

## **Report to the Cabinet**



**Epping Forest  
District Council**

**Report reference: C/072/2007-08.**

**Date of meeting: 12 November 2007.**

**Portfolio: Finance, Performance Management & Corporate Support Services.**

**Subject: Civic Offices Environmental Improvements – Comfort Cooling.**

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### **Recommendations:**

**(1) To note all but the following parts of the Civic Offices Complex have been provided with comfort cooling under a rolling programme of works:**

**(a) the entire rear extension of the condor building;**

**(b) the Legal Services suite in the condor building;**

**(c) the Estate and Valuation suite in the condor building; and**

**(d) parts of the Housing Services suite on the ground floor of the main Civic Offices building; and**

**(2) That a revenue DDF growth bid in the sum of £100,000 for 2008-09 be made, in order to provide comfort cooling to the areas of the Civic Offices identified above thereby providing similar levels throughout the Civic Offices complex**

### **Report:**

1. The Cabinet has previously considered reports identifying the need to install comfort cooling in the Civic Offices Complex to combat excessive temperature and humidity levels during the summer months. Comfort cooling has been provided in the following areas:

- Planning Reception;
- Environmental Services;
- Research & Democratic Services;
- Electoral Services;
- Human Resources;
- Finance Services;
- Council Tax Office;
- Benefits Office;
- Housing Maintenance Office;
- Housing Needs Office;
- Housing Incomes Office;
- The Southern side of legal and Admin Offices; and
- Condor Building (Planning Control)

2. The sections of the Civic Offices Complex that have not been provided with comfort cooling are as follows:

(a) the entire rear extension of the condor building (which includes Accountancy, Audit, the Performance Unit etc.);

- (b) the Legal Services suite in the Condor building;
- (c) the Estate and Valuation suite in the condor building; and
- (d) parts of the Housing Services suite on the ground floor of the main Civic Offices building

3. Given the unpleasant working conditions which can arise in these areas when temperatures are high, the potential to breach health and safety standards and to ensure that all staff working in the Civic offices complex have equivalent working conditions, it is recommended that financial provision be made in 2008-09 to complete the installation of comfort cooling throughout the Civic Offices complex

#### **Resources:**

4. A funding request for these remaining comfort cooling works was made to the Cabinet at its meeting on the 4 September 2006, but in view of the uncertainties surrounding the potential cost of the Waste Management contract, a decision was deferred. Now that the contract has been awarded, the Cabinet are requested to reconsider the situation.

5. To undertake works to complete the improvement of environmental and comfort conditions in the remaining parts of the Civic Offices Complex, costs are estimated at £110,000. There is currently a carryover of £10,000 from the previously allocated funding and therefore for the works to proceed as set out, additional funding of £100,000 is sought for 2008-09.

#### **Statement in Support of Recommended Action:**

6. Those parts of the Civic Offices complex, which do not have comfort cooling, do not provide satisfactory working conditions when temperature and humidity rise during the warmer months of the year. As well as causing significant discomfort for officers, such conditions may also result in breaches of health & safety legislation.

7. Over the past five years or so significant progress has been made in providing comfort cooling in the civic offices complex on a priority basis. It appears reasonable that this work should now be completed so that all staff are able to work in appropriate working conditions.

#### **Other Options for Action:**

8. The alternative options are:

(a) to do nothing and accept that conditions will be uncomfortable for those staff in the parts of the Civic Offices complex identified in the report during periods of high temperatures and humidity and that health & safety legislation might be breached; and

(b) to continue to provide temporary relief from high temperatures and humidity through the hiring in of temporary/portable air conditioning units during periods of high temperature and humidity.

9. Whilst option (b) appears a viable alternative, short term hiring of equipment is expensive and during hot spells demand is high and units may not always be available. Portable units are also difficult to locate especially since they need to be vented to the open air to function correctly.

#### **Consultation Undertaken:**

10. No external consultation undertaken.

**Resource implications:**

**Budget provision:** The total cost of the works is estimated at £110,000. There is currently a carryover of £10,000 in 2007/2008 from the previously allocated funding. Therefore additional DDF funding of £100,000 will be required in order to complete the comfort cooling works in the remaining areas of the Civic Office Complex. This is only an estimate at this stage and competitive tenders will be invited if Cabinet approval is obtained.

**Personnel:** All supervisory work can be contained within existing staff resources.

**Land:** Nil.

**Community Plan/BVPP reference:** GU2; Use/conservation of energy, FL1; energy conservation through account management, LA21; sustainability and waste management.

**Relevant statutory powers:** Discretionary.

**Background papers:** Cabinet report 4 September 2006.

**Environmental/Human Rights Act/Crime and Disorder Act Implications:** Improved Environmental Conditions.

**Key Decision reference (if required):** N/A.