

Report to the Overview and Scrutiny Committee



Date of meeting: 28 January 2020



Subject: Transformation Programme – Accommodation Strategy

Responsible Officer: Sacha Jevans (01992 564229)

Democratic Services: Gary Woodhall (01992 564470)

Recommendations/Decisions Required:

(1) That the current progress with the Accommodation Strategy be noted.

Report:

1. Work on the Refurbishment of the Civic Offices is progressing well, and this report sets out the activity that has been undertaken since the last Overview and Scrutiny Committee in January. This is a key corporate project and as such a governance structure has been established to oversee the performance and monitoring of the project. This paper provides a progress update on the key workstreams as follows:

- (i) Planning Process;
- (ii) Procurement;
- (iii) Communications;
- (iv) Decant Process;
- (v) Member Consultation; and
- (vi) ICT.

Planning Process

2. The designs for the external changes to the building are being prepared for a planning application submission. This will enable an external entrance to the café area of the Civic Offices. Consultation with members at a workshop held on 27 February concluded that the space next to the café would be a more desirable location for the library. This has been relayed to Essex Library and we are awaiting their feedback on location and cost.

Procurement

3. The cost consultants G & T have completed and sent out the tender documents on the 24 February. There have been six companies from the framework that have showed an initial interest. Over the next few weeks there will be several workshops and clarification days with interested contractors before it can be known how many final submissions will be received.

Communications

4. There have been several communications to staff and information sent out about the decant process through District Lines. The change champions continue to meet and are discussing the new ways of working, the travel plan and the decant arrangements. The Oakwood Hill depot works have now been completed and the new furniture and meeting room layout provide an excellent example of the new ways of working.

Decant Process

5. A detailed decant plan has been developed which sets out how and when teams will be moved into the Condor building or other offices during the decant period. This process has started, and a number of teams have been successfully moved. The decant arrangements continue on a phased approach. Staff are being encouraged to start working within their teams on the new 6:10 fixed desk ratio in preparation for the return to the refurbished Civic Offices.

Member Consultation

6. A second Member workshop was held on 24 February 2020. The detailed plans for the building were presented at the workshop and members were able to look at the pilot scheme on the second floor of the Civic Offices. Members reviewed how the existing member area in the civic offices could be used in the newly refurbished offices. Members discussed the following:

- That the member area would still benefit from some individual meeting spaces that could provide privacy if needed. In view of that it was suggested that the leaders room remain as current and the Chairman's room be partitioned to provide two offices (different entrances).
- The kitchen will be refurbished however it was felt that it was useful to retain the shutters that could be opened when required.
- There should be a range of furniture, chairs with low tables, meeting pods and some workspace.
- That the sofas would be replaced with furniture that would enable seating capacity of up to 50 members.

7. It was agreed that these comments from the workshop would be circulated on an all member email to seek any further views before finalising the approach.

8. The second part of the workshop covered the potential meeting space options for the Council meetings during the decant period. A presentation was given on the various options available within the context of the following challenges:

- Cost of external venues;
- Availability of external venues;
- Availability of parking;
- Additional administration in sourcing and organising a number different venues;
- Semi-permanent webcasting set-up (only available on our own premises at North Weald).

9. Following a discussion about the venues and travel arrangements members through that:

- The Ground Floor meeting room at the North Weald airfield control tower agreed

- as the principal venue for cabinet and committee meetings;
- Waltham Abbey Town Hall agreed as a venue for Full Council meetings;
- Epping Hall to be considered as a potential Full Council meeting venue;
- Debden Park Community Centre as the venue for Area Plans South, Licensing Committee and Local Councils Liaison Committee;
- To look at a venue in Waltham Abbey for Area Plans West
- A transfer facility to be provided between the Civic Offices and North Weald (eg. minibus) on the evenings of meetings;

10. The table below sets out all the meetings and the proposed venues:

Meeting	Proposed Venue
Area Plans East	North Weald Airfield
Area Plans South	Debden Park Community Centre
Area Plans West	Waltham Abbey TBD
Asset Management and Economic Development Cabinet Committee	North Weald Airfield
Audit and Governance	North Weald Airfield
Cabinet	North Weald Airfield
Full Council	Waltham Abbey Town Hall (+ Epping Hall ?)
Council Housebuilding Cabinet Committee	North Weald Airfield
District Development Management Committee	North Weald Airfield
Executive Briefing	North Weald Airfield
Finance and Performance Management Committee	North Weald Airfield
JCC	North Weald Airfield
Licensing Committee	Debden Park Community Centre
Licensing Sub-Committee	Debden Park Community Centre
Local Councils' Liaison Committee	Debden Park Community Centre
Local Plan Cabinet Committee	North Weald Airfield
Overview and Scrutiny	North Weald Airfield
Standards Committee	North Weald Airfield
Select Committees	North Weald Airfield
Task and Finish Panels	North Weald Airfield
Waste Management Partnership Board	North Weald Airfield

11. These options will be circulated via an all member email to ask for any further comments or suggestions before the arrangements are finalised. It was noted that travel to North Weald would be arranged to and from the Civic Offices.

ICT

12. Further work is being undertaken to ensure that all staff will be able to work remotely, and Microsoft teams has been implemented across the business. Teams will enable staff to join virtual meetings if working from a different location.

13. Work is also being undertaken to ensure that there is enough capacity in our disaster recovery planning in the event of any disturbance to service during the works or the decant period.

Resource Implications:

The cost for consultants and the refurbishment works has been included in the 2020/21 budget and medium-term financial strategy.

Legal and Governance Implications:

Any professional consultancy services will be procured in line with the Council procurement rules. The Civic Offices site has a draft allocation of housing within the Local Plan to be bought forward in the early years. There is a Governance Board in place and regular reports of progress back to Cabinet and Overview and Scrutiny.

Safer, Cleaner and Greener Implications:

The refurbished building and will be safer by design and energy efficient.

Consultation Undertaken:

Consultation with Partners to potentially occupy the Civic Offices continues. Consultation with members on the requirements and design has commenced and will continue. There is a full communication plan for staff through the project delivery phases.

Background Papers:

None

Risk Management:

A risk map has been developed and is reviewed monthly by the Accommodation Programme Board with mitigating actions reviewed.