

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING/ DECISION MAKER:	Policy Development & Scrutiny Panel	
MEETING/ DECISION DATE:	28 March 2022	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E
TITLE:	Preparing for the Future Programme – review of office accommodation	
WARD:	All [or list specific wards]	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
List of attachments to this report: Appendix 1 - Impact on climate change of the relocation of some of the Council's workforce from Bath to Keynsham Civic Centre		

THE ISSUE

- 1.1 This report provides an update on the Preparing for the Future Programme – office accommodation.

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 Council has for some time been reviewing the way we work and prior to the Covid pandemic progress had been made on plans to adapt Keynsham Civic Centre to improve utilisation, create greater flexibility and enable more effective collaboration between teams and across the organisation.
- 3.2 In common with many organisations the pandemic accelerated the progress of these plans with the majority of staff working flexibly during the last 2 years. This has enabled us to consider that a blended working approach, where staff have the choice in how and where they work, is possible for the future.

- 3.3 A number of staff surveys have been undertaken since we first went into lockdown in March 2020, to include questions around the appetite for working flexibly in the future, monitoring staff wellbeing and what improvements staff would like to see in the Civic Centre. The results of these surveys have been collated and used to inform our new ways of working and the final design for the interior of the Civic Centre. A further staff survey is in circulation at the moment, the full results of which will be available in the coming weeks.
- 3.4 Some headline results were that 85% staff told us they felt confident about working flexibly in the future in comparison with 33% prior to the enforced lockdown. 84% of staff also told us that collaboration with their team and other teams, along with having team meetings were the most important reasons for coming into the office. We also had feedback from the service user group about the importance of increasing showers and cycling facilities to encourage sustainable transport to and from the Civic Centre.
- 3.5 In July 2020 the decision was taken to streamline the number of office buildings we occupy and to change the work base for the majority of staff based at St Martin's Hospital, the Guildhall, the Hollies and Lewis House to our main office building, Keynsham Civic Centre.
- 3.6 This has enabled the Council the potential to generate income and reduce operating costs through a reduction of office buildings / rationalisation of office space and capitalise on the opportunity to create revenue through the commercial letting of Lewis House.
- 3.7 This report provides an update regarding the programme and highlights the progress to date.

Keynsham Civic Centre

- 3.8 In order to accommodate around 1,500 staff across the working week the interior of the Civic Centre has been redesigned and work is now underway to create a more flexible working space, with the aim to break down silo working between services and create the opportunity for increased collaboration between teams leading to improved staff morale, well-being and productivity.
- 3.9 Feedback from staff that they value face to face time with their team and colleagues to share ideas, get advice, guidance and mutual support has been taken on board and so the redesign of the office space will provide this. It will also provide the opportunity for hybrid meetings to take place so not all staff need to be present in the same room for a meeting.
- 3.10 The redesign includes:
- A small team space for each team that want one on large open plan floors to encourage collaboration and interaction between teams, whilst maintaining confidential spaces
 - Private Teams/call booths per team space floor as well as cubicles for individuals to have quiet space and still be able to make calls (41 in total)
 - 21 meeting rooms, hybrid technology enabled, and a further 10 small one-to-one rooms

- Collaboration zones of different sizes complete with hybrid meeting technology for team meetings, one-to-ones and inter-departmental meetings to take place
- New large airy refreshment areas to replace the small “end of floor” kitchens to encourage staff to meet over coffee or lunch both, for work purposes as well as social interaction
- A dedicated learning and development suite to encourage continuous improvement and provide opportunities for development
- A large number of bookable hot desks for use in between meetings which can be booked near other team members for the day
- An inviting self-service entrance area with a waiting area and meeting tables
- Increased shower facilities to encourage a sustainable commute to work, along with a new, secure cycle rack within the building to encourage cycling to work
- Resolution of some equalities issues to include the addition of a multi-faith room, adaptations to washroom facilities as well as providing easier ways to identify floors and navigate the building

3.11 A contractor has been appointed to complete the redesign works within the agreed budget and the works started in January 2021. Whilst the work takes place staff who were using the Civic Centre as a work base have been temporarily moved to our other office buildings in Bath and Midsomer Norton.

3.12 Over the coming months there will be a series of engagement sessions to ensure staff are prepared for the new way of working once they come back to the building, with a focus on *choice*. Whilst a large majority of office based staff have told us they do want some choice and flexibility in how and where they work we know that individual circumstances, working styles, and job roles differ and will dictate how flexible staff are able to be. Managers of teams will therefore be able to discuss and agree the most suitable working arrangements for their staff, following a set of guiding principles.

