

## **SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**REPORT TO:** Employment & Appeals Committee **DATE:** 3rd April 2013

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**WARD(S):** All

### **PART I**

#### **FOR INFORMATION & COMMENT**

#### **ACCOMMODATION & FLEXIBLE WORKING**

1. **Purpose of Report**

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the aims and objectives of the accommodation strategy; as part of the Accommodation Strategy new flexible ways of working ways will also be explored.

2. **Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action**

The Committee is requested to note the report.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

The relevant Sustainable Community Strategy priorities are:

- **Celebrating Diversity, Enabling inclusion** - There will be greater equality for staff and service users.
- **Adding years to Life and Life to years** - Staff will have a greater work life balance through flexible/mobile working options.
- **Being Safe, Feeling Safe** - Staff and customers will be received or visited for council services in safe and easily accessible locations.
- **A Cleaner, Greener place to live, Work and Play** - The project will deliver better remote access to staff, thus reducing carbon emissions relating to staff commuting to work or returning back to the office at the end of the day.

#### 4. **Other Implications**

##### (a) Financial

Budgets to support the Accommodation Strategy have been approved for the next financial year 2013/14.

##### (b) Risk Management

There no risks arising from the project at this point in time as it is still at the planning stage.

##### (c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal

There are no Human Rights implications at this point in time.

##### (d) Equalities Impact Assessment

Due to be carried out as part of the project post go live in the 01 April

##### (e) Workforce

A number of staff briefings have already taken place, further dates to be agreed.

#### 5. **Supporting Information**

5.1 This initiative has become a Gold Project and as such monthly monitoring reports will be provided to CMT and Members.

5.2 As part of their planning, the project team have identified some key actions which will support the successful delivery of the project and enable the rationalising of assets and the introduction of new, flexible ways of working. The following work streams have been identified:

- Document Scanning & Secure Accessible Storage
- Developing Suitable, Flexible Accommodation
- Community Hubs
- Communications

##### **Document Scanning & Secure Storage**

5.3 In order to offer staff greater flexibility, security in document storage and ensure Slough works harder towards becoming more environmentally friendly there is a clear business justification and need to invest in a corporate Document Image Processing (DIP) system. The project team recognises some positive adoption of DIP scanning within some services and teams; however this has not been consistently adopted across the organisation. Reasons for this range from some sections being on an out of date, no longer supported version of DIP, to concerns over security and a general lack of awareness of its benefits.

5.4 Agreement has already been reached for an upgrade to take place so that all parts of the organisation are on the same version of DIP. Plans will be put in place for this work to start once the year end processing has been completed.

A programme of work is being pulled together which will schedule the rollout of DIP to different service areas based on the timing of their accommodation moves. Additional resource will be required to work with service areas up front to organise and prepare files for the scanning process. Members of the programme team will work with the service areas in advance of this so that necessary categories, file structures and key search fields can be defined to aid effective search and retrieval of the scanned documents, in parallel we will be expanding our electronic storage capacity to facilitate this additional work.

- 5.5 We are also in the process of recruiting to the new Information Governance and Records Manager posts, who will be tasked with implementing retention and disposal schedules across the council which will help greatly with the volume of paper records currently being stored.

### **Developing Suitable, Flexible Accommodation**

- 5.6 The main corporate building for Slough Borough Council for the next 5 – 10 years will be St Martins Place (SMP), and there is an intention to optimise the use of space here so that additional teams can be moved in.
- 5.7 The project team will manage the upgrade work required to the SMP air conditioning system. This will be co-ordinated by project members from the Property and Facilities teams and may mean that some teams are temporarily relocated to other sites such as The Centre or Landmark Place while the work is being completed in each wing. Proposed dates for starting the air conditioning works at SMP are round June this year subject to tenders being awarded, however the budgets for the works have been approved.
- 5.8 The wider plans for the space planning mean there will also be an opportunity for the project team to redesign the layout and usage of space at SMP, making more meeting space and more user friendly, flexible and functional space.

### **Community Hubs**

- 5.9 There are number of key Community Hubs located around Slough targeting services at residents locally based. As use of space is redesigned at St Martin's Place there is a positive opportunity to allow staff who offer community based services to be remotely located at the various Community Hubs. It is envisaged the hubs would offer staff a drop in and logon facility as opposed to a permanent location. This would enable more staff to be available to meet service users, clients, and suppliers within the community. IT requirements such as Citrix logins, laptops, Wi-Fi etc will be co-ordinated by the IT lead on the project team to ensure staff use the Community Hubs in an appropriate, secure and flexible way.
- 5.10 In order to measure the viability and success of the project, the programme board has recommended a phased approach to flexible working within the Community hubs be piloted. Chalvey Community Centre will be the first to be trialled. Four permanent pcs will be made available for use by a team/service to be agreed at CMT level. These teams/services could be from the Community Wardens, Environment Health, Social Care or Planning teams.

### **Communications**

- 5.11 The project team has representation from the Communications team who will lead the Communications Strategy / Plan, ensuring all staff and where appropriate service users are kept informed of the changes. So far a number of staff briefings have already taken place on the aims of the Accommodation and Flexible Working project, which has now been listed as a gold project. There is also a blog / comments board set up for staff on the internal intranet. This will be used as a mechanism to support all staff feedback to ensure there is regular, detailed consultation and communication with staff.

### **Flexible Working**

- 5.12 An interim home working/desk sharing scheme has been in place since April 2008. This set out categories of home working and health and safety, equipment and other practical issues. Home working is currently used by some services but this tends to be inconsistent – often the determining factor is a manager's view.

Since the scheme was agreed home working has become more common across a range of employers including the public sector. For the organisation there are a range of benefits:

- Reduces overheads (e.g. accommodation and car parking)
- Increases productivity and quality of service, through increased efficiency and accuracy
- Improves staff morale, commitment and motivation
- Helps recruit and retain skilled employees, because of the flexibility offered, including disabled employees (and many employees are increasingly expecting this flexibility)
- Contributes to environmental benefits, e.g. by reducing commuting (linking to current work to reduce congestion in the borough)
- Extending flexible working practices could make services / information available to customers outside of the normal working day.

## **6. Comments of Other Committees**

No other Committee's comments are required at this point.

## **7. Conclusion**

The project has a number of different and interdependent work streams, however buy-in from all levels will be critical to the success of the Accommodation & Flexible working project which should result in cost reductions, an improvement in service delivery models and greater flexibility to staff and customers.

## **8. Appendices Attached**

None

## **9. Background Papers**

None