From: Peter Oakford - Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services

                    Rebecca Spore - Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 11th September 2020

Subject: **Property Accommodation Strategy - SHQ Review Next Steps**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee meeting on 20th November 2018

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

Summary:

This paper seeks to update Members on the review work undertaken to date and the workplan to consider the future use of the Strategic Headquarters Campus.

Recommendation(s):

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** is asked to **NOTE** the report.

---

1.   **Introduction**

1.1   At the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee meeting on 20th November 2018, an update was given on the work being undertaken to modernise the Council's Office Estate. As part of this work, a review has been undertaken of KCC's (Kent County Council) Strategic Headquarters Campus. The campus currently includes Cantium, Invicta and Sessions House. Sessions House in particular, is facing a number of challenges to provide appropriate accommodation to meet the Council's ongoing needs. Sessions House is a vast, historic, listed building which has become increasingly expensive and environmentally inefficient to maintain. In its current form it also limits our ability to make the most of the technology that we have available and to provide our staff with a modern workspace.

1.2   A review of the SHQ accommodation has been progressed to ensure that we are making the most effective use of the Council's resources in the way that we deliver our services given the significant expenditure required. Whilst a number of options have been considered, in all options KCC remains committed to continuing a presence in Maidstone as the County Town.

1.3   This paper updates Members on the work of the Member working group and staff engagement. The exempt report provides an update on the Strategic Outline

Case, its key findings, and the next steps as part of the SHQ accommodation review.

2. Establishment of a Member Working Group to consider Member accommodation

2.1 The cross-party Member Working Group was set up to inform a set of design principles and a design brief for new Member accommodation.

2.2 To support the work, site visits were organised to Somerset County Council, Birmingham City Council and the London Borough of Brent Council, to consider different approaches to working and the configuration of Members' accommodation.

2.3 Each authority was using space in a slightly different way, but all had invested in their use of technology to support a new working approach. This included the promotion of a mobile working culture, a multi-functional space including the Council Chamber with Member workspaces shared.

2.4 A workshop was held with Members to capture the lessons learnt from the visits and how this can be applied to Kent. This work will help inform the key design principles, space standards and an accommodation brief.

3. Staff Engagement

3.1 Engagement with directorates has taken place, facilitated as part of the Council's business change work. Each directorate set up a task-and-finish group to consider how they currently work. The feedback from the directorates emphasised key themes around spaces, technology, people and culture which are highlighted below:

- Spaces – all directorates requested a mixture of specialist, confidential, flexible and desk-based space, with collaborative spaces adjacent. The spaces must be high quality and consistent across the county, reflecting the demographic need for KCC services.

- Technology – available to all and consistently reliable, with the use of Artificial Intelligence and good video-conferencing facilities. Services want a digital offering to clients and to facilitate partner-working across networks.

- People – the need for upskilling, particularly in relation to digital skills, with managers feeling confident to manage a more agile workforce. The importance of Team identity in a more transient culture was highlighted.

- Behaviour/Culture – promoting use of technology and community focus and the importance of the business change programme were highlighted.

3.2 Further feedback sessions were held at the T200 Extended Group of front-line managers, where a series of questions were posed to staff to gauge thoughts and ideas about how and where they would like to work, and what the key aspects of a workspace were for them. In addition, a questionnaire was sent out through the

task-and-finish groups, asking them to feed back on the same questions, with over 1,100 responses, which are summarised below:

- All staff involved were keen to improve their work-life balance by working more flexibly, holding virtual meetings, reducing travel and engaging service users digitally

- Many services and staff groups want to use technology to automate manual processes

- 41% staff thought KCC service need was growing

- 76% staff thought they could be mobile and work remotely at least 1-2 days/week

- 43% staff thought they could be mobile and work remotely 2-4 days/week

- The most important aspects of a workspace to staff was a comfortable environment, immediate work area and car parking

4. SHQ Review and Business Case Development

4.1 It has been clear from the engagement with both Members and staff that there is a desire to work differently, building on our technology, environmental and asset strategies.

4.3 To support the SHQ review, a project governance structure has been established, along with selected external partners who have worked together to develop a project-initiation document and the strategic outline business case for consideration. In addition, a cross-directorate Modern Ways of Working Group has been established, who have supported the development of the SOC. The cross-directorate group feeds into an advisory group of Corporate Board which has been established to support the Council's modernisation work.

4.4 To support the review, discussions have commenced with key stakeholders, including Maidstone Borough Council, along with a wider staff engagement plan to ensure that, whilst this work is in the early stages, staff are aware of the work as it is progressed.

4.5 The project team have worked through a series of options which have been evaluated against the Council's future requirements and are set out in more detail in the exempt papers.

5. Conclusions and Next Steps

5.1 The SOC has enabled the Council to refine the parameters for the next stage of the business case work as set out in the exempt report. It is recognised that since the SOC was commissioned that there have been a number of changes which have the potential to impact on the operating environment of the Council and need to be considered further in the finalisation of the Council's requirements as we move into the next business-case stage. These include the

impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on long-term working patterns and the Devolution White Paper, which is due to be published by Central Government in September. It is proposed to scope these areas further during the course of September and October.

5.2 The key milestones and planning activity for the next steps are summarised below:

Defining the Employers Requirements	Aug 2020 to Nov 2020
Decision point Nov 2020	
Prepare Outline Business Case	Nov 2020 to Apr 2021
Decision point Apr 2021	
Prepare Final Business Case	Apr 2021 To Oct 2021
Decision point Oct 2021	

6. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** is asked to **NOTE** the report.

7.   Contact details

Report Author: Tom Porter-Williams Head of Asset Management - Infrastructure 03000 416304 **tom.porter-williams@kent.gov.uk**	Relevant Director: Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure 03000 416716 **rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk**