

**TO: OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMISSION
21 NOVEMBER 2013**

**OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY PROGRESS REPORT
Director of Corporate Services**

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 In order to support the Council's medium term objective "to build a vibrant Town Centre that residents are proud of", the Council carried out considerable analysis of its current office buildings and customer access points and the requirements for its office accommodation. The result of this work was the Office Accommodation Strategy which was approved by the Executive in July 2011.
- 1.2 A number of key principles were developed by the Council to underpin this strategy including:
- Rationalising the amount of accommodation that the Council occupies;
 - Locating customer facing staff in the town centre;
 - Accommodation to be accessible and within the outer town centre ring-road;
 - Modernising customer service delivery and provide one point of contact for the public;
 - Locating the democratic function (Council Chamber and associated meeting/office space) in the town centre to enable public access;
 - Staff working within their service teams;
 - Staff working space allocation of approximately 1:8-9m²;
 - The adoption of flexible working practices for staff;
 - Sharing meeting space to reduce the Council's overall requirements.
- 1.3 In anticipation of new civic accommodation as part of the town centre redevelopment, the Council had deferred investment in any building maintenance and improvements within its town centre office accommodation for a number of years. Since it is now clear that new civic accommodation will not be possible in the foreseeable future, the Council has progressed these works with our existing buildings. As a result, work has been planned to contribute to achieving the principles established in the Accommodation Strategy.
- 1.4 This report outlines progress against the 2011 Strategy recommendations and provides an overview of the current status of the changes to services, working practices and the building estate. The Commission are asked to note progress and make comment.

2 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

The Office Accommodation Strategy approved in July 2011 included a number of recommendations. An update is provided against each of these.

2.1 Use of town centre office accommodation

The strategy set out a number of objectives for the use of the Council's office accommodation:

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- § Decommissioning of Seymour House
- § Space principles for office accommodation
- § Customer improvements
- § Efficiency improvements
- § Maintenance

2.1.1 Decommissioning of Seymour House

This building was required for the redevelopment of the town centre. It was initially envisaged that the building would be decommissioned by December 2012. Changes in the terms of the handover and delay in the regeneration programme resulted in staff vacating the building in March 2013 and the building was handed over to the Bracknell Regeneration Partnership (BRP) in August 2013. The BRP provided the opportunity to relocate staff temporarily from Seymour House to Ocean House for the duration of the works programme in Time Square. Seymour House is scheduled to be demolished in the first phase of the Northern Retail Quarter development by the end of November 2013 and the staff are expected to move into Time Square (TS) in May 2014.

2.1.2 Space principles for Office Accommodation

Time Square needs to accommodate 720 staff where previously it held 550. Since July 2012 work has been progressing to provide an environment where the number of desks required in the town centre offices can be reduced. All jobs in the town centre offices have been evaluated and classified as either fixed or flexible and the staff have been provided with the appropriate ICT kit to enable them to work in the most efficient way for the role. An extensive training programme underpinned the transition for those staff and teams who were identified as needing support.

As a result of the recent Public Services Network (PSN) code of connection requirements there will be a need to provide laptops for all who access the corporate network remotely. This additional work will be completed by mid December.

Space planning to reduce the number of desks in line with flexible working principles is being implemented in conjunction with the refurbishment of Time Square. Moves to shared desks are supported by providing personal storage lockers for staff who no longer have sole access to a desk. The desk ratio for flexible staff has been set at 5:4 and provide approximately 8-9m² per person.

Reduction in the need for storage space and the EDRMS project to increase electronic document storage is contributing to progress in this area. Further work to reduce desk numbers in other office buildings in the town centre will be incorporated into the final moves.

2.2 **Improvements for customers to civic buildings**

The consolidation of customer facing services in Time Square will be achieved at the end of the Time Square works programme.

2.2.1 Time Square Reception North

This is the main face to face customer contact point for the Council. Customer Services will be moving to Time Square in April 2014. During the period that CYPL are located in Ocean House all face to face customer contact has been transferred to Time

Square. The public meeting rooms continue to be available to customers who attend reception and require a confidential meeting with a Council officer. From June 2014 Time Square reception will provide support for the following additional services:

- § Registrars
- § Revenue Services
- § CYPL (Education teams)
- § Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities (CTPLD)

The Housing Benefits teams are currently trialling a new system to ensure their customers receive a reconfigured service. Work to ensure all customers receive easy access to the services they require in the public areas of Time Square is underway.

2.2.2 Use of the ground floor meeting rooms at Time Square South

Improvements to the suite of meeting rooms are planned as part of the works programme. There is a glass panel between room 3 and room 4. This room is used for child protection hearings and family conferences. The glass panel will be replaced by a wall to improve the soundproofing between these two meeting rooms. CTPLD will use room 1 South as their therapy room as outlined in the Accommodation Strategy.

