



23 February 2015

Agenda Item: 6

**REPORT OF CORPORATE DIRECTOR, POLICY, PLANNING AND
CORPORATE SERVICES**

**WAYS OF WORKING CONSTRUCTION & REFURBISHMENT PROGRAMME:
PROGRESS UPDATE**

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide the Finance & Property Committee with a progress update on the Council's Ways of Working Construction and Refurbishment Programme.

Information and Advice

Background

2. On the 9th December 2010 the original Ways of Working business case was approved with the purpose "to rationalise the Council's office accommodation and provide a flexible, cost effective and efficient workplace that will facilitate improved service delivery and new working practices and maximise the benefit to service users and tax payers."
3. Following preliminary survey work on buildings and staffing levels, a revision to the original business case was approved by Council on the 3rd November 2011. This made the following changes to the original proposals:
 - Increase in the identified office portfolio from 23 buildings to 30 buildings
 - Number of sites to be disposed of increased from 18 to 22
 - Number of sites to be retained increased from 5 to 8
 - Demand for workstations increased from 2,569 to 3,161
 - Investment increase from £11.7m to £15.2m

Progress to Date

4. The Ways of Working (WoW) Programme is continuing to progress well and refurbishment works at Trent Bridge House were completed at the end of 2013. The refurbishment, building reconfiguration and move to flexible working arrangements have facilitated an initial occupancy increase of 54% (from 518 in 2011 to 802 based on an average desk to person ratio of 7:10).

The team are intending to undertake a post occupancy review on the building to assess desk ratios and accommodation requirements, with a view to releasing surplus space for further teams to relocate into; it is envisaged this surplus space will be available due to ongoing restructuring of the teams currently accommodated.

County Hall Programme

5. Refurbishment works are continuing at County Hall in H Block. Environment & Resources (E & R) and Adults Social Care (ASC) employees totalling 165 have been in situ on floor 4 since July 2013. ASC teams agreed that the new office environment has the potential to enable them to work more effectively (65%) with both teams agreeing that team neighbourhoods have the potential to improve communications and team working (ASC: 86%; E&R: 59%).
6. Floor 3 has been occupied since May 2014, with 330 staff from across ASC, Public Health and Children, Families and Cultural Services (CFCS) being relocated in the first instance onto 264 desks. A further 19 staff have since moved onto the floor, creating a 6.8:10 occupation ratio. Comments received about the move and the new environment include: *'It has been a well planned and supported project. The office environment is very much improved compared to the CLASP block, and enhances the potential for joint working within the team and with other teams. Overall, my team overwhelmingly feel the move to Floor 3 has been a positive one'*.
7. Works to the Ground Floor have also been completed; as of October 2014 ICT are occupying Bridgford North wing with 66 staff working to 51 desks, creating a ratio of 7.7:10.
8. Works to Bridgford South wing were completed in November. The area is being prepared for reoccupation; it is intended in the long term that this will accommodate Facilities Management and provide an additional suite of publicly accessible meeting rooms.
9. Corporate Complaints took occupation of the northern end of the central wing in September; Registrars have been well established in the public-facing areas near Reception since March 2014. Feedback on their move included *'As a wheelchair user I am finding it much better being located on the ground floor especially as I no longer have to work from another office...'*.
10. Refurbishment of floor 1 was completed in September 2014, with Communications and Marketing reoccupying their former location in Riverside North wing in October. Due to the nature of their work they decided to adopt a lower person to desk ratio of 6.8:10 which has allowed them to incorporate some interactive, team working areas within their floor layout. This has been supported by the inclusion of ICT equipment and audio visual technology which will allow the team to monitor media and social networking information more readily. The layout also includes some standing height touchdown facilities designed for use with tablet or mobile devices, in preparation for the mobilisation strategy.
11. As of November 2014, Planning Group returned to their previous location in Bridgford North wing, enabling the release of Rushcliffe Civic Centre from the property portfolio.
12. Democratic Services have now been relocated to Riverside North wing from their

temporary position on floor 3, to enable them to support the Councillors more efficiently.

