



Extract from the Joint Strategic Committee - 1 December 2020

JSC/087/20-21 WorkspacesAW - Designing a new model of working following Covid 19

Summary of discussion

The restrictions imposed to help control Covid-19 changed how the Councils worked and how they provided services overnight. Most notably, the requirement to work from home where possible resulted in a significant reduction in staff coming into the office. Those changes were implemented successfully with a very limited impact on service delivery.

The lessons learnt as a result of the changes provided an opportunity to review how office based services worked once restrictions were eased, designing a more flexible way of working that realised multiple benefits including:

- reduced office footprint, enabling the leasing of space, generating an **net annual revenue saving of £179,740** to support the Councils' medium term financial strategy;
- the operational efficiencies generated by the scheme would create the financial capacity for the **investment in buildings, office space and technology needed to unlock the revenue savings**;
- **vital increased capacity and modernisation of core ICT connectivity**, upgrading WiFi at all Council sites (not just Town Hall and Portland House) and further improving remote working services, creating the necessary stability and capacity for increased data traffic (e.g. video), fast and reliable access to systems, and addressing remaining resilience risks by removing routing via the Town Hall for some key services;
- providing the necessary **building and equipment changes** and upgrades to the Town Hall to accommodate more staff, all delivered **prudently**, e.g. ensuring that office furniture and other equipment was reused and recycled appropriately;
- Redesigning how we provide services in line with the Councils Good Service standard, with a particular emphasis on **service accessibility** and increased

use of digital channels such as video appointments;

- a more **flexible workforce**, able to work from any location with effective and resilient technology, improving the Councils ability to recruit and retain;
- higher levels of **staff satisfaction**;
- reduced **carbon emissions** associated with running offices and through reduced commuting and business travel.

Organisations across all sectors were reviewing their office accommodation, aiming to reduce overhead costs but also in recognition of the benefits to **recruitment and retention** for offering greater flexibility to staff.

The purpose of the report was to inform members of the work undertaken to date to assess the feasibility of the project and to seek the Committee's approval to release the funding to instigate the project to redesign how the Councils worked to realise the associated savings and benefits.

The Committee applauded the work that had gone into the proposals and recognised the need to be sensible with the use of office space. The Committee acknowledged that home working didn't suit everyone and highlighted the need to maintain the Councils duty of care to staff in relation to Health & Safety and equipment.

The recommendations in the report were proposed by Councillor Daniel Humphreys, seconded by Councillor Angus Dunn and unanimously supported by the Committee.

Decision:

That the Joint Strategic Committee

- a) noted the feasibility work undertaken to date, which concluded that there were significant opportunities to reduce the Council's office footprint, realise financial savings whilst delivering Good Services and creating an effective flexible working environment;
- b) noted the expected net annual savings of approximately £179,740;
- c) noted that project budget allocations were indicative at this stage, with 20% optimism bias and subject to detailed cost analysis and procurement;
- d) **recommended that Adur and Worthing Councils approve a capital budget of £2,335,720, on an invest to save basis, as set out in section 7.5 of the report;**

- e) agreed to delegate authority to the Executive Members for Resources to review the final business case and give authority to proceed;
- f) approved the use of capital receipts to fund the revenue costs associated with the project utilising the capital flexibilities as set out in paragraph 7.4 of the report.