



# Cabinet

<b>Date:</b>	<b>Monday, 21 February 2011</b>
<b>Time:</b>	<b>6.15 pm</b>
<b>Venue:</b>	<b>Committee Room 1 - Wallasey Town Hall</b>

**Contact Officer:** Mark Delap  
**Tel:** 0151 691 8500  
**e-mail:** [markdelap@wirral.gov.uk](mailto:markdelap@wirral.gov.uk)  
**Website:** <http://www.wirral.gov.uk>

---

## **SUPPLEMENTARY AGENDA/2**

10. **ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE (Pages 1 - 6)**
11. **EXEMPT APPENDIX - ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE (Pages 7 - 10)**

This page is intentionally left blank

## WIRRAL COUNCIL

### CABINET

21 FEBRUARY 2011

<b>SUBJECT:</b>	<b>ACCOMMODATION IN OLD MARKET HOUSE</b>
<b>WARD/S AFFECTED:</b>	<b>BIRKENHEAD AND TRANMERE</b>
<b>REPORT OF:</b>	<b>DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT</b>
<b>RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:</b>	<b>COUNCILLOR HOLBROOK</b>
<b>KEY DECISION?</b>	NO

#### 1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to seek approval of terms for the occupation by the Department of Adult Social Care of part of Old Market House, Birkenhead.
- 1.2 The recommended course of action supports the strategic objectives of improving health and wellbeing for all by re-providing appropriate accommodation for the core headquarters team of the department. It also supports the objective of creating an excellent council by facilitating the sale of Westminster House and a consequent overall reduction in accommodation costs.
- 1.3 Occupying space within Old Market House will incur annual revenue costs. These will however be more than covered by annual savings in accommodation costs made from the sale of Westminster House.
- 1.4 Entering into the proposed agreement is not a statutory duty.
- 1.5 An exempt appendix to this report contains information that is not for publication under paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972. This information should remain confidential because it explains the current position reached in negotiations which have yet to be concluded between the Council and a third party where a particular course of action is recommended. It also contains financial information relating to the affairs of the third party.

#### 2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1 That the terms proposed within this report, for the Council to occupy accommodation within Old Market House, Birkenhead, are agreed and the Director of Law, HR and Asset Management is authorised to complete the necessary documentation.
- 2.2 That in view of the urgency call-in is waived.

### **3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 The terms proposed by NHS Wirral for part occupation of the building have been examined and are considered by the Head of Asset Management to be the best terms reasonably obtainable having regard to the accommodation to be taken.
- 3.2 In order to secure the sale of Westminster House it is intended to vacate that building by 30 April 2011 to ensure sufficient time is available to the purchaser, Wirral Partnership Homes, to refurbish the building and vacate currently rented accommodation elsewhere. Lead-in times for building and IT work mean any delay will put the vacation of Westminster House by the agreed date and its sale at risk.

### **4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES**

- 4.1 At its meeting on 25 November 2010 Cabinet agreed to sell Westminster House to Wirral Partnership Homes.
- 4.2 The purchase was agreed by Wirral Partnership Homes on the basis that Westminster House would be vacated in sufficient time to allow it to fully refurbish the building before moving in. In consequence a target date of 30 April has been set for the vacation of Westminster House.
- 4.3 In discussions with the Director of Adult Social Care it has been agreed that his staff currently occupying Westminster House will be relocated to different places based on 'best fit' in terms of geographic and/or service requirements.
- 4.4 One of the groups of staff to be relocated is the 'departmental headquarters' which contains the Director, heads of service and key central functions. Options have been considered to locate this group of staff within existing Council buildings, and these are referred to in section 6 below. An opportunity has however arisen to locate this group within part of Old Market House and this now represents the preferred option.
- 4.5 Old Market House is the neighbouring building to Westminster House, built at the same time and sharing the same car park entrance. It has been comprehensively refurbished to provide good quality modern offices and is currently occupied by NHS Wirral. Old Market House is now being organised into a serviced office building with a number of separate occupiers each paying for the space they occupy and for shared use of common facilities such as meeting rooms, staff canteen, reception etc. This anticipates the reorganisation of functions arising from current changes to health services.
- 4.6 Alternative options were considered for the DASS headquarters function and these are dealt with in section 6 below. Old Market House is however considered to be the best location from a service point of view. A central Birkenhead location is preferred, as it offers maximum accessibility by public transport for staff and service users who visit and at times work from the headquarters facility. More importantly, locating DASS within Old Market House

gives physical co-location at a strategic level of social care and health functions which is considered important in terms of future service development and improvement. It will be adjacent to the new headquarters for Wirral Partnership Homes, with which the department also has an interface. The Public Health function is also one of those currently in the building. The Director of Adult Social Care strongly recommends the occupation of accommodation in Old Market House for reasons of these strategic links, and it would be welcomed from a service perspective by NHS Wirral.

