

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING DATE:	05 July 2021	
TITLE:	Preparing for the Future Programme	
WARD:	All	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix A – Concept design plans for Keynsham Civic Centre		

THE ISSUE

1.1 This report provides an update on the Preparing for the Future Programme.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel is asked to;

2.1 Note the contents of the report and the progress that has been made with the Preparing for the Future Programme.

3 THE REPORT

Background

3.1 The Preparing for the Future Programme will deliver changes to how we work which will streamline our use of office buildings and provide a more flexible workforce that reflects the changes in how we now work and how we will deliver services in the future. The aim is to equip all staff to have a good day's work by providing them with the right technology, being flexible in our approach to promote wellbeing and ensuring an effective work/life balance.

3.2 This report provides an update regarding the programme and highlights the progress to date.

Keynsham Civic Centre redesign

3.3 The plans are progressing well for the Keynsham Civic Centre redesign and we have been working closely with our architects to finalise the designs.

3.4 The concept plans have been shared with the Service User Group as well as Heads of Service and the Leadership Team and we have taken on board feedback and suggestions for improvement.

3.5 The proposal is to deliver the changes in a phased approach to mitigate disruption to the council operation. The deliverables are:

- To deliver a proposal that enables up to at least 650 individuals to be in the KCC at one time, subject to fire and ventilation constraints. The current capacity is around 550 which includes both Virgin Care and Police tenants. The plan will deliver subtle design changes that enable increased occupancy in certain areas of the building.
- To create an interior design that promotes collaboration, as well as providing a core element of team space.
- To deliver new and improved refreshment areas.
- To deliver a partnership working space which will enable our key partners to book hot desks on the understanding there will be a reciprocal arrangement in their office buildings.
- To develop and implement a strategy that uses technology and digital equipment to enable collaboration across multiple locations.
- To develop options for how staff, partners and Councillors can work – enabling greater numbers of bookable meeting spaces and flexible use of desks.
- To improve branding/signage, artwork and graphics. This will include both internal and external signage to improve brand exposure and accessibility.
- To design dedicated spaces and facilities that enable private and confidential working and meetings to enable staff to work productively and efficiently.
- To improve toilets and general wellbeing facilities across the site taking into account our duties under the Equality Act.
- To increase shower capacity and bicycle storage facilities across the building to promote sustainable travel and support the corporate objective to address the climate emergency.
- To improve lighting and overall ambiance across the building irrespective of time of day.

- 3.6 Concept designs of some of the new spaces are contained in Appendix A.
- 3.7 In terms of timescales detailed designs will be prepared by the end June, construction starts from August and some significant changes will be completed by Christmas, so our aim is to move fully back into the building in January 2022.
- 3.8 Delivery of the programme will be split over two financial years in two phases. The majority of work will be carried out in 2021/2022 with some additional works happening in 2022/2023.

Communication and engagement

- 3.9 Regular monthly communications are sent to staff to keep them updated. There is a wealth of information on our intranet page and a large number of FAQs have been published. A dedicated email address for the programme is in place and managers have been encouraged to invite the Programme Manager to their team meetings to answer questions.
- 3.10 The Service User Group meets monthly and has been fully involved in developing the concept redesign plans and feeding back to their teams.
- 3.11 We have developed a Blended Working Charter to illustrate how we will work in the future. Blended working means that staff have the best of both worlds – a choice in their working lives which complements their work and enhances their work life balance.
- 3.12 The principles in the charter mean that:
- Staff should have individual choice around *where* we work on a day-to-day basis, wherever possible.
 - Staff should have individual choice around *when* we work on a day-to-day basis, wherever possible.
 - We should encourage teams to come together from time to time as teams thrive when we collaborate, communicate and connect.
- 3.13 We have also been developing some “day in the life” profiles with our service user group to bring to life what a working week will look like once we are able to work in a blended way.

Individual risk assessment process and meeting spaces

- 3.14 The Government’s advice during the last year has been to continue to work from home if you are able to do so. However, in recognition that this does not suit all staff we have developed an individual risk assessment process for staff who need to return to the office for some of their working week whether for service delivery purposes, because they do not have facilities at home or to support their mental health and wellbeing.

- 3.15 We currently have a number of staff in Keynsham Civic Centre and the Guildhall who have taken up this offer and we continue to support staff with this.
- 3.16 We have also recognised that teams are really keen to meet up again face to face as soon as they can and so we have developed team meeting spaces so that teams can start to meet up again once the social distancing rules are lifted. We currently have a limited number of spaces available for meetings but will increase this offer significantly when the Government's roadmap allows.
- 3.17 These spaces will be available in Keynsham, the Guildhall and the Hollies and will be bookable for meetings until the end of December.

