

SLOUGH BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO: Employment & Appeals Committee **DATE:** 24th March 2015
CONTACT OFFICER: Roger Parkin - Director of Customer & Community Services
AUTHORS: Charan Dhillion
(For all enquiries) (01753 523127)
WARD(S): All

PART 1 **FOR INFORMATION**

SBC Accommodation Strategy

1. Purpose of Report

This report is to provide members with an update on the SBC Accommodation Strategy, including detail on the impact on services and staff during and after the various office moves.

2. Recommendation(s)/Proposed Action

The Committee is requested to Resolve:

- (a) That the report is noted.
- (b) Members consider the information within the report.

3. Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy, the JSNA and the Five Year Plan

3.a Slough Joint Wellbeing Strategy Priorities

The JSNA priorities of particular relevance are:

- Enables the Council to provide suitable office accommodation that supports the delivery of front line services to our residents
- Delivers cashable and efficiency savings across the council

3.b Five Year Plan Outcomes

The proposals within this report meet the Five Year Plan objectives as follows:

- Using resources wisely. Maximising the use of our office accommodation
- Investing in technology and digital transformation to enable staff to work smartly wherever they are located.

4. Other Implications

(a) Financial

The expenditure on the accommodation strategy to date is within the budget allocated. Expenditure is being carefully monitored with regular update reports provided to Corporate Management Team (CMT) and the Accommodation Working Group.

(b) Risk Management

Risk	Mitigating action	Opportunities
Employment Issues	None	
Financial	Careful monitoring of the expenditure to ensure budget is managed	
Human Rights	None	None
Health and Safety	Regular meetings with the Councils Health & Safety Representatives are taking place. Areas under refurbishment are subject to restricted access. Delivery of materials are confined to an enclosed area to prevent injuries from trips and falls	Additional safety features are included in the works schedule. Improved fire alarm system, improved reception area etc.
Equalities Issues	All equality issues are being addressed as work continues	None
Other	None	None

(c) Human Rights Act and Other Legal Implications

No implications identified

(d) Equalities Impact Assessment

An Equalities Impact Assessment was carried out before the appointment of the contractors to carry out the works programme.

(e) Workforce

To our knowledge, there has been minimal impact to staff considering the extent of work that is being undertaken to upgrade the mechanical and electrical equipment during working hours. The Works are primarily being done during office hours in order to ensure costs are kept to a minimum, therefore avoiding paying enhanced costs from contractors working out of hours.

5.Supporting Information

5.1. Background

Since the Accommodation Strategy started in 2008, the council has transformed the way we use our assets and substantial savings have been achieved ie from the closure of the The Town Hall, which accommodated 1400 desks, moving to St Martins Place which now accommdates about 800 desks.

Over the last year the Accommodation Strategy Project has introduced a number of initiatives to support new ways of working, which have received very positive feedback from staff

- 5.2 **Business Suite** has opened on the 1st floor west at St Martins Place. This offers private and quiet working space. It can be used to merely get away from the open space, if staff are visiting from another site and are between meetings and wishing to do some work or if no desk is available in their service area. Protocols for use of this room have been advertised and displayed in the room to prevent misuse or staff setting desks up as their own private working space.
- 5.3 **Informal Meeting Space** – Informal high back sofas have been introduced with open plan space, enabling informal discussions awys from the desk area. These are used on a first come first serve basis rather than being bookable. These may also be used to make a private call or to do some work on a laptop if visiting from another site or merely requiring desk space.
- 5.4 **Increased the number of meeting rooms**, therefore reducing the councils spend on hiring space.
- 5.5 **Installed lockers** on 1st floor west for Adult social care who are informally embracing desk sharing. This is enabling us to test the success of a reduced desk ratio.
- 5.6 **Reduced storage space** by removing all low cupboards between desks, encoraging staff to use space more effectively and creating a tidier environment, with vibrant welcoming colours. Storage space will be further reduced as Arvato progress with the DIP project.
- 5.7 **Virtual Meetings** – We have installed Video Conferencing in the CMT meeting room with a view to expand this facility into two additional rooms. This will reduce the need for people to travel to attend meetings.
- 5.8 **Wi-Fi** will be installed as part of this project, providing further flexibility for staff working at SMP. For example, those that have laptop will be able to work anywhere in the building, including in informal meeting spaces.
- 5.9 **Working Space in Community Hubs** – By introducing working space at Chalvey Community Centre, Britwell Centre and Manor Park Centre, staff do not necessarily need to travel back to St Martins Place to log on. Staff can work from these locations between meetings, therefore reducing C02 emissions, reducing desk requirements and enhancing use of officer time.

5.10 **Asset Challenge Project Set Up** – This project board will support the objectives of the Accommodation Strategy Project Board and Corporate Landlord. All three projects have been set up to support each other while achieving a similar objective ie financial savings for the council.

6.0 Impact on Staff

To our knowledge, there has been minimal impact to staff considering the extent of work that is being undertaken to upgrade the mechanical and electrical equipment during working hours. The Works are primarily being done during office hours in order to ensure costs are kept to a minimum, therefore avoiding paying enhanced costs from contractors working out of hours.

6.1 The general feedback from staff has been as below:-

- The new office environment looks very airy, welcoming and so much nicer to work in, with a more open and less congested feeling.
- The colouring on the walls and the graphics create a happier and more pleasant environment. When you go to the floors where the work has not started, you can appreciate the difference in the new environment.
- The informal meeting spaces and business suite have been fantastic, when you need to discuss something away from the open plan or do some quiet work.

6.2 Prior to installing the desks, there was a sense of fear from some staff, moving to work on smaller desks. Surprisingly no negative feedback has been mentioned and staff seem to have adapted well.

6.3 The main issue experienced with the desks was the height for those that are tall. These individuals felt that the desk bar located underneath the desk caused some inconvenience. Facilities Management have worked with our supplier Bates and come up with a solution, which introduces slimmer bars. Where staff with the original order find this uncomfortable, the bars have already been changed.

6.4 Chairs have been a little problematic, with so many people having different requirements and preferences, preventing a standard chair for all. Although a majority of staff are enjoying the new chairs, we have had to provide alternatives for some who have back, neck, etc. issues. Health & Safety, Facilities Management and our supplier Bates have been very accommodating trying to resolve any issues as soon as they arise.

6.5 Contractors have tried to keep noise to a minimum during office hours, however this has not always been possible, therefore there has been some inconvenience to staff from the transfer of noise. When this has been unreasonable the contractors have been instructed to stop work.

6.6 The office temperature will unfortunately not be consistent throughout the building until all the mechanical upgrading work is complete. Therefore there is some discomfort in certain areas due to the unbalancing of the system, which unfortunately cannot be resolved until the work is complete. The situation is being

managed reactively and where the environment is too hot, facilities are opening windows.

- 6.7 Following each move, staff have settled in very quickly and both IT and Facilities have worked hard to ensure staff are able to start working quite early after the move.
- 6.8 Once the project is complete, a customer survey will be carried out by Facilities Management to gather data and receive feedback from staff. This will be published to all SBC staff.

7. Conclusion

- 7.1 Despite the amount of office moves that have taken place over the last year or so, the reaction from staff has been very supportive.
- 7.2 Overall there has been minimal disturbance to service delivery to the residents of the borough