

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee **DATE:** 6th June 2013

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PART I

FOR INFORMATION & COMMENT

ACCOMMODATION & FLEXIBLE WORKING

1. **Purpose of Report**

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

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

The Committee is requested to note the report.

3. **Community Strategy Priorities**

State how the report links/contributes to the emerging priorities in the Community Strategy:

- **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 working conditions and greater remote access to staff, resulting in flexibility.
- **Prosperity for All** - The project will deliver new technologies and ways of working.

4. **Other Implications**

(a) Financial

The budget for the Accommodation is awaiting approval for the next financial year.

(b) Risk Management

There no risks arising from this report for information only

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal

There are no Human Rights implications

(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 consultations have already taken place, further dates to be agreed.

5. **Supporting Information**

This will now become a Gold Project and as such monthly monitoring reports will be provided to CMT.

On a deliverable level the project team have identified some key actions which will support the successful delivery of the project to support rationalising of assets and new, flexible ways to working this include the following work streams:

- DIP W2 Document Scanning & Secure Accessible Storage
- Developing Suitable, Flexible Accommodation
- Community Hubs
- Communications

DIP W2 Scanning & Secure Storage

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 scanning system. The project team recognises some positive adoption of DIP W2 scanning within some services and teams, however reasons for the system not being adopted across the authority are some teams in housing are on the DIP W1 out dated version, concerns over security and a general lack of awareness of its benefits.

Agreement has already been reached with housing for the W2 upgrade to take place, plans will be put in place for this work to start once the year end processing has been completed. 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. 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 upfront 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.

Developing Suitable, Flexible Accommodation

The main corporate building for Slough Borough Council over the next 5 – 10 years will be St Martins Place, (SMP) with the possibility of additional teams moving in. The project team will manage the upgrade work required to SMP air conditioning system. This will be co-ordinated by project members from the Property and Facilities teams and may mean some teams are temporarily relocated to other sites such as The Centre or Landmark Place while the work is being completed by 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. 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

There are number of key Community Hubs located around Slough targeting services at residents locally based, as use of space is redesigned at St Martins 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. I.T requirements such as Citrix logins, laptops, Wi-Fi etc will be co-ordinated by the I.T lead on the project team to ensure staff use the Community Hubs in an appropriate, secure and flexible way.

In order to measure the viability and success of the project, the programme board recommends a phased approach to flexible working within the Community hubs be piloted. Starting with Chalvey Community Centre with four permanent p.c's being used by a team/service agreed at CMT level, these teams/services could be from the Community Wardens, Environment Health, Social Care or Planning teams.

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

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.

Progress to date has included:

- Formal agreement gained for the project from CMT.
- Staff briefings held with areas affected on the reasons for project.
- Financial budgets for the project being agreed.
- Presentation to SLT on 09th April detailing projects focus and key milestones.
- Agreements finalised with Housing Services to move out of the Centre into Landmark Place, with an aspiration for all teams to move over by the second week in July.
- Flexible & Home Working Policy completed to be circulated for agreement and appropriate sign off's.
- The Storage Area Network (SAN) solution is being testing for suitability ahead of implementation by I.T, the (SAN) will support the W2 scanning project across the organisation.
- Meetings held with all Assistant Directors to agree space requirements.
- Agreement reached with the Adult Social Care team to pilot flexible working, details to be finalised.
- Agreed has also been reached with Finance to pilot home working, again details to be finalised.
- Chalvey Community Centre identified as the first hub for staff to use for flexible working with two workstations on the first floor and one on the ground floor with disabled access.
- Draft Plans drawn up for St Martins Place & Landmark Place. (See attached examples for the 1st & 2nd floor west).
- Presentation delivered to the Commissioners & Directors on 13th May on proposals.

- The 16+ team have been moved out from Landmark Place and relocated to St Martins Place.
- Desk reconfiguration and cabling work started on the 20th May at Landmark Place.

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**

Two draft floor plans.

9. **Background Papers**

None