

**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 - 20<sup>th</sup> March 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 are 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 is being undertaken of KCC's (Kent County Council) Strategic Headquarters Campus. The Campus currently includes Cantium, Invicta and Sessions House. Sessions House particularly is facing a number of challenges to provide appropriate accommodation to meet the councils ongoing needs. Sessions House is a vast historic 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 provide our staff with a modern workspace fit for delivering our services in the best way.
- 1.2 A review of the SHQ accommodation is being progressed to ensure that we are making the most effective use of the council's resources in the way that we deliver our services. Whilst a number of options will be considered KCC remains committed to Maidstone as the County Town and to a continuing presence in the town.
- 1.3 This paper seeks to update Members on the member and staff engagement undertaken to date and the workplan to complete the review. Further detail as to the approach will be included in the exempt section.

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

- 2.1 The cross-party Member Working Group was set up to inform set of design principles and a design brief for new Member accommodation. The group attendees are Eric Hotson, Rob Bird, Dara Farrell, Emma Dawson, Harry Rayner, Diane Marsh, Martin Whybrow, David Brazier and Sue Chandler.
- 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 series of workshops are now being planned 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 Councils 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 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 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 feedback on the same questions, with over 1100 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, asset strategies.

4.2 The feedback to date through staff engagement and the cross-party member accommodation group will help inform the SHQ work and our future working requirements.

4.3 To support the SHQ review a project governance structure has been established along with selected external partners, who will work 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 and initial scoping has been completed with a series of workshops completed. 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 and a wider staff engagement plan has commenced to ensure that whilst this work is in the early stages that staff are aware of the work as it is progressed.

4.5 The project team are working through a series of options which will be evaluated against the Council's future requirements. Progress will be reported to the committee as the business case work progresses, through series of formal and informal briefings at key points as the business case develops.

4.6 The key milestones and planning activity are summarised below:

Activity	Date
Policy and Resources Committee – Update on approach	20 <sup>th</sup> March 2020
Review and Strategic Business Case Development	February - May 2020
Internal Review and Member Briefings	May – June 2020
Policy and Resources Committee - Presentation of Review work and recommendations	July 2020

## 5. Conclusions

5.1 As part of KCC's wider strategy to modernise the way that we work, an integrated programme of activity is being progressed aligned to the Council's ambitions. Due to the pressing issues at Sessions House, a review is being undertaken of SHQ to consider options as to how we best develop an accommodate strategy which meets the needs of our staff, elected members and service users, represents value for money for our residents and delivers against our technology and environmental objectives.

5.2 A project team has been established to oversee the development of the strategic outline business case and updated options appraisal, which will be brought back to the Policy and Resources Committee in advance a key decision in the summer 2020.

## 6. Recommendation(s)

### Recommendation(s):

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

## 7. Contact details

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