2.2.3 Easthampstead House Reception

Once the ground floor has been vacated by Customer Services, the floor space to the west of the lifts and stairwell will be sealed off from the reception area. This will be converted to an office area and will be complete by the end of April 2014 as part of the whole Time Square refurbishment programme. Corporate ICT will move to Easthampstead House (EH) from Time Square 3 south to allow the final phase of the refurbishment and relocations in Time Square to be completed.

2.2.4 Registration service

Registrars who are currently on the 4th floor of Easthampstead House will be relocated to a purpose built section at the rear of the main Customer Services reception on Time Square ground floor north. The space has been designed to provide improved accommodation and access including a separate waiting area of a suitable size with better access for wheelchairs or wide pushchairs. This will be complete and the service in place by April 2014.

2.2.5 Democratic function

The Council Chamber is located in a large meeting room on the fourth floor of Easthampstead House. The furniture comprises of large rectangular desks which are difficult to move and therefore limit the flexibility to change layouts. In addition the size and shape of the room does not lend itself to any other layout than that currently in use. The room does not have a public gallery with the result that, at Council meetings, Members have their backs to visitors, who sit around the back of the room. It was recognised that improvements were required in order to improve the use of the Council Chamber, in particular, enabling the Council to move closer to its aspirations regarding quality of contact with customers.

The audio/visual equipment in the Chamber has been replaced with a mixture of wired and wireless microphones, two large plasma screens and two small screens on the dais. Presentations can be displayed on the screens by using the PC in the Chamber or a laptop. There are two laptop points, one at each end of the room, to provide more flexibility. The screens are also connected to Freeview. EH reception is linked to the equipment so that both sound and images used in meetings in the Chamber can also be displayed on the screen in EH reception.

The new sound system means members of the public are able to hear what is being discussed more clearly and to view presentations more easily. The Mayor can also manage Council meetings more effectively. Presentations/seminars/training sessions held in the Chamber will also be improved as a consequence.

The quality of lighting across the Chamber was variable and not energy efficient, therefore the lighting has been replaced and sensors are in place to ensure that the lighting is only activated when the Chamber is in use.

The Council Chamber also now has a drinks machine to provide refreshments.

2.3 Service Improvements

In line with the principles agreed in the strategy, the refurbishment of Time Square provides a standardised working environment so that regardless of which department is located on a floor the layout will be the same. This will provide considerable savings in the longer term when there will no longer be the need to move floor boxes to accommodate non standard floor/desk layouts.

The final plan is to provide the best co location of teams across and between floors in Time Square so that the directorates are working as closely together as possible and synergies can be realised. This is outlined in the table in Appendix A

With ICT moving to Easthampstead House this will bring most of the Corporate Support Services together in one building. There are further plans being developed to reconfigure Easthampstead House by early 2015. This will enable the Construction and Maintenance team, who are currently located in the Commercial Centre, to relocate to EH.

2.4 Operational Efficiency Improvements

Work on rationalisation and streamlining of support functions continues and the following changes have been delivered since 2011.

Post room: The service was consolidated from three post rooms to one post room and was temporarily housed on the vacant Time Square floor 1 north. The facilities for sorting and storing post were not fit for purpose so in January 2012 a new post sorting area was set up on 3 south. This freed up 1 north to enable the works programme to begin. The final location for the post room is on ground north and this will be complete by late March 2014.

Meeting rooms: Previously meeting rooms were managed at a local level and while this had benefits for some departments, there were inconsistencies in access to meeting room bookings. During 2012 the Council moved to a central booking system for all meeting rooms which is managed by Democratic Services. Refreshments for meetings are now administered locally and Flavia machines are located in the

kitchens of Time Square to provide refreshments for meetings. The changes to the layout in Time Square and general access to meeting rooms has created approximately 40% increase in the number of rooms available from 18 to 32 (of which 5 are public)

Combined Heat and Power (CHP): Research into this area showed CHP as uneconomic for Time Square therefore it was necessary to pursue options for alternative power supply for key infrastructure items such as the ICT server farm in the basement of Time Square. Currently there is no long term back-up power supply and, as a result, should Time Square lose power, all sites and remote workers are affected. Initial investigations looked at providing back-up just for the ICT elements in Time Square so in such an event, others could keep working. It has become clear that it is just as cost-effective to look at back-up power provision for the whole building. This greatly enhances our business continuity capacity and simplifies the overall solution. As a result Ridge are carrying out some detailed design work and the installation of an alternative power source will be added to the main contract under change control. This will not impact on the overall project time-scales.

2.5 Estate Efficiencies

2.5.1 Waymead

To enable the refurbishment and reconfiguration of services at Waymead, staff from Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities (CTPLD) were relocated to Amber House during March 2012 and Respite Care were relocated to Eastern Road during July 2012. The refurbishment of Waymead was completed during December 2012.

Staff from Day Care services and Respite Care were then relocated from Eastern Road into Waymead during January 2013. CTPLD staff from Amber House will move into Time Square during January 2014. Eastern Road was declared surplus to the requirements of ASCHH and handed to Corporate Property in January 2013. Alternative uses are currently being explored.

