WIRRAL COUNCIL

COUNCIL EXCELLENCE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

17 NOVEMBER 2011

SUBJECT:	**OFFICE RATIONALISATION AND AGILE WORKING**
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 as to progress with the office rationalisation project and agile working.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

2.1 That Members note the contents of this report.

3.0 REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

3.1 The report provides a basis for Members to monitor progress on office rationalisation and agile working, which form part of the Committee's work programme for 2011/12.

4.0 OFFICE RATIONALISATION

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 The sale of Westminster House to Wirral Partnership Homes was completed on 28 October 2011, with a capital receipt of £1.025m. Net annual revenue savings are £264,000 after deducting the costs of occupying accommodation in Old Market House. The saving for 2011/12 will be £110,000 (apportioned to reflect the completion date part way through the year).

4.3 Detailed arrangements are now being made for the relocation of staff from The Old Courthouse. The majority of staff will move to Moreton Municipal Building, whilst Community Patrol staff who are currently in The Old Courthouse will move to Cheshire Lines and be based alongside the CCTV control room. The team is staffed on a multi agency basis, with members from Merseyside Police and the Probation Service. Relocation to Moreton will take account of their specific requirements (for example in respect of data management). The

vacated building will then be disposed of, with the timescale dependent upon the route chosen. A further update will be provided to Members in due course.

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 are due to move into Pensby Park from Moreton Municipal Building in November and from Willowtree in December.

4.5 A series of other smaller staff moves is continuing in the period from now to December that will improve operational efficiency and vacate Oakenholt Building and Esher House.

4.6 The second phase of the rationalisation project has identified Liscard Municipal Offices, Bebington Town Hall and Bebington Town Hall Annexe for vacation and closure. Discussions have started with affected services on options for relocating staff, and further updates will be given to the Committee in due course. A report is currently being prepared with options for the vacation of a further major building, and it is intended that this report will be considered by Cabinet on 8 December 2011.

4.7 The Committee has previously asked for a list of Council buildings that includes a breakdown of staff by department in each. Such a list is attached for information.

5.0 AGILE WORKING

5.1 The Committee has expressed interest in agile working and the following information is provided in response to specific questions that have been asked.

5.2 The Council has put in place policies to support agile and home working. These were considered by Employment and Appointments Committee on 27 January 2011 and are available to view on the intranet. They can be found using the following link –

http://wir06metrognome.admin.ad.wirral.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=197&MId=3083&Ver=4

5.3 The policies contain a standard corporate approach that applies to all departments. They recognise different types of workers; covering home working, mobile working and hot desking.

5.4 Work is in progress to identify all staff currently working in an agile manner and those individuals and teams with the potential to do so. Historically, agility has been taken forward on an ad-hoc basis, driven by service need or interest and with a number of agile working `pilots' in different departments. For this reason an average figure of space saving is unavailable. However, the recent move of DASS social care staff out of Westminster House to the Rock Ferry Centre showed the potential savings that can be achieved with a work force that is not

desk-based. With mobile technology and hot desking the space occupied per person roughly halved from some 7 sq.m. to 3.5 sq.m. It must be stressed that this team is one where staff work away from a fixed base for much of their time. Such space reduction would not be achievable in other areas which had a high proportion of desk based staff or requirements for specialist equipment and/or furniture.

5.5 The report to this Committee on 31 January 2011 explained some of the IT and resource issues in relation to developing agile working across the authority, and stated an intention to trial the deployment of a virtualised desktop infrastructure in an operational section with non-technical users. This would support the more effective use of agile working. It is intended to select an appropriate service area for such a trial in the next stage of rationalisation, when there is clarity as to the next sequence of staff moves.

5.6 The Committee has previously considered the possibility of a seminar on agile working for Members. It is suggested that this could be structured around IT issues to allow a better understanding of the potential benefits and limitations in this area. The Committee is asked to confirm whether it wishes such a seminar to be arranged and, if so, Members' views are requested as to the areas to be covered.

6.0 RELEVANT RISKS

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

7.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

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

8.0 CONSULTATION

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

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

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

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

10.1 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.

10.2 IT Implications. Weekly meetings take place to coordinate the deployment of IT resources in support of office rationalisation

10.3 Staffing – none beyond those referred to in the body of this report

10.4 Asset Management implications are dealt with in the body of the report.

11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

11.1 There are no specific legal implications associated with this report.

12.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

12.1 An Equality Impact Assessment will be completed for each building identified for closure. This will take account of the implications for staff and service users.

13.0 CARBON REDUCTION IMPLICATIONS

13.1 Closure of buildings will reduce the Council's CO_2 emissions and contribute to the delivery of the Council's carbon budget.

13.2 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.

14.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

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

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APPENDICES

Appendix – Departmental Staff within Buildings

REFERENCE MATERIAL

None

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet – Transforming Wirral – Strategic Asset Review	**15 January 2009**
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation	**18 November 2010**
Cabinet – Office Rationalisation	**25 November 2010**
Cabinet – Capital Programme	**21 February 2011**

Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation and Agile Working	**31 January 2011**
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation	**16 March 2011**
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation	**12 July 2011**
Council Excellence Overview & Scrutiny Committee Office Rationalisation Update	**15 September 2011**