

# GLASGOW CITY CHAMBERS



# Welcome from the Lord Provost



I'm delighted to welcome you to Glasgow. It's a wonderful city. Dynamic, multi-cultural and famed for its friendliness and world-class hospitality.

As Lord Provost I am proud to represent this city and its people locally, nationally and internationally.

It's an amazing privilege, for this is a city with much to commend it, from world class art galleries and museums, to parks, theatres and cinemas.

The City Chambers is a building at the heart of Glasgow's political and civic life. It's a magnificent example of Victorian architecture. Built at the height of the British Empire and representative of the ambition and vision of that era.

An ambition and vision, I'm proud to say, the people of Glasgow – the People who Make Glasgow – continue to demonstrate today.

There are regular tours of the building which showcase its impressive interior and fascinating history which I highly recommend.

I trust you find this brochure a useful souvenir of your visit to the City Chambers.

Councillor **Eva Bolander**  
The Right Honourable The Lord Provost of Glasgow  
Lord Lieutenant

# At the Heart of Glasgow



In the very heart of Glasgow stands one of the city's most important and prestigious buildings – the City Chambers.

A grand and imposing building overlooking George Square, the City Chambers is an impressive symbol of Glasgow's political strength and historical wealth.

Completed in 1888, the City Chambers has for over a hundred years been the headquarters of successive councils serving the City of Glasgow.



# Glasgow City Chambers



The City Chambers is the headquarters of Glasgow City Council – the largest of 32 local authorities in Scotland.

Glasgow City Council came into existence on 1st April 1996 following an Act of Parliament reorganising local government in Scotland. Two separate councils were previously responsible for the entire city – the City of Glasgow District Council and Strathclyde Regional Council.

Today Glasgow City Council is solely responsible for all council services for the metropolitan city and Glasgow's 600,000 people. Gross annual budget of the council is over £2000 million. The council's main service responsibilities are:

- Education and Social Work Services - nursery, primary and secondary schools, care services for children, the elderly and disabled people.

- Land and Environmental Services - local roads, street lighting, parks and cemeteries, cleansing, land remediation, food safety and environmental health, building control, consumer and trading standards.
- Development and Regeneration Services - economic and social regeneration, business development, planning.
- Financial Services - council tax and business rates collection, assessor and electoral registration.
- Registrar of births, deaths and marriages.

Glasgow Life, a company with charitable trust status and funded by Glasgow City Council, is responsible for museums, art galleries, libraries and performing arts, sports and leisure centres.

Council elections take place every five years. The next election is May 2022. The current 2017 political make up of the council is 39 Scottish National Party, 31 Labour, 8 Conservative and 7 Greens.

The City Council is active in promoting the economic development of the city and works closely with Scottish Enterprise Glasgow, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde, voluntary and community organisations and local business.

# The Armorial Insignia

The armorial bearings of the City of Glasgow date back to 1866 when a patent was first granted by The Lord Lyon. The emblems which appear in the official bearings refer to legends about Glasgow's patron saint, St Mungo.

The first to appear was the fish, on the seal of Bishop William Wyschard in 1270, to be joined by the bird in 1271, on the seal of Bishop Robert Wyschard.

On a later seal of the prelate the tree is shown along with the fish and bird. The bell first appears in 1321 on the privy seal of the Chapter of Glasgow where all the emblems were first used together, between 1488-1540.

In 1647, they appeared in a combination similar to today's armorial bearings, prompting the famous verse:

**Here's the Bird that never flew  
Here's the Tree that never grew  
Here's the Bell that never rang  
Here's the Fish that never swam**

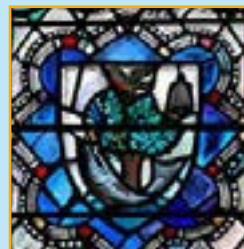
With each reorganisation of local government a new patent was granted, the latest being in April 1996 when the thistle coronet, patented in 1975, was changed to the current mural coronet representing the city.