3.13 The timescales for completion of the works is June 2022 and we are currently on track to achieve this date. Once the building is re-opened we will continually review and monitor the use of the different work spaces, take on board staff feedback and be flexible in our approach should some changes be required.

Lewis House

3.14 The Council continues to market floors 1,2 and 4 of Lewis House as commercial office accommodation, having initially let floors 1 and 2 to Bath University from September 2020 to 2021. Floor 3 is currently undergoing a small level of refurbishment in order to accommodate Avon and Somerset Police and a partner who will share the floor for office accommodation.

3.15 Work has also been taking place on the ground floor of Lewis House to accommodate Avon and Somerset Police Station as well as the Council’s Information and Advice Service. The Council’s work on the ground floor has now been completed and the Police started their works in January and will be

completed in April 2022, with the opening of the Police Station planned for 13 April 2022.

The Guildhall and the Hollies

- 3.16 Whilst the permanent work base for the majority of staff will be Keynsham Civic Centre there will be opportunities for staff to book meeting rooms and hot desks at the Guildhall in Bath and the Hollies in Midsomer Norton should that suit their needs.
- 3.17 The hot desks will be suitable for staff who have visits in these localities and need a touch down space in between meetings or who live close by and would prefer to use a desk there than work elsewhere.

Communication and engagement

- 3.18 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.
- 3.19 The Service User Group has been fully involved in developing the concept redesign plans for Keynsham Civic Centre and their views have been taken into account in the finalised designs.
- 3.20 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.
- 3.21 There will be a programme of engagement in place from March until June 2022 when the Civic Centre will be ready to be re-occupied, led by a programme manager and a number of service representatives as change champions. This will include all staff briefings, videos, team briefing packs and surveys to ensure effective communication is in place.
- 3.22 There is a wide range of practical guidance and advice about implementing a hybrid working model such as the [summary document](#) produced by the CIPD. It is clear that whilst there are many advantages for a hybrid / blended working approach there needs to be flexibility and agility to make changes and improvements as required. A quote from the summary pages of this document captures this well:

“Hybrid working at scale is a largely new and untested concept. Lessons about hybrid working will be quickly learned, and organisations should be prepared to adapt their approach.”

Working from our office buildings since March 2020

- 3.23 For much of the last two years the Government’s advice 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 developed an individual risk assessment process for staff who needed 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.

- 3.24 We have accommodated a number of staff in Keynsham Civic Centre, the Guildhall and the Hollies who wanted to take up this offer and we continue to support staff with this whilst the redesign of the Civic Centre takes place.
- 3.25 During the periods of time when the guidance to work from home was lifted we developed team meeting spaces so that teams could start to meet up again and we implemented a hot desk booking system in the Guildhall and the Hollies. These are now in place permanently.

New technology

- 3.26 We are now embarking on the final phase of issuing laptops, having already allocated well over 1000 to staff. There have unfortunately been delays in receiving the laptops due to the global impact both on supply chain distribution and also on parts and materials but we are now confident that we have enough stock to increase the pace of and complete the rollout.
- 3.27 We are also progressing with the selection of equipment that will be used in all the meeting rooms and available in the new collaboration spaces in the future. The overall aim is to provide IT and audio/visual equipment that makes it easy to hold effective hybrid meetings (e.g. via Microsoft Teams) in the future where some staff will be in the office and others are connecting from home or elsewhere. This equipment will also be installed in appropriate meeting rooms in the other main Council offices. It is anticipated that the rollout will complete by the time staff move back into the civic Centre in June 2022.
- 3.28 Work is also well progressed on planned changes to the Condeco room booking system. Our use of this will be expanded to also include hot desks and the collaboration spaces as well as meeting rooms in the future and we will also be introducing a mobile app for Condeco to make booking these resources even easier.
- 3.29 To compliment Condeco we will also be introducing a new visitor management system in the newly designed building entrance/lobby area, to enable visitors (and staff) to self-serve when they arrive (e.g. notifying the person they are visiting that they've arrived, printing a visitor pass etc).

Summary

- 3.30 In summary:
- The redesign of Keynsham Civic Centre is underway and should be completed in June 2022
 - Communication and engagement with staff continues to be a priority and a programme of engagement will be in place before staff to return to the Civic Centre.
 - Meeting spaces and hot desks have been created across our office estate to enable teams to come together.
 - An individual risk assessment process continues to enable staff who need to work from an office building at the current time to do so.

- The laptop and new technology rollout continues with the aim to complete this by June 2022.

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)

Finance

- 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 Work related travel has significantly reduced over the last two years with increased use of hybrid technology and we expect to see a saving of around £200,000 per annum.
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 The capital investment for the redesign of Keynsham Civic Centre is £1.705m. The savings and income from vacating St Martins and Lewis House and the commercial letting of Lewis House are approximately £850,000 per annum, and so the pay back would be achieved in 2 years, contingent on the full letting of Lewis House. We will be doing further work to establish additional savings through supplies and services in due course.