New Hope have successfully been relocated from their town centre premises on the Broadway to refurbished shop units in 16/17 Market Street in November 2012.

2.6 ICT Efficiencies

The Electronic Document Records Management System (EDRMS) project is ongoing with CYPL and ECC to help reduce the need for physical storage and improve business processes. A significant number of documents have been scanned onto existing EDRMS.

Printers and photocopiers – The majority of local printers have now been replaced with Multi Functional Devices (MFD) throughout the Council. These now have a secure print module and users now print to any MFD in the Council knowing the documents will remain securely on the printer until it is retrieved via a unique PIN number.

Meeting Room presentation and IT conferencing facilities – The new meeting rooms in Time Square have presented the opportunity for installing the capability for new technology. Four large meeting rooms in Time Square will have the capacity to support a display screen (similar to the Council Chamber), at some point in the future. A TV signal will also be made available to each screen. All meeting rooms

have telephones that allow conference calls.

2.7 Maintenance/Access Improvements

Time Square

The essential repairs and improvements to Time Square were specified in December 2011 along with the changes to the building and the works were tendered during 2012. These were roof and balcony works, boiler replacement, repairs to the window gaskets and water ingress. This should provide the building with a future life of at least 15 years. After a delay related to the regeneration timetable, the contract was awarded and work started in May 2013. The work is on target and on budget. The building remains occupied and fully operational throughout and is supported by flexible working practices and a business continuity centre in Easthampstead House.

Easthampstead House

Essential repairs were identified and prioritised as part of the condition survey. These were recognised as essential to keeping the building operational over the next 7 years. They include:

- § Replacement of the existing obsolete boilers and pumps for the heating system
- § Replacement of the cold water tank
- § The roof of the building has been repaired
- § Some toilets were identified as needing cosmetic repairs
- § Lighting in stairways has been upgraded

The work has been kept to a minimum as the future intentions is to vacate this building when the Town Centre regeneration is complete.

2.8 Other Service Improvements

Service needs for depot space

In anticipation of a new set of public realm contracts being in place by October 2014, the future accommodation requirements are currently at an early stage of development. The focus of activity is removing non depot services from the site (such as the Construction and Maintenance team) and ensuring only these services which require a depot site are based there. The intention ultimately is to release all or part of the current site for housing and consolidate the Council's depot requirements elsewhere.

2.9 Summary

2.9.1 The Accommodation Strategy outlined the way forward for managing the Council's town centre accommodation portfolio in the medium term and supporting the regeneration programme. There have been a number of significant changes since the original document was agreed including the source of funding for the Time Square works which has been met by the Council rather than BRP. Considerable progress has been made against the agreed recommendations.

2.9.2 The main purposes of the rationalisation programme were to:

- § Rationalise the amount of accommodation the council occupies
- § Locate customer facing staff in the town centre
- § Modernise customer service delivery

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- § Locate the democratic function in the town centre
- § Improve use of office space
- § Locate service teams together

These objectives will be met.

2.9.3 Work is progressing in Time Square (on target and on budget) and when complete in June 2014 will enable the Council to increase occupation in the building and reduce the town centre buildings from 4 to 2 providing the opportunity to make ongoing revenue savings.

2.9.4 Work on other aspects of the strategy have all progressed with most actions complete and timescales in place for all others which are supported by a business case. Delivery of all outstanding essential actions outlined in the 2011 strategy are planned to be complete within the next 18 -24 months.

3 EQUALITIES IMPACT ASSESSMENT

3.1 Already completed as part of the original Accommodation Audit.

4 STRATEGIC RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

4.1 N/A

5 ADVICE RECEIVED FROM STATUTORY AND OTHER OFFICERS

5.1 Chief Officer; Property

This progress report update complements the work of the Asset Management Group and encapsulates many of the principles that are behind the Corporate Asset Management Plan, which is currently being updated and will be implemented subject to due process over the next few months. The Corporate Asset Management plan is the overarching framework document to support the Council's policy in managing its property assets to deliver the Council's key stated objectives.

Background Papers

Office Accommodation Strategy 2011
Executive report April 2013

Contact for further information

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Time Square final locations of teams and services

	SOUTH	NORTH
Floor 4	ECC (Planning + Transport) Chief Officer: Planning	ECC (Environment + Public Protection) Chief Officer: EPP
Floor 3	CYPL (Ocean House) Director CYPL + Chief Officer	ECC (Transport Development) ECC (Performance + Resources) Director ECC + Chief Officer Leisure
Floor 2	CYPL Chief Officer: Childrens Social Care	CYPL Chief Officer: Strategy, Resources and Early Intervention
Floor 1	ASCH Includes CTPLD	ASCH Director ASCH&H Chief Officers ASCH&H
Ground	ECC (Leisure + Culture) Housing IT Duty Desks Chief Officer :Housing	Customer Services + Revenue Services Post and Facilities Web Team Registrars Chief Officer: Customer Services