- 4.7 Terms proposed by NHS Wirral for occupation of part of the building are set out in the exempt appendix to this report. Analysis of the proposed terms shows that they are reasonable in comparison with other properties on the market and for the standard of accommodation being offered. NHS Wirral has also stated that costs will be recharged on a non-profit basis.
- 4.8 To support future service delivery and in particular more integrated working between social care and health, the Director of Adult Social Care, the Interim Chief Executive and the Chief Executive of NHS Wirral believe this is the best location for the headquarters function of DASS.
- 4.9 The area to be occupied is approximately 372 sq. m. on the third floor of the building. Some 53 staff will be based there including the director, service heads, managers and departmental support staff. There will be a small element of agile working, and the floor will be occupied on an open plan basis consistent with the remainder of the building. This will represent a significant change in the working environment for the staff who will be based there when compared with the previous accommodation at Westminster House.

## **5.0 RELEVANT RISKS**

- 5.1 Risks arising from the proposed basis of occupation are set out in the exempt appendix to this report.
- 5.2 There is a risk that the new more intensively used and open plan accommodation will cause some service disruption in the short term to staff unfamiliar with such an environment. This risk will be managed by the service, which considers the wider benefits of occupying this building to outweigh any short term disruption.
- 5.3 Whilst existing office furniture will be re-used as far as possible some new furniture may be required to maximise the use of the available floor space, but every effort will be made to minimise the purchase of new furniture. Requirements will only be clear once floor layouts are finalised.

## **6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 6.1 Birkenhead Town Hall. Accommodation is available now on the first floor of Birkenhead Town Hall with capacity for approximately 100 work stations. That space would need IT cabling for data and telephones, some minor repairs and the removal of some partitions. There is no dedicated car parking, and proposals have yet to be finalised for the future use of the whole building. The accommodation is divided into a series of rooms on the first floor and when

compared to modern open plan space it does not in the view of the director readily support new ways of working and the necessary service transformation and improvement. It could not be made ready within the timescale for vacating Westminster House.

- 6.2 Bebington Town Hall. Currently occupied by CYPD staff, with the potential for those staff to be relocated to support departmental reorganisation. This is seen by the service as a less accessible location than Birkenhead. The building is being considered for potential vacation within the wider accommodation strategy, but this could not happen within the timescale for vacating Westminster House.
- 6.3 South Annexe. This building has been identified for long term retention upon the sale of Westminster House. Two floors are currently being vacated and could accommodate DASS headquarters staff. If they are not used for this purpose however they will provide space to accommodate other staff and support moves to vacate other buildings. This building does not have the benefits of strategic co-location offered by Old Market House and again is seen by the service as a less accessible location.

## **7.0 CONSULTATION**

- 7.1 Consultation is being undertaken within services directly with those staff whose workplace will be changed as a result of office rationalisation.

## **8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS**

- 8.1 None arising directly from this report.

## **9.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS**

- 9.1 Financial resources

Financial implications of renting space in Old Market House are contained in the exempt appendix to the report.

There will be 'one-off' costs to install a fibre optic ICT connection to the building, estimated at £10,000, and to either install suitable cabling to the office area to be occupied or upgrade the existing installation. These costs will be met from existing IT budgets. Costs of moving staff between the two locations will be met from existing Asset Management budgets.

- 9.2 IT resources

IT staff resources will be deployed to deliver the relocation from Westminster House assisted as necessary by specialist external contractors.

- 9.3 Staffing – no implications arising directly from this report.

- 9.4 Asset management implications are dealt with in the body of the report.

## **10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

10.1 An appropriate agreement will be required to document the Council's occupation of part of Old Market House.

## **11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS**

11.1 None arising directly from this report.

11.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the overall office rationalisation programme. Detailed assessments will be undertaken in each case where teams are relocated.

## **12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS**

12.1 This move is one of several staff moves that will facilitate the vacation and disposal of Westminster House. Disposal of Westminster House will reduce the Council's CO2 emissions by 188 tonnes in 2011/12.

## **13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS**

13.1 None arising directly from this report.

**REPORT AUTHOR:**    **Ian Brand**  
                                  **Head of Asset Management**  
                                  telephone: 0151 691 8686  
                                  email: ianbrand@wirral.gov.uk

## **APPENDICES**

None

## **REFERENCE MATERIAL**

None.

## **SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)**

<b>Council Meeting</b>	<b>Date</b>
Cabinet – Office Rationalisation	25 November 2010

This page is intentionally left blank



By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank