

Date of issue: 2nd July 2013

MEETING	EMPLOYMENT & APPEALS COMMITTEE (Councillors Rasib (Chair), Plenty, Brooker, Chohan, Coad, Davis, A S Dhaliwal, S K Dhaliwal and Sharif)
DATE AND TIME:	WEDNESDAY, 10TH JULY, 2013 AT 6.30 PM
VENUE:	MEETING ROOM 2, CHALVEY COMMUNITY CENTRE, THE GREEN, CHALVEY, SLOUGH, SL1 2SP
DEMOCRATIC SERVICES OFFICER: (for all enquiries)	GREG O'BRIEN 01753 875013

NOTICE OF MEETING

You are requested to attend the above Special Meeting at the time and date indicated to deal with the business set out in the following agenda.



RUTH BAGLEY
Chief Executive

AGENDA

PART 1

<u>AGENDA ITEM</u>	<u>REPORT TITLE</u>	<u>PAGE</u>	<u>WARD</u>
	Apologies for absence.		
	CONSTITUTIONAL MATTERS		
1.	Declarations of Interest		

AGENDA
ITEM

REPORT TITLE

PAGE

WARD

All Members who believe they have a Disclosable Pecuniary or other Pecuniary or non pecuniary Interest in any matter to be considered at the meeting must declare that interest and, having regard to the circumstances described in Section 3 paragraphs 3.25 – 3.27 of the Councillors' Code of Conduct, leave the meeting while the matter is discussed, save for exercising any right to speak in accordance with Paragraph 3.28 of the Code.

The Chair will ask Members to confirm that they do not have a declarable interest.

All Members making a declaration will be required to complete a Declaration of Interests at Meetings form detailing the nature of their interest.

2. Minutes of the Meeting held on 6th June 2013 1 - 6

SERVICE IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

3. Accommodation Strategy - Works at St Martin's Place 7 - 12
4. Date of Next Meeting - 12th September 2013

Press and Public

You are welcome to attend this meeting which is open to the press and public, as an observer. You will however be asked to leave before the Committee considers any items in the Part II agenda. Special facilities may be made available for disabled or non-English speaking persons. Please contact the Democratic Services Officer shown above for further details.

Employment & Appeals Committee – Meeting held on Thursday, 6th June, 2013.

Present:- Councillors Rasib (Chair), Plenty (Vice-Chair), Brooker, Chohan (left at 7.40pm), Coad, Davis, A S Dhaliwal, S K Dhaliwal and Sharif

PART 1

4. Declarations of Interest

None were declared.

5. Minutes of the Meeting held on 3rd April 2013 and the Special meeting held on 16th May 2013

Resolved – That the minutes of the meeting held on 3rd April 2013 and the special meeting of the Committee held on 16th May 2013 be approved as a correct record.

In answer to a question regarding minute 30 (Use of Suspensions) the Committee was informed that CMT had considered a report about the process and criteria applied leading up to suspension. Further information had been requested and another report would be made to CMT in the next 2/3 weeks.

A request was made that consideration be given to holding meetings of the Committee at an alternative location, subject to further investigation of suitable venues.

6. Accommodation and Flexible Working

The Committee considered a report about accommodation and flexible working as part of the accommodation strategy, with an oral update on the work due to be carried out at St Martins Place (SMP). The report detailed actions and progress in relation to:

- Document scanning and secure accessible storage
- Developing suitable, flexible accommodation
- Developing community hubs with drop in and log on facilities
- Extending flexible working

The programme of work at SMP to refurbish/ replace the air conditioning, wiring and IT cabling was outlined, which would require the evacuation of staff from a floor of each wing of the building for a temporary period. This would go hand in hand with the overall work plan to redesign the layout of the accommodation at SMP with new office furniture to fit the current and future needs for the most appropriate location of staff in relation to their customers and optimise the use of space. The Committee was shown two indicative floor plans for SMP showing existing and proposed layouts which illustrated the use of smaller desks (now possible since introduction of compact flat

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screen PCs), reduced file storage (given the increased use of document scanning) and additional meeting rooms and break-out areas. The plans also showed new space designated for hot desks and a 'touch down' area.

Redecoration and refurbishment of space at Landmark Place was currently in progress which when complete would allow the transfer of Housing staff from The Centre. Office space vacated at The Centre would be used for the staff temporarily decanted from SMP during the works there.

The Committee was concerned about the effect of the proposed changes on general staff welfare. It was felt that there were a number of questions which remained unanswered together with a number of matters on which further explanation and assurance was sought. In summary these were:

- The original strategy of the Council on moving to SMP (ie short / medium term, temporary /permanent).
- The Health and Safety space standards for staff and how the proposed new desks/seating arrangements comply.
- How old are the existing desks and what is the cost of the replacement furniture?
- Details of the numbers of additional desks, numbers of staff who can be accommodated, the number and allocation of hot desks.
- The impact of change/moving on staff and the measures being put in place to deal with stress and other issues arising.
- The total cost of the works at SMP, the business case and the alternatives considered.

The Committee noted the consultations already carried out with staff but considered there were lessons to be learned from local companies who had gone through a similar process.

Resolved – to RECOMMEND the Cabinet that no further work at St Martin's Place be undertaken on the accommodation strategy until the Director of Customer and Community Services has reported to Employment and Appeals Committee to answer members' concerns about the effects of the proposals on staff.

7. Temporary Agency Staff - Progress on Implementation and Baseline Monitoring

The Committee considered a progress report on the contract with Matrix SCM to supply Temporary Agency staff for the Council, which had been in operation since January 2013.

The implementation of the new contract had a savings target for 2013/14 of £250,000. Expenditure on agency staff from 6th January to 28th April 2013 amounted to £1,930,548, meaning there would be a saving of £90,459 under the formula agreed with Matrix.

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It was noted that 69% of the workers from the 123 agencies now signed up with Matrix were travelling less than 10 miles to their work location. Also, since the last progress report the total number of agency staff in place had decreased from 137 to 95. These numbers were based on the temporary staff employed via the full approval process. Those employed via the short term/urgent process were separately recorded but these had also decreased. The Committee noted there were also temporary staff engaged 'off-contract', where because of recruitment difficulties staff had been employed direct without reference to Matrix.

An appendix to the report provided a breakdown of the number of temporary staff per Directorate, together with their roles and a commentary as to their usage. It was noted that owing to a number of internal restructurings taking place, there was a tendency to use a greater number of temps. However, if a temp was taken onto permanent staff, no finders fee became payable under the contract.

The Committee noted ongoing progress and identified a number of areas where further data would be helpful.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the following information be included in the next progress report:
 - How many Agency staff live within 5 miles of their place of work or are resident in SL1 to SL3 post code areas;
 - What is the extent of the off-contract spend on temporary staff;
 - How many consultants or interims are engaged by the Council currently; and
 - How many sessional workers are engaged and where are they used.

8. Reducing Sickness Absence Performance Update

The Committee considered a report with an update on progress of reducing the Council's sickness absence.

There had been a significant decrease in the average full time equivalent (FTE) days lost per month since introduction of the new sickness absence policy compared with the equivalent month in the previous year. For instance, the March 2013 average FTE absence reported 0.3 days compared to 1.2 days in March 2012. The early indication was that the Council was well on its way to achieving the overall target reduction to 6 days per FTE by 2014/15.

The report also contained the sickness balanced scorecard showing numbers (and percentage) of staff per Directorate at each stage set down in the absence policy during the six month period to February 2013. This also showed numbers of staff referred to Occupational Health, together with the

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small number who had failed to attend a booked appointment. It was noted that in cases where depression was a cause of absence, early assistance was sought from Occupational Health and the Counselling service.

The Committee noted that an internal audit review of the new sickness reporting processes had resulted in a favourable report.

Resolved –

- (a) That the report be noted.
- (b) That the next progress report include the numbers (and percentage) of staff on long term sickness.

9. Update on Wellbeing Strategy

The Committee received an update on the staff initiatives introduced to support the Wellbeing agenda as part of the wider Workforce Strategy.

The initiatives included a Healthy Eating Campaign day due to take place on 12th June 2013 at which there would be taster sessions, information on food labelling, knowing your portions, and alcohol awareness, together with a fun quiz and a survey. Also planned was an initiative called “Pace along with your Pedometer” being organised in conjunction with the British Heart Foundation. This was due to begin on 1st July, last for one month and comprise teams of five with each team member issued with a pedometer. Various locations would be identified in Slough where participants could “clock up” the miles. A team of Councillors was suggested and Cllrs Coad, A Dhaliwal, S K Dhaliwal, Rasib and Sharif volunteered to take part.

Further initiatives still in the planning stage were a ‘Tour de Slough’ to link with promotion of the Council’s salary sacrifice scheme to purchase a bike, a health MOT and a piece of work around stress contributors.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

10. Work Programme 2013/14

The Committee received a proposed work programme for 2013/14 reflecting the main priorities for the coming year.

The programme had been designed to support initiatives in the workforce strategy and was built around regular updates about sickness absence and the Temporary Agency Staff contract, with periodic reports about other topics within the scope of the Committee.

Resolved – That the work programme be approved, subject to the addition of a report on suspensions and disciplinary cases at the year end.

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11. Members' Attendance 2012/13

The Committee received a report setting out Members' attendance over the past year.

Resolved – That the report be noted.

12. Date of Next Meeting

The date of the next meeting was confirmed as 12th September 2013.

Chair

(Note: The Meeting opened at 6.30 pm and closed at 8.38 pm)

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SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee **DATE:** 10th July 2013

CONTACT OFFICER: Roger Parkin, Director of Customer & Community Services
(For all enquiries) (01753) 875207

WARD(S): All

PART I
FOR COMMENT & CONSIDERATION

ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY – WORKS AT ST MARTIN’S PLACE

1. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to respond to matter raised by the Employment and Appeals Committee at its meeting on 6th June 2013.

2. Recommendations

Permit the Accommodation Board to continue with works at St Martin’s Place following satisfaction that members’ concerns have been adequately addressed.

3. Corporate Plan Priorities

- Develop new ways of working
- Develop a skilled and capable workforce
- Achieve value for money

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

The financial implications of the Accommodation Strategy have been reported previously.

(b) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

There are no direct Human Rights Act implications arising from this report.

5. Accommodation and Flexible Working

5.1 The Employment and Appeals Committee considered a report at its meeting on 6th June 2013 about accommodation and flexible working, with particular reference to the work due to be carried out at St Martins Place (SMP). The report detailed actions and progress in relation to:

- Document scanning and secure accessible storage
- Developing suitable, flexible accommodation
- Developing community hubs with drop in and log on facilities
- Extending flexible working

5.2 An oral update was made to the Committee on the programme of work at SMP to refurbish/ replace the air conditioning, wiring and IT cabling, which would require the evacuation of staff from a floor of each wing of the building for a temporary period. This would go hand in hand with the overall work plan to redesign the layout of the accommodation at SMP with new office furniture to fit the current and future needs for the most appropriate location of staff in relation to their customers and optimise the use of space.

5.2 Having noted the report, the Committee considered that there were a number of questions which remained unanswered together with a number of matters on which further explanation and assurance was sought. These are addressed below:-

5.2.1 The original strategy of the Council on moving to SMP

The Freehold of St. Martins Place has always belonged to the Council. In April 1990 the land was let to Kestrel Properties for a term of 999 years. Kestrel built St. Martins Place. As part of the Lease agreement SBC was entitled to 38% of rental income from St. Martins Place.

The Lease was assigned/sold to Capital & Counties at some point.

SBC took Leases of 5 of the 6 floors in 2007 and then brought back the Leasehold interest from Capital and Counties in March 2009. This decision was taken as the council needed to relocate staff out of the Town Hall and was able to negotiate a good deal. It was anticipated that the council would occupy St Martins Place as their new head quarters for a short/medium term while the development of the Heart of Slough proceed, with a desire for the new offices to eventually be located with the Curve.

The Town Hall eventually closed in 2011 and all remaining staff were transferred to SMP and The Centre, Farnham Road.

Economic factors have now influenced changes to the council's accommodation strategy, resulting in the council's decision to remain at SMP for the next 7-10 years. Therefore the council needs to invest capital to enhance the buildings standard to ensure compliance with Health & Safety regulations, respond to service changes and upgrade/replace the aged mechanical and electrical equipment at SMP, which parts are unobtainable to maintain operations and respond to break downs.

The decision to invest in furniture to better utilise space and re-do layouts to respond to service changes, should be undertaken in line with the mechanical & electrical upgrade as offices will need to be completely decanted to carry out these essential works. Therefore rather than review furniture in the future, it makes financial sense to implement changes in line with this project. It is also anticipated that due to the age of the existing furniture, it is unlikely to remain intact after further moves.

5.2.2 Health and Safety space standards and how the proposed new desks/seating arrangements comply

New proposed layouts are being put together in conjunction with all services, assessing their future accommodation requirements and therefore space planning is being based around their service needs.

The Facilities & Corporate Services Manager is working closely with Building Control and Health & Safety Officers to ensure that all layouts are constructed in compliance with Health & Safety and Building Regulations. She will also be initiating a Fire Strategy which will ensure that an up to date Fire Risk Assessment of the building is carried out and that the Buildings Fire Evacuation Procedure reflect building layout changes and therefore advice staff accordingly. Training and briefings will also be held for staff, so they understand any changes to the existing procedures.