Workforce

- 5.5 Feedback from the majority of staff is that they are keen to have a choice where they work and value the flexibility that blended working gives them. The last two years has been highly unusual with the majority of staff working from home but an analysis of labour turnover suggests that this way of working has not had a negative impact on staff retention, with staff turnover decreasing from 11.1% in 2019/20 to 7.5% in 2020/21.
- 5.6 It is not possible to fully determine the reasons for leaving as 60% of staff cited “personal reasons” as their reason for leaving and the data from exit interviews is not currently held centrally. The HR&OD team are planning to expand the “personal reasons” box to enable a fuller explanation of reasons for leaving in the future.

5.7 We will closely monitor any impact on workforce recruitment and retention once staff have moved back into Keynsham Civic Centre and are working in a blended way.

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 initially in August 2020 and an improvement plan is in place, with the document being reviewed and updated regularly. 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.

7.2 The Equality Impact assessment is available on the Council's intranet for staff to be able to view and comment on.

8 CLIMATE CHANGE

8.1 Please see appendix 1 for information about the potential impact of these changes on carbon emissions.

9 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

9.1 If we make no changes to how we work we will have a less efficient, agile and responsive workforce who are restricted by ineffective processes and equipment.

10 CONSULTATION

10.1 The Chief Operating Officer and Director of People and Policy have been consulted on the contents of this report.

Contact person	Amanda George, Director of Business Change and Customer Services Tel: 07790 430827
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	

Impact on climate change of the relocation of some of the Council's workforce from Bath to Keynsham Civic Centre

Key Points to note:

- The Council has decreased carbon emissions from the Council estate by 66% since 2010 as shown in the 2022 annual climate emergency report produced by the Sustainability Team.
- The impact of the changes of moving some of the Council's workforce (c. 450 staff) from Bath to Keynsham is not able to be accurately measured at the present time because of the changing nature of working patterns, commuting habits and the variable nature of people's home working practices and environments. It does, however, represent an extremely small movement of people in the context of the whole area of B&NES.
- It is also not possible to predict the travel arrangements for any new tenants of Lewis House to contribute to or offset any carbon emission impact of some staff now commuting to Keynsham instead of Bath.
- It is likely, however, that considering Lewis House will have new tenants and there is no increased daily capacity at the Civic Centre there will be very little net impact on carbon emissions.
- In the absence of useful modelling certain principles have been followed to minimise any carbon emission impact.
 - Increase the capacity of the Civic Centre building across the working week to ensure the building is operating at optimal efficiency
 - Encourage sustainable travel to Keynsham Civic Centre by increasing the bicycle and shower facilities
 - Encourage the practice of blended working, enabling staff to work flexibly by providing them with the right technology and reducing travel to and from the office / meetings 5 days a week
 - Promote tax-free bicycles for work, the green car benefit scheme and the pool car scheme
 - Put in place hot desk facilities in the Guildhall in Bath so staff have a choice about where they work

Principle drivers for the relocation of some staff to Keynsham Civic Centre

- To realise the full benefits of the award-winning environmental performance of KCC so it is fully utilised
- To reduce desk space due to a change in working habits with the improvements in blended working technology and increased desire for flexibility of work
- To reduce the requirement for travel between office buildings for meetings as these can now be held virtually which will reduce the need to travel between Bath and Keynsham

- To reflect the change in working habits by completing a redesign of the interior of Keynsham Civic Centre to support a new way of working and making the best use of the available space
- To support the Council's financial pressures and release Lewis House as a significant revenue opportunity helping to limit the savings that need to be found in service areas.

Understanding the impacts of the relocation

Impact on staff

- It is clear that some staff will benefit from a shorter commute to Keynsham and some will have a longer commute than when they were based at Lewis House and it is expected that, in conjunction with their managers, staff will determine the best working option for them. This includes access to hot desks and meeting rooms in other office locations like the Guildhall in Bath and the Hollies in Midsomer Norton.
- It is not possible to predict the individual choices of how staff may use Keynsham Civic Centre in the future and therefore how often they may travel to the building – it would only be possible to gather this data following a suitable period once staff have moved back in.
- However following feedback from staff, we are improving the facilities at Keynsham Civic Centre for staff who cycle, walk or run to work to encourage sustainable travel choices.