The city motto

**'Let Glasgow Flourish'**

is a shorter version of the text inscribed on the bell of the Tron Church cast in 1631.

**Lord let Glasgow flourish through the preaching of  
Thy word and praising Thy name.**



# History

## From Trongate to George Square

In the 15th century, the town council met in a tolbooth at the corner of High Street and Trongate. The building served the city in many ways – it was also a prison, a burgh court and housed booths for rent collection.

As the council continued to grow, the need for more spacious and functional premises eventually led to the development of the Trongate site in 1735.

In 1814, the Tolbooth was sold, with the exception of the steeple – which still remains – and the council chambers moved to Jail Square, Glasgow Green, site of the present Justiciary Court House.

Subsequent moves were made to larger sites in Wilson

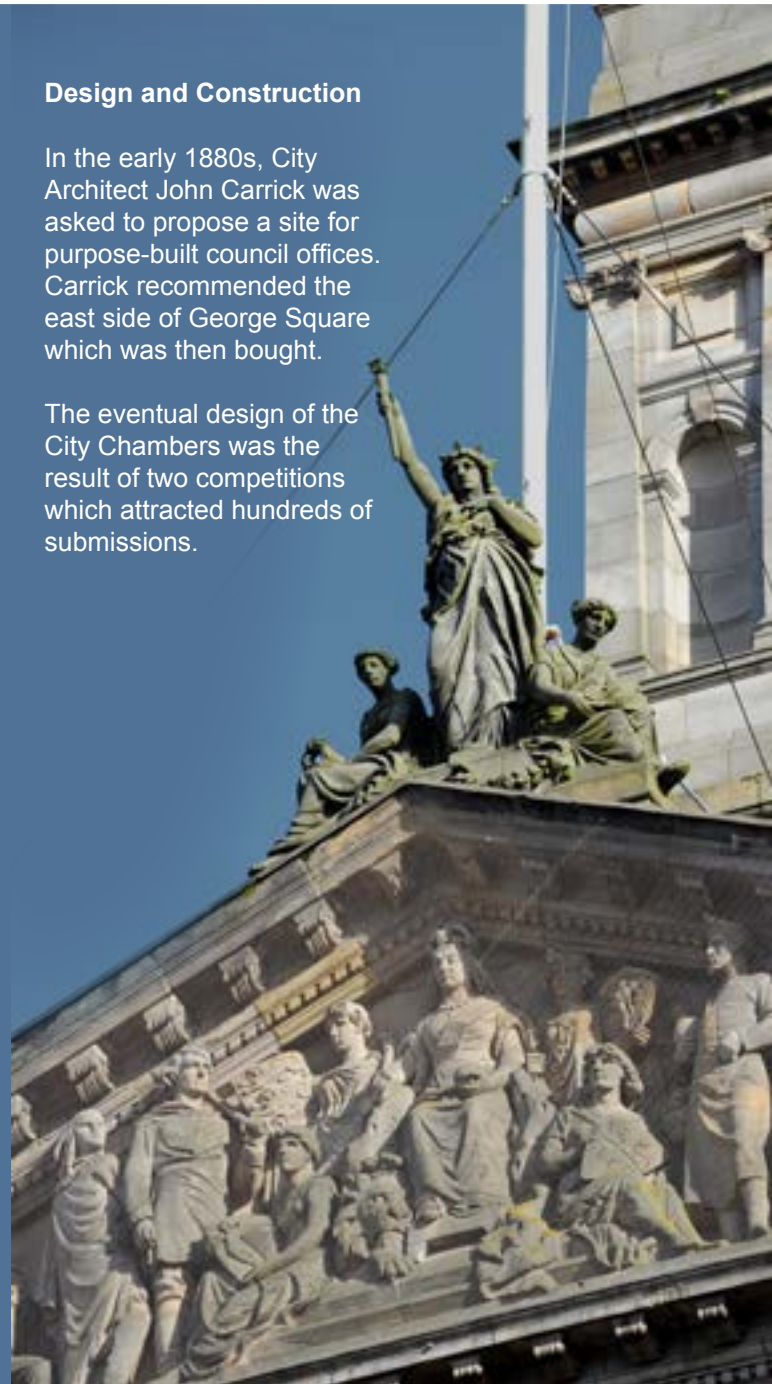
Street and Ingram Street before finally settling in George Square where the foundation stone for a showpiece City Chambers was laid by the Lord Provost, John Ure, in 1883.