The proposed layouts provide one person between 10 – 14 cubic square metres, depending on location. These measurements have been forwarded to Health & Safety Officers, along with proposed layout and no issues have been raised. If the council wishes to increase this measurement, there is flexibility to do so by removing desks which have been allocated for desk sharing. Future Space allocation per person will give officers the same and in some areas more distance between desks.

5.2.3 Age of existing desks and cost of replacement

The existing furniture is 10+ years old. It was originally purchased to accommodate the traditional wide visual display units. Since, technology has developed and therefore we are using slimmer and smaller PCs requiring less desk space. Therefore we can now better utilise our office space by investing in more modern and effective furniture.

Cost of replacing furniture at SMP will be about £360,000 over a 2 year period.

5.2.4 Desks & additional Facilities Details

IMPROVMENTS / ADDITIONAL	BENEFITS
14 more meeting rooms	Easier to hold meetings/1 to 1s. Free up canteen space.
6 more meeting rooms for Social Services Clients and Staff	Reduce requirement to discuss issues in reception or open office space. Also enable staff supervisions to be done more easily.
18 Break Out Areas	More space for confidential calls/working as well as a quick chat with a member of staff.
About 78 extra desks Present Number of Desks – 794 Future Number of Desk - 872	78 more than at present throughout the building (enabled more desk sharing).
About 86 Flexible Working/Desk Sharing	Enable more flexible working.
Quiet Working/ELearning Suite/Annual Elections	Booths for staff to work away from their desk to undertake online training or just work away from the open office.
Improved Shower Facility	Enhance DDA compliance, encourage staff to cycle and walk to Work
Enhance Reception Facilities	Security of the building and reception staff

5.2.5 Impact of change/moving on staff and measures to deal with stress/issues

It is anticipated that this project will have a positive effect on staff as we are responding to staff feedback with the following benefits:-

- Increase Fresh Air Capacity & enhance Climate Control, while also meeting requirements of new layouts. This will provide staff with a better working environment which provides suitable temperature control.
- Provide staff with more private meeting space, which is in great demand especially for our social services staff.
- Enhance building and staff security by redesigning the reception area, while also providing better meeting/waiting facilities for customers who may be visiting the council offices to address sensitive matters.
- Create more flexible working opportunities for our staff so that their time is used more effectively and therefore increase productivity. Also improve staff morale, commitment & motivation by offering different flexible working options, while also responding to their feedback.

Staff will be kept fully informed throughout the process via briefings and electronic information. An electronic notice board has already been set up and will be developed where staff FAQs can be posted. Facilities Management will also work closely with Communications in ensuring regular updates are circulated to staff. Staff will be given the opportunity to post anonymous questions and as with previous phases, Facilities Management will continue to offer presence at staff team meetings to address any issues/concerns.

The drafted proposed layouts have already taken into account feedback received from officers.

Once the project commences, the board will work with the HR team to agree any further facilities that can be offered to staff to address stress, including the employee counselling service which is already available.

5.2.6 Total cost of the works at SMP, Business case and Alternatives

The Business Case for this project has gone to the Capital Asset Management Board. To date it is anticipated that the following capital investment will be required over a 2 year period:-

Furniture – About £360,000 to upgrade SMP Furniture

Building Works –TBC, Plans being finalised

Mechanical & Electrical Upgrade - £1.2 Million

IT Infrastructure Upgrade Costs - £500,000

Archive - £350,000

DIP - £150,000

5.2.6.1 Options Considered and Impact

- **Do Nothing** – Increasing staff complaints due to restrictions on service delivery and office environment temperatures. Risk of SMP emergency closure if boilers or chillers fail. Continue with poor practices preventing staff from maintaining regular confidential one to one meetings, especially Social Services staff who are all required to have regular supervision meetings.
- **Retain Existing furniture** – Ineffective use of space, ongoing maintenance costs due to age of existing furniture (10+ years), especially where manoeuvring of furniture is required. Unable to build additional meeting rooms, confidential working space, enhance desk sharing etc.
- **Relocate Offices** – Costly as building will be leased not owned. This option will take time to explore and implement, by which time the SMP mechanical and electrical may fail and parts be unobtainable. Furniture costs would still be required.
- **LMP – Continue to under utilise site** – Inefficient use of public money. Early termination = very high costs for council including dilapidation costs. Lease until May 2020.

6. Conclusion

The board believes that this report responds to matters raised by the Committee and provides suitable justification for proceeding with this project.

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