

Report to the Council

Committee: Cabinet **Date:** 27 July 2017

Subject: Transformation Programme – Service Accommodation Review.

Portfolio Holder: Councillor C Whitbread (Leader)

Recommending:

(1) That, in order to fund the external support for the production of the business case, a virement in the sum of £120,000 from the capital budget for the purchase of Bridgeman House be approved.

1. The Cabinet had previously stated a desire to reduce the size and cost of the current office accommodation. This initiative is one of the key parts of the Transformation Programme and links to the review of Customer Service and the move to more flexible and mobile working. There is also a link to the emerging Local Plan as if part of the site could be re-developed then this would help minimise the loss of green belt land to meet housing need.

2. On 9 March 2017, the Cabinet considered several different strategic outline cases for the office accommodation. The options ranged from re-developing the whole of the current site and fully re-locating the offices to more limited refurbishments and partial re-developments. The option favoured by Cabinet was to retain the new building and seek to free up the Condor building, 323 House and the rear extension for re-development.

3. To take forward the accommodation review, a more detailed business case is necessary to set out a sequential programme of works with more detailed costs and indicative layouts to give clarity on the possible number of workstations and any potential shortfall in accommodation. This will enable Members to decide if they want to proceed to the implementation stage and make appropriate provision in the Capital Programme for 2018/19.

4. The Director of Resources and the Head of Transformation have undertaken some soft market testing with three potential suppliers. It is evident from these discussions that all three are interested in performing this work and an approximate cost has been suggested of around £100,000. An Invitation to Tender was prepared and has been approved by the Transformation Programme Board. The document was then shared with Portfolio Holders to give them the opportunity to comment and a version incorporating those comments was issued to the three potential providers on 23 May. A deadline of 15 June has been set for the return of tenders and it is intended to hold interviews with the three potential providers on 22 June. This should allow for the award of a contract by mid-July and for the work to be completed in line with the requirements of the 2018/19 budget cycle.

5. When the purchase of the former police station in Waltham Abbey was being evaluated, it became clear that the purchase of Bridgeman House was not going to proceed and so the £297,000 included in the Capital Programme was available to be re-allocated. As the Accommodation Review has now reached the detailed feasibility stage it can be funded from capital and it would seem sensible to re-allocate a budget that is no longer required instead of seeking a supplementary estimate. The Cabinet considered this at its meeting on 15 June 2017 and are now requesting the Council to agree a virement of £120,000 from this budget to fund the cost of the production of the business case.

6. We recommend as set out at the commencement of this report.