## Design and Construction

In the early 1880s, City Architect John Carrick was asked to propose a site for purpose-built council offices. Carrick recommended the east side of George Square which was then bought.

The eventual design of the City Chambers was the result of two competitions which attracted hundreds of submissions.





The City Chambers  
building cost

**£552,028.**

Including furnishings,  
the whole project in 1888  
cost

**£578,232.**



- The original building covered 5016 square metres. With extensions, now 14,000 sqm.
- The concrete foundations are in excess of a metre thick and the sand subsoil reaches to a depth of more than 12 metres.
- 10 million bricks, 9905 cubic metres of stone and 537.7 cubic metres of granite were used.
- Stone moulding machinery was used for the first time in Glasgow.
- In 1889, a 10-day public viewing attracted 400,000 people.
- The first four to six feet of the external wall are of red Aberdeenshire granite. The rest is faced with Polmaise on the north and west fronts and Dunmore stone on the south and east.
- The first council meeting was held in the building on 10 October, 1889.

# Ground floor



Visitors enter from George Square into a covered gallery and immediately discover that the interior is even more sumptuous than the exterior. Architect Young had visited the historical arch of Constantine in Rome and the entrance reflects this. He sought to bring a touch of Italy to Glasgow.

The first notable feature is a “Keramic mosaic” of the city’s Coat of Arms in its original 1866 design. This mosaic style is found throughout the original building and copied on the floors of several others in the city, built around the same time.

The ceilings, too, are decorated with mosaic tiles. It is estimated more than 1.5 million tiles were laid by hand in the vaulted ceilings and domes.

The pillars are, from the base, grey Aberdeen granite, hand-polished red Scottish granite and topped with dark green marble in Ionic style.

From the reception area, to the left and right, there are stair accesses to the first and second floors. The staircase to the left is made of Carrara marble; the one to the right, of freestone. Both have alabaster balusters. The wall panels, also of alabaster, were placed one after the other in cutting order.





# Satinwood Suite



Next to the Council Chambers is the Satinwood Suite. It is finished with Australian satinwood and boasts an alabaster fireplace. The paintings on the walls are from the city's art collections. This room is used for civic functions, wedding ceremonies and large meetings.

Adjoining the Satinwood is the Octagonal Suite. It is decorated in amber wood and acts as an overflow suite for the Satinwood and Mahogany Suites.

The Mahogany Suite owes its dark colour to its Cuban and walnut panels and fireplace. It, too, is used for smaller functions and often as a holding area for top-table guests before they ceremonially enter the Banqueting Hall.

# Banqueting Hall



Kings, queens and presidents have been highly impressed as they passed through the door of this impressive hall. Some have described it as “magnificent”. Not only has the Banqueting Hall been used for civic functions but also for presentation ceremonies – Nelson Mandela received his Freedom of the City award here in 1993 and Sir Alex Ferguson in 1999. As well as formal civic events, the Banqueting Hall has housed charitable events, children’s parties, youth celebrations and fashion shows. It is 33.5 metres long, 14.6 metres wide and 15.8 metres high. It is usually carpeted with four sections which are rotated regularly to prevent wear. The design of the carpet reflects the ornate ceiling pattern.

Much of the decoration on the walls is in the form of huge murals depicting some of the history of the city. They were painted by artists from the famous Glasgow School including Sir John Lavery, Alexander Roche and George Henry and overseen by William Leiper, RSA.

The mural at the rear of the stage represents the granting of the city’s charter by William the Lion of Scotland, c.1175. Those on the south wall depict some of the city’s history and culture while the four above the entrance doors represent the four principal rivers of Scotland - the Tay, the Forth, the Clyde and the Tweed. The small panels immediately above are of various Virtues.

The central window of leaded Venetian glass on the north side commemorates Queen Victoria’s Diamond Jubilee.



# “Electroliers”



Banqueting Hall

The three central chandeliers “electroliers” have their own story to tell. In 1885, the council decided that the Hall should have electric lighting, an innovative decision for that time.

Messrs. A. Clark, of nearby Buchanan Street, designed these magnificent features, and a generator was installed in the basement to power them.

Today, the same “electroliers” are still working - although one or two bulbs have been changed! Innovation also had a part to play in additional access to the Banqueting Hall which was by way of a hydraulic lift. An American elevator was installed, operated by hydraulic pressure, another technological development of the time.



# Councillors' Corridor



The Councillors' Corridor lies on the second floor, above working offices. Its domed ceiling is decorated in yellow, blue and white coloured faience - an Italian form of glazed and decorated pottery.

The Committee Rooms, where more formal council business is conducted, can be accessed from the Corridor. It also leads to an impressive library with 11 feet high walnut bookcases.

From the Councillors' Corridor you pass through Queen's Square into the Council Chamber.



Council Chamber

# Council Chamber



The council meets formally in one of the most impressive rooms in the City Chambers.

Each of the 85 councillors has a designated seat facing a platform where the Lord Provost, Depute Lord Provost, Director of Governance and Solicitor to the Council sit behind the mace. The Lord Provost sits in a seat gifted by Queen Victoria.

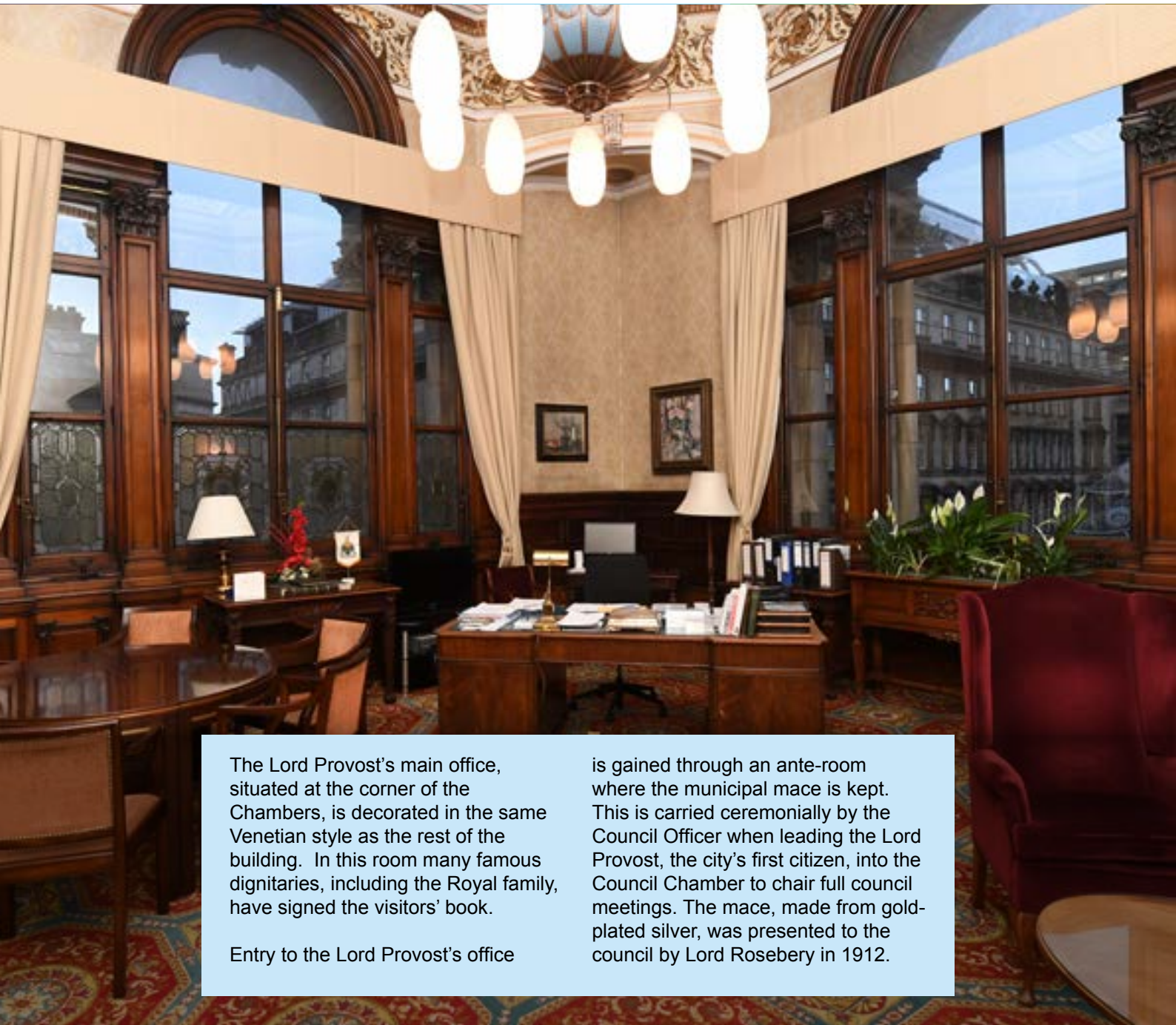
Behind the councillors, there is an area called the “bed recess” - a reference to an architectural feature of old Glasgow tenements. Council officials sit here as well as the Lord Dean of Guild representing the Merchants House and the Deacon Convener of the Trades House, the city’s second and third citizens.

