

WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

15 SEPTEMBER 2011

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| SUBJECT: | OFFICE RATIONALISATION UPDATE |
| WARD/S AFFECTED: | ALL WARDS |
| REPORT OF: | DIRECTOR OF LAW, HR AND ASSET MANAGEMENT |
| RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER: | COUNCILLOR ADRIAN JONES CORPORATE RESOURCES |
| KEY DECISION? | NO |

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 The purpose of this report is to update members on progress with the office rationalisation project and outline the proposed next steps.

2.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 To provide a basis for members to monitor progress on office rationalisation, which forms part of the Committee's work programme for 2011/12.

4.0 BACKGROUND AND KEY ISSUES

Phase 1

4.1 Previous updates to this Committee have identified a first phase of building closures comprising Westminster House, The Old Courthouse and administrative accommodation within the Willowtree facility. The position in respect of each of these is set out below.

4.2 Westminster House is vacant, cleared and ready for sale. At its meeting on 21 July 2011 Cabinet agreed amended terms and legal completion of the sale to Wirral Partnership Homes is expected shortly.

4.3 Suitable accommodation has now been identified in Moreton Municipal Building to relocate staff from the Old Courthouse. Occupiers include staff from multiple agencies, including Merseyside Police, with specific requirements for data handling and security. Detailed work will now be undertaken to implement the relocation.

- 4.4 Building works have been completed to convert the former Pensby Park Primary School (at the rear of the Children's Centre) into office accommodation. This will create flexible space for area-based staff and allow the relocation of CYPD staff currently based at Willowtree and in Moreton. It will also accommodate some area-based Adult Social Care staff and provide a 'touchdown' area for staff not based in the building. Staff will relocate to Pensby Park in phases.
- 4.5 A series of other smaller staff moves is in progress in the period from now to December that will improve operational efficiency, vacate space for staff from the Old Courthouse to move into and vacate Oakenholt Building and Esher House.

Phase 2

- 4.6 Occupancy figures and space per person for administrative buildings were reported to the Committee at its meeting on 12 July 2011. Those figures reflected the impact of staff leaving the Council through the recent voluntary retirement and severance exercise. They show that overall density of occupation has declined from 13.6 m² pp to 15.6 m² pp. However this under-occupation is spread across all buildings, and surplus space in any one area may be insufficient to accommodate a whole team or service. It is therefore important to re-use any larger areas of vacant space in a way that ultimately facilitates moving whole teams or services from buildings that can then be disposed of. Such a plan may involve a series of intermediate moves.
- 4.7 Previous reports have identified the vacation and closure of the following buildings as forming phase two of the office rationalisation project:
- Liscard Municipal Offices
 - Bebington Town Hall
 - Bebington Town Hall Annexe.
- 4.8 Detailed discussions will now take place with affected services, and in some cases these have already started. Some external partners will be affected, and where this is the case suitable alternative accommodation will be offered.
- 4.9 Even if the above buildings are vacated the overall density of occupation will remain substantially above the Council's previous target of 8.5 m² pp or the more ambitious targets for occupation in the EC Harris business case. Within Phase 2 of the project work is therefore under way to identify a further major building for vacation and new locations for the affected staff.
- 4.10 Options are now being developed for the potential relocation of the Acre Lane facility, and it is expected that these will be reported for consideration by Members in December 2011. Within those options re-use of both Bebington Town Hall and the Annexe will be considered. A brief is being developed to engage retained external consultants to assist in this. The potential to bring the Pennant House complex into use will also be explored.

4.11 Significant areas of currently available space that can facilitate the vacation of a major building are as follows:

| Building | No. of desks | Comments |
|----------------------|-----------------|--|
| All | To be confirmed | Under-used space is scattered across buildings. Services can `squash up`, but this will take time and IT resource and won't necessarily produce sufficient areas in which to fit teams or services. Service and management inefficiencies may arise from inappropriate sharing of space. |
| South Annexe | 100 | This space could be filled now, but gives the ability to move staff around within the Wallasey Complex to achieve reductions elsewhere. |
| Birkenhead Town Hall | 80 | Future use of building needs to be confirmed. Re-occupation of this building is important for the vitality of Hamilton Square. Lack of car parking is a major issue. |

4.12 Key to identifying a further major building for closure will be to determine future use and occupation within the Wallasey Complex, and maximise the use of available space. Accommodation is currently vacant within the South Annexe that was prepared in case a requirement arose to locate staff in that building in the vacation of Westminster House. This vacant space allows options to be developed in conjunction with

- the approved capital scheme to improve access and means of escape in Wallasey Town Hall, and
- the business case requested by Cabinet for works to the North Annexe.

4.13 A report will be prepared for Cabinet by November 2011 recommending a way forward. In respect of the Wallasey Complex currently identified next steps include:

- Implementation of the capital scheme for fire precaution and access works to Wallasey Town Hall. The estimated timescale for this is 1 year. A scheme and estimate report is anticipated to go to Cabinet in November with (subject to approval) the scheme out to tender in December.
- North Annexe Heating replacement – scheme to go out to tender in October.
- Business case for North Annexe refurbishment to be reported to Cabinet for approval in November.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

5.1 Risk management for office rationalisation takes place within the governance arrangements of the Strategic Change Programme.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Options for accommodation change are developed and considered within the Strategic Change programme.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 Consultation is an on-going process with services and staff affected by these proposals.

8.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 8.1 There are no implications in this report for voluntary, community or faith groups.

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

- 9.1 Financial - The rationalisation programme will proceed in line with available capital and revenue resources. The approved capital programme for 2011/12 allows for improvements to access and means of escape within Wallasey Town Hall, and for improvements to the North Annexe subject to approval of a business case.
- 9.2 IT Implications. Weekly meetings take place to coordinate the deployment of IT resources in support of office rationalisation
- 9.3 Staffing - none beyond those referred to in the body of this report
- 9.4 Asset Management implications are dealt with in the body of the report.

10.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

11.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for each building identified for closure

12.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 Closure of buildings will reduce the Council's CO2 emissions and contribute to the delivery of the Council's carbon budget.
- 12.2 Where appropriate, those buildings identified for retention will be included in the scheme that was approved by Cabinet on 1 September 2011 to fit solar PV panels to Council buildings.

13.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 There are no specific Planning and Community Safety implications associated with this report.

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APPENDICES

None

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

| Council Meeting | Date |
|--|--------------------------------------|
| Cabinet - Transforming Wirral - Strategic Asset Review | 15th January 2009 |
| Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation | 18th November 2010 |
| Cabinet - Office Rationalisation | 25th November 2010 |
| Cabinet - Capital Programme | 21st February 2011 |
| Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation and Agile Working | 31st January 2011 |
| Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation | 16th March 2011 |
| Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation | 12 July 2011 |