

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW & SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 18 NOVEMBER 2010

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT

OFFICE RATIONALISATION UPDATE

1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 This report provides an update on the office rationalisation project.

2. Background

2.1 At its meeting on 21 September 2010 this Committee discussed the office rationalisation project and considered a report on Office Rationalisation that was to be submitted to Cabinet on 23 September 2010.

2.2 The Committee was made aware of interest from Wirral Partnership Homes (WPH) in the potential acquisition of Westminster House. WPH was conducting an option appraisal for its future office needs which was expected to be completed by 5 October 2010.

2.3 The Committee resolved that Cabinet be advised of its views:

- (a) That there should be an early resolution in relation to the future of Westminster House.
- (b) That urgent progress should be made in relation to agile working, in order to reduce the occupancy of buildings and to establish ways of working in communities to the benefit of local residents.

2.4 At its meeting on 23 September 2010 Cabinet resolved that:

- (1) The Director of Law, HR and Asset Management be authorised to discuss the potential sale of Westminster House with Wirral Partnership Homes and report to the Cabinet at the earliest opportunity the outcome of those discussions, and
- (2) In the event of Wirral Partnership Homes wishing to purchase Westminster House, the report back to Cabinet will include an evaluation by the Interim Director of Corporate Services of the environmental, economic and regeneration impacts of the two options set out in the report, together with a recommended approach, taking all the relevant factors into account.

3. Present Position

3.1 Following the Cabinet resolution, further discussions have been held with Wirral Partnership Homes who have indicated that the purchase of Westminster House is their preferred option. In accordance with the Cabinet resolution, it is intended to report to the Cabinet meeting on 25 November 2010; seeking approval to the terms of disposal; advising members of the impact of the disposal on the wider rationalisation

project; and seeking approval to further actions that will be required as a result of a decision to sell.

3.2 A report is currently being prepared for the Cabinet meeting on 25 November 2010 and when the agenda is published it will be available for this Committee to consider.

3.3 Cabinet on 23 September 2010 also approved a scheme and estimate report for the conversion of the former Pensby Park primary school to office accommodation for locality based staff from Children and Young People's Services, with the facility for 'touchdown' use by other staff working on an agile basis.

3.4 Other actions since the meeting of the Committee on 21 September have included:

- Assessment of options for relocation of staff following the disposal of Westminster house.
- The preparation of a scheme and estimate report for the refurbishment of the North and South Annexes.
- Consideration of options for the future use of other buildings within the scope of the project.

4. Financial implications

4.1 Detailed financial implications will be addressed in the Cabinet report to be circulated separately.

5. Staffing implications

5.1 All administrative staff will potentially be affected by the rationalisation of the Council's administrative estate and the implementation of new ways of working. A comprehensive communication strategy will be developed for the project.

5.3 Full engagement will take place with trades unions, and discussions have already begun on revised policies to support agile working.

6. Equal Opportunities/Equality Impact implications

6.1 An equality Impact Assessment has been completed for the overall rationalisation project. More detailed assessments will be undertaken as workplace changes are implemented. Refurbishment of existing accommodation and new build will allow the development of more accessible environments than exist in current accommodation.

7. Community Safety implications

7.1 None arising directly from this report.

8. Local Agenda 21 implications

8.1 None arising directly from this report.

9. Planning implications

9.1 None arising directly from this report.

10. Anti-poverty implications

10.1 None arising directly from this report.

11. Human Rights implications

11.1 None arising directly from this report.

12. Social Inclusion implications

12.1 None arising directly from this report.

13. Local Member Support implications

13.1 None arising directly from this report.

14. Background Papers

14.1 Report to Council Excellence Overview and Scrutiny Committee 21 September 2010
– Office Rationalisation.
Report to Cabinet 23 September 2010 – Office Rationalisation

15. Asset Management Implications

15.1 None arising directly from this report.

16. RECOMMENDATIONS

16.1 That the report be noted.

Bill Norman

Director of Law, HR and Asset Management