Looking down on the Chamber is the public gallery. Council meetings are by law open to the public. At the side there is a small gallery for journalists to report the proceedings of the council.

The decoration is primarily Spanish mahogany wood with two massive chimney pieces. The windows are of Venetian stained glass



# The Lord Provost's office



The Lord Provost's main office, situated at the corner of the Chambers, is decorated in the same Venetian style as the rest of the building. In this room many famous dignitaries, including the Royal family, have signed the visitors' book.

Entry to the Lord Provost's office

is gained through an ante-room where the municipal mace is kept. This is carried ceremonially by the Council Officer when leading the Lord Provost, the city's first citizen, into the Council Chamber to chair full council meetings. The mace, made from gold-plated silver, was presented to the council by Lord Rosebery in 1912.





Council Library



Council Chamber



Banqueting Hall Ceiling



Staircase



Lead Glass



Mahogany Fireplace



Mahogany Suite



Picture Gallery



City Chambers at night

#### Glasgow - accolades

1988 National Garden Festival  
1990 European City of Culture  
1995-1999 National City of Sport  
1996 Festival of Visual Arts  
1999 UK City of Architecture and Design  
2003 European Capital of Sport  
UNESCO City of Music  
Host City for Commonwealth Games 2014  
Host City for 2018 European  
Championships

#### Glasgow - twin cities

Dalian, China  
Nuremberg, Germany  
Turin, Italy  
Rostov-on-Don, Russia  
Havana, Cuba  
Lahore, Pakistan  
Marseille, France  
Bethlehem, Palestine

City Chambers, George  
Square, Glasgow  
G2 1DU

@GlasgowCC  
[www.glasgow.gov.uk](http://www.glasgow.gov.uk)



Tours of the City Chambers are  
conducted most weekdays at

**10.30am and 2.30pm**  
subject to availability

All tours are open to the public and  
there is no charge.