Work related travel

- Travel between Keynsham and Bath for officer meetings will reduce as staff will no longer need to make this trip.
- Previously a significant proportion of our staff business mileage (and carbon emissions) came from inter-office face to face meetings (and return to base) on the Bath/Keynsham corridor.
- A combination of home working and hybrid meetings, more efficient office occupancy and low emission/E.V. pool cars will see those business trips, along with expenses and carbon emissions, significantly reduced.
- The table below shows the reduction since pre-Covid levels of business mileage:

Year	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22 (1 st x 3 quarters)
Business miles	805,000	402,950	309,916
Cost	£365,454	£182,609	£139,462
% difference		- 49.9%	-50% expected

- This trend is expected to continue when we open up our offices again as the miles claimed for customer facing/related journeys in 2020/21 reflect the core business travel requirement for teams such as children's and adult social services and public protection, regardless of their office base.

Travel to work

- Mapping undertaken in 2019 showed the link between staff postcodes and work locations and this indicated that there would be little net change of carbon emissions from changing our main office location to Keynsham. There were as many staff who would have a shorter journey (because they live on the Keynsham/Bristol side and are nearer to the Civic Centre than they were to the centre of Bath) as those who might have a longer journey (because they live nearer to Bath than they do to Keynsham).
- However this was only a snapshot in time and is subject to change which limits the value of any calculations on carbon emission for commuting based on workforce postcode data.
- It has been suggested that the large-scale shift towards working from home since the beginning of the pandemic has reduced the previous strong incentive for people to live close to their place of work and, in particular, to be in large urban hubs. The link below shows another article on this subject <https://www.knightfrank.com/research/article/2021-05-05-demand-for-rural-living-drives-record-price-growth-in-prime-regional-market-as-supply-tightens>
- While there is no clear data trend about this yet it does show that Covid could well change living habits in the future and therefore trying to assess any impact now would be of limited value.
- A reduction in desk-based staff commuting to work every day will have a positive impact. If “desk” staff reduced their travel by 60% (i.e. driving to work just 2 days not 5) this would reduce tailpipe emissions significantly.
- It should be noted that reducing car commuting has other societal and individual benefits, in particular it improves air quality at the roadside, typically in more economically deprived areas, traffic casualties are reduced for vulnerable road users and more active travel improves individual health and wellbeing, which is a Council priority.
- Given the information above and the fact that Lewis House will be let to 3rd parties and continue to be in use, the change of office location for a proportion of the Council’s workforce is very unlikely to have any impact on the carbon footprint in terms of travel to work.

Carbon emissions for home working vs being in the office

- There are so many individual variables (e.g. how homes are heated, what is the source of energy used, how renewable is it etc) that it is not possible to accurately measure the impact on carbon emissions by increased homeworking.
- There appears to be no consensus of opinion on this issue at the present time with different studies showing different results. However a recent study from the Carbon Trust shows a positive impact from the change to homeworking - <https://www.carbontrust.com/resources/the-carbon-savings-potential-of-homeworking-in-europe>

Local Economy

- The buildings in Bath will not be mothballed but let to 3rd parties so it is not anticipated that there will be an impact on the local economy from the change in Council working base.

Re-design of a relatively new building

The Council has been working with our contractors, Bray and Slaughter, to ensure that we recycle as much of building fabric that we remove as follows:

- Sympathetic removal of building fabric to ensure re-use/repurposing of hardwoods within the new design
- Recycling of carpet tiles
- Re use of glazed partitioning in new local start up business premises who will make use of the screens for their own meeting rooms
- Re-purposing existing furniture and re-upholstering where appropriate
- Re-use of desks, chairs and lockers in new developments
- Upgrading of some lighting with LED technology to provide 70% improvement in efficiency in those areas

The Council are also supporting the local economy wherever possible as follows:

- Use of local labour with a number of specialists based in Keynsham and the wider BANES area
- Electrical Contractor from Radstock
- Glazing/Curtain Walling from Midsomer Norton
- Flooring specialist sub-contractor from Bath
- Soft Strip/Demolition from Keynsham

The contractors will also be segregating any site waste to ensure the highest percentage of material is recycled.

Conclusion

- For the many reasons that have been outlined in this report it is not possible to accurately predict the impact on carbon emissions from the decision to relocate some staff from Lewis House in Bath to Keynsham.
- However, by increasing the capacity of the Civic Centre to ensure it is fully utilised to maximise the environmental benefits, encouraging more sustainable travel by the installation of better cycle facilities and increased showers, and promoting hybrid working the Council is committed to continuing to reduce carbon emissions.
- It may be possible to measure the impact of the relocation of some staff once all staff have returned to office working (June 2022), and the new way of working has been embedded, although the data would only be accurate at that moment in time. As outlined above it is anticipated the data will show a very limited impact across the whole area of B&NES.
- As the experts in this field, the Sustainability Team has been consulted about the contents of this paper and have contributed to the findings in the report.