

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 MARCH 2010

#### OFFICE RATIONALISATION PROJECT – UPDATE

##### 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report provides an update for members on the work being undertaken to rationalise office accommodation.

##### 2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 On 1<sup>st</sup> February 2010 this Committee received a progress report on the rationalisation of office accommodation. Members requested that a further update be given to this meeting of the Committee.

##### 3. PRESENT POSITION

- 3.1 The last update report described progress against the five project work streams, and this approach is repeated below. The primary focus of work in recent weeks has been – with the support of EC Harris – the development of a plan for future building use (work stream 2).

- 3.2 **Work Stream 1: Baseline information:** This will determine the costs and use of the selected administrative buildings and confirm the baseline position. The accurate baseline data will enable the Building utilisation/disposal work stream to complete its plan. Since the last report:-

- IT infrastructure issues are being discussed in regular meetings with IT staff to inform project development.
- The localisation agenda for CYPD and DASS services continues to be explored and its potential impact will be taken into account in project development. In particular discussions are taking place with CYPD colleagues to support the development of locality working/area teams and deliver more flexible workspace to support agile working.
- Further information is being provided to EC Harris as required to support the development of the business case.

- 3.3 **Work Stream 2: Building utilisation/disposal:** This will develop a plan for future building use, focussing on physical requirements. The plan will provide for the maximum use and efficiency of retained buildings, confirm the closure/demolition/disposal programme and engage with partners to explore opportunities for co-location and rationalisation. It will also establish an appropriate framework for managing the performance of the administrative estate. To complete its work it will require outputs from work streams 1 and 3. Since the last report:

- The first stage in the work programme to develop a business case has been completed
- Further investigation has taken place of significant areas of the estate or issues which require more detailed understanding and which may have significant influence on the business case.
- It has been agreed that the business case will be delivered by 31 March 2010. Work on the business case is currently on target.

3.4 **Work Stream 3: Workplace change/policy:** This will develop the authority's approach to agile working and provide a complete framework for implementation. It will identify how and where agile working will be used and resolve associated HR and ICT and other related issues. It will lead and facilitate workplace change and develop and manage a communication plan for the whole project. Since the last report:-

- A review has been concluded of all HR policies required to support agile/flexible working. Consultation will follow on the revised policies.
- A review continues of existing car parking provision. A consistent corporate approach to car parking will be required to support the programme, and a policy will be developed.
- Consideration is being given to the ICT requirements to support agility. An initial relocation of Asset Management staff is being used to test some of the proposed solutions.

3.5 **Work Stream 4: Facilities management:** This will examine Facilities Management arrangements, identify options for delivering savings and recommend a way forward. It will take account of the other work streams but it forms a discrete element that will not delay the rationalisation programme. In terms of progress:-

- Arrangements are being made to transfer administrative buildings budgets to the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management with effect from 1 April 2010.
- Discussions are taking place with EC Harris for the provision of additional support to take forward change in existing arrangements and realise efficiencies.

3.6 **Work Stream 5: Implementation:** This will manage the implementation of the agreed rationalisation plan. It will deal with the re-location of staff and all that is entailed from the project schedule of building closures, disposals and demolitions.

3.7 Preparation of the following properties for disposal continues:

Property	Present position
Bridge Court, West Kirby	Agreed sale to Wirral Partnership Homes proceeding
Dock Road Depot, Wallasey	Short term lease extension agreed to tenant
Esher House	Council staff being relocated

Hillcroft, 4 Rocky Lane, Heswall	Discussions continuing with tenant prior to sale
Oakenholt, Moreton	Council staff being relocated
The Old Courthouse, Wallasey	Some Council staff relocated. Remainder of staff to be relocated prior to sale

- 3.8 These actual and planned disposals form part of a larger programme necessary to deliver the scale of rationalisation required. This programme will be finalised when work streams 1 to 3 conclude their work. It is important that the buildings identified for vacation and disposal within the final programme are the most appropriate having regard to the business case for the Council's long term office requirements.

#### **4. CONCLUSION**

- 4.1. Office rationalisation forms part of the wider corporate change programme and is being dealt with in a corporate context. The project is complex, with an appropriate formal governance structure drawing on input from all departments and from key resource areas. Consultants have been appointed to support the project and to develop a business case for the Council's future office need. Whilst the vacation and disposal of some minor administrative assets is proceeding, the bulk of the rationalisation programme will follow the agreement of the business case. In the meantime, preparatory work is under way in a number of areas to ensure that, once the rationalisation programme is finalised, it can proceed as quickly as possible.

#### **5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1. The consultancy costs are being met from the £100,000 allocated by Cabinet.
- 5.2. The delivery of overall savings from office rationalisation will follow the agreement of a business case for future office need, and will be the subject of further reports as appropriate.

#### **6. STAFFING IMPLICATIONS**

- 6.1 None arising directly from this report.

#### **7. EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 None arising directly from this report.

#### **8. COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

#### **9. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 None arising directly from this report.

**10. PLANNING IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 None arising directly from this report.

**11. ANTI-POVERTY IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None arising directly from this report.

**12. HUMAN RIGHTS IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 None arising directly from this report.

**13. SOCIAL INCLUSION IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 None arising directly from this report.

**14. LOCAL MEMBER SUPPORT IMPLICATIONS**

14.1 None arising directly from this report.

**15. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

15.1 Report to Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee on 1 February 2010.

**16. RECOMMENDATION**

16.1 That the report is noted.

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