Laptop rollout

- 3.18 We are now nearing the end of the first phase of laptop rollout which included 325 devices. The next order of laptops is with our supplier (HP) and currently expected to be with us around August. This is later than we had hoped for but unfortunately is as a result of global IT component shortages. We are in regular contact with HP and working hard with them to achieve the earliest delivery date we can.
- 3.19 It is anticipated that the rollout will continue into the first half of 2022 but we will be looking at options to bring these dates forward where possible and complete the rollout sooner, as we know how important it is for staff to receive this new equipment.

Summary

- 3.20 In summary:
- The plans for the redesign of Keynsham Civic Centre are on track and the detailed design should be available shortly.
 - Communication and engagement with staff continues to be a priority and the service user group has been working well.
 - Team meeting spaces have been created across our office estate so that when the Government's roadmap allows teams can come together and meet to enable collaboration.
 - An individual risk assessment process in place to enable staff who need to work from an office building at the current time to do so.
 - The laptop rollout has been completed for phase 1 staff and we are awaiting delivery of the next batch of laptops, planned to be in August.

4 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 Section 2 of the Health and Safety at Work Act 1974 provides a general duty on every employer to ensure, so far as is reasonably practicable, the health, safety

and welfare at work of all his employees. The Corporate Health and Safety Manager is part of the project team.

- 4.2 The design of the office arrangements will be flexible to ensure all appropriate infection control measures are in place in accordance with latest legislative provisions, national policy and public health advice.

5 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)

- 5.1 The project provides an opportunity to co-locate a range of council services in a single building, sharing resources and overheads while helping to enable a more joined up and collaborative approach. This co-location, together with provision of modern technology will increase flexibility and enable our workforce to tackle problems and queries as soon as they are received.
- 5.2 The programme will enable reduced operating costs through a reduction of office buildings / rationalisation of office space along with the opportunity to create revenue through the commercial letting of Lewis House. This will contribute to delivering existing budget savings in the Estates Service from a reduction in our office buildings.
- 5.3 The Council vacated St Martins hospital in July 2020 which represents a saving of £50,000 per annum.
- 5.4 As a result of working differently and conducting meetings virtually rather than in person the business travel savings for 2020/21 were forecast to be £150,000. The projected saving for 2021/22 is £200,000.
- 5.5 The commercial letting of Lewis House has the potential to yield up to £425,000 income per annum and realise operating savings of £172,130 per annum.
- 5.6 The capital budget to enable the redesign of Keynsham Civic Centre to accommodate more staff across the working week and support the changing way we will work is £1.655m over two years.

6 RISK MANAGEMENT

- 6.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

7 EQUALITIES

- 7.1 An Equality Impact Assessment was carried out on the Preparing for the Future Programme in August 2020 and an improvement plan is in place. Several impacts were identified, all with mitigating actions and a Service User Group is in place to enable full consultation with staff. The council's Inclusive Communities Manager is part of the council officer group leading this project and her advice and the wider team's guidance is being considered as the project develops.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

- 8.1 In 2014 the Keynsham Civic Centre was an award-winning building for its high environmental performance. Officers are working closely with surveyors as

proposals are developed to ensure that as a minimum this environmental performance is not compromised and that we identify any opportunities to improve environmental performance. For the carbon savings to be fully realised from this building the space needs to be fully utilised and the internal re-design of the building will support this aim.

8.2 This project will result in less employee travel:

- (1) It will enable us to reduce the number of Council offices, thereby reducing employee travel into Bath and between offices.
- (2) It will improve the facilities at Keynsham Civic Centre for staff who wish to cycle, walk or run to work encouraging sustainable travel choices.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 If we do nothing, we will have a less efficient and responsive workforce who are restricted by ineffective processes and equipment. We will remain split across 4 offices across Bath, Keynsham and Midsomer Norton and continue to work in silos with very little space for team collaboration.

9.2 This would not support a change in culture or prepare us for the future of working differently. There would be no space for teams to come together for social and collaboration interaction due to the current design of the building. This has been a request of employees that has increased over the course of the pandemic. The building infrastructure is also constrained with a complex fire strategy that does not allow for all council employees to be in the space at one time due to the limited fire escapes and staircase locations.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Chief Operating Officer has been consulted on this report.

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Background papers	Preparing for the Future Cabinet report E3261
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	