13. Refurbishment of the Chamber and Assembly Rooms was completed in December 2014 and these are fully operational once again. Increased revenue is anticipated from external room hire of the public areas following limited aesthetic improvements. Audio visual equipment is to be installed within the Assembly Rooms and Chamber to improve sound and vision during Council and Committee meetings.
14. Demolition work has commenced on floor 2; asbestos removal started on 24th November and was due to continue until the end of February 2015; however the further identification of asbestos within the floor void has resulted in this phase being extended by 10 weeks until Easter. The current programme demonstrates that the refurbishment will continue throughout summer and the contractor is due to complete at the end of September, with reoccupation anticipated during October 2015. Future occupants of this floor will be CLT and the office of the Chief Executive (Riverside North wing); Legal Services (Bridgford North wing); the Corporate Strategy Group, including Policy, Performance & Research and Economic Development; and the Transformation Team.
15. The asbestos contractors on site are highly diligent and during the longevity of the programme there have been no incidents whereby any occupant of the building has been put at risk due to the asbestos removal works. A safe method of working is agreed prior to any piece of removals works being implemented and control measures are checked before any works commence. The enclosures erected to facilitate safe removal of contaminated materials, and the air around them, are periodically tested on a daily basis to ensure there is no risk of exposure to persons in the building.

Supplementary Works

16. A light- touch refurbishment has been carried out to the Riverside block during the summer of 2014 in order to increase the accommodation on floor 1 for ICT staff, now totalling 42. The ground floor, whilst not suitable for permanent accommodation, has been reconfigured in order to provide a project space for ICT where they can hold meetings, workshops, design and build sessions and have an interactive area to encourage innovation.
17. Reconfiguration and light-touch refurbishment is being progressed until early February in order to accommodate Solutions for Data and the central mail room in to the lower ground floor. A new kitchenette has been installed which is Equalities Act compliant in order to accommodate supported employment teams.
18. A small work package has been scoped out for the Data Centre to transform it into flexible office space; surveying is currently under way to establish the feasibility of progressing with this work. It is anticipated that a decision will be made by the end of February as to whether this will proceed. If the works take place, there is likely to be a subsequent piece of work undertaken by Property to upgrade the heating and cooling in the property.
19. The drainage soil stack replacement programme is progressing with stacks 2, 7 and 8 completed. A redesign of stacks 3 and 6 is currently in progress to take into account amended routings identified following asbestos strip-out on floor 2, plus existing drainage issues that require resolution. Drainage works will recommence at night once asbestos

removal is completed on floor 2 in Easter and will be complete prior to the H block refurbishment finishing.

20. The Health & Safety Executive visited site in December 2014 with no major items identified for action. Several minor items were identified to be addressed, such as a section of hoarding that required disassembly, and rubber coverings to electrics that had started to perish. All items identified were promptly addressed by the contractor and no issues are currently outstanding.

Financial Status

21. Thoroton Road was vacated as of January 2015 and handed over to Property for sale. Revenue savings from its vacation are estimated at £47K per annum. The property was auctioned on 29th January 2015, realising a sum of £384k.
22. Centenary House has been vacant since July 2013 and is being marketed; anticipated capital receipts are £1.3M.
23. The temporary floor space in Rushcliffe Civic Centre has been vacated and the lease ceased; the revenue savings from release are £33K per annum.
24. Baldertongate was returned to Newark & Sherwood District Council in December 2014; revenue savings made from vacating this property are £168K per annum.
25. The financial status of the programme remains within the anticipated £15.2M window at this time; this includes an estimated £215K increase due to the discovery of additional asbestos on floor 2.

CONCLUSION

26. In summary, the Ways of Working Programme is progressing in the same manner that it has continued to do so over the course of the last three years: the programme is well defined and the end product meets the quality expected. Local variations are being made to the scope of the works as discrete work packages are undertaken, however this is to be expected in a programme of this nature, scale and complexity. The volume of asbestos found in the properties being refurbished remains the primary issue, and is the sole reason for the overall programme slippage.

RECOMMENDATION/S

27. That Finance & Property Committee notes the content of the report

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For any enquiries about this report please contact: Jayne Francis-Ward Corporate Director for Policy, Planning & Corporate Services (0115 977 3478)

Financial Comments (GB 26/01/15)

There are no specific financial implications arising directly from this report.

Background Papers and Published Documents

None

Electoral Divisions and Members affected

All