

Policy & Resources Committee

Subject: Future Ways of Working

Date of meeting: 06 October 2022

Report of: Executive Director of Governance, People & Resources

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Ward(s) affected: All

For general release

1. Purpose of the report and policy context

- 1.1 This report recommends investment to continue to develop, implement and bed-in new ways of working across the organisation and to ensure the council is maximising the opportunities of hybrid working developed during the pandemic.
- 1.2 Our future ways of working must support the needs of our customers and must also balance our use of workspaces in a way that is efficient and sustainable, make the best use of our technological investments and continue to provide our staff with a valued flexible working offer. In addition, our flexible workspaces will continue to develop to make collaboration between colleagues and partners easier to best serve the needs of the city.

2. Recommendations

- 2.1 That Committee agrees to the programme expenditure of £0.223m for office and workspace equipment as described in paragraph 3.6 below to be funded from the council's Modernisation Fund.
- 2.2 That Committee notes the continuation of the Future Ways of Working (FWOW) programme including the objective to review and rationalise our workspace, to match our hybrid working requirements, through a future Accommodation Strategy.

3. Context and background information

- 3.1 The Future Ways of Working programme ensured a joined-up approach to deliver significant changes to our ways of working during the pandemic and has continued to develop a model for hybrid working where there is flexibility in where and how work is done, including working at home, which is driven by service and customer needs.
- 3.2 Customer services are being delivered with a revised operating model developed by the Customer Experience Steering Group which is needs

based rather than preference based. This model considered the learning and hybrid ways of working during the pandemic and the opportunities presented for example, Parking accelerated their digital transformation with 97% resident permits purchased online compared to 56% before the pandemic.

- 3.3 Face to face appointments are provided where digital and telephone channels are not appropriate to ensure support is in place for those customers that cannot access services in this way. Going forward, the council will continue to develop approaches to improve customer experience for example, exploring community access points, and the development of hybrid working will be led by service changes and by ensuring customers are at the heart of everything we do.
- 3.4 Since January, a pilot workspace situated in Bartholomew House has provided information about the types of workspaces that best support hybrid working and inform the Accommodation Strategy. This has included pods for small hybrid meetings, larger meeting rooms equipped with MS Teams enabled conferencing, collaboration spaces for developing project work and touch down spaces for staff that might be working for a brief period between meetings (see Appendix 1).
- 3.5 The programme will use the learning from the pilots to continue to roll-out new ways of working and equipment across the council's workspaces, and to provide a work environment that will:
- Support the effective use of digital skills to improve productivity, collaboration, and flexible working arrangements
 - Provide an office environment that continues to support wellbeing and which is tailored to the needs of new ways of working
 - Support the delivery of the council's workforce strategy by helping to address recruitment and retention issues as well as supporting employee wellbeing and resilience
 - Support the efficient use of office space to inform a future Accommodation Strategy and enable savings as part of the Medium Term Service and Financial Plans (MTSFP).
- 3.6 To support future ways of working based on the learning and experience gained, investment of £0.223m is proposed including the following:
- Equipping over 100 of our meeting spaces with the technology required to support effective hybrid working (for example, MS Teams enabled conferencing and flexible technology)
 - Equipping customer service rooms to support face to face appointments with customers with hybrid technology that will allow other partners and services to join
 - Rolling-out flexible workspaces to all parts of the organisation that will include meeting pods, touch down spaces and collaboration spaces as required by services to provide staff with the right environment to support new ways of working, customer interactions and service delivery

- Providing funding for the piloting of a shared collaboration space via the Joint Working Group - Future of Public Sector Office that exists between neighbouring authorities and other public sector bodies.
- 3.7 The changes to workspaces would be alongside the development of the future Accommodation Strategy and this will inform any purchasing decisions to make effective use of the investment, particularly where there is the potential to rent or dispose of buildings in the future.
- 3.8 The council's Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board (CMDB), chaired by the Chief Executive, reviews all business cases for modernisation or improvement of council services requiring financial support from the Modernisation Fund. The CMDB has reviewed the business case and supports the proposals presented in this report.

4. Analysis and consideration of alternative options

- 4.1 The recommendations recognise the importance of interdependencies and cross-cutting issues for our future ways of working and the need to make decisions about office space at a corporate level.
- 4.2 An alternative option is to leave investment decisions about workspaces to individual directorates without corporate oversight and coordination. Whilst this model may allow individual services to meet the needs of customers, it is likely to be sub-optimal and would not support the council to support customers in a joined-up way and would reduce opportunities to ensure the most efficient and value for money use of space.

5. Community engagement and consultation

- 5.1 This programme brings together the council's Customer Experience Programme, Accommodation Strategy, Our People Promise and Digital Programme, and our ways of working has been developed with extensive engagement with colleagues across the council including service leads, Trade Unions and Workers Forums.
- 5.2 The programme has engaged with Members via the Member Development & Support Group with site visits, focus groups and survey.
- 5.3 This programme has approached any uncertainty of the work environment, external factors (pandemic and economic), and organisational capacity by taking considered steps informed by stakeholder engagement (Appendix 2).

6. Conclusion

- 6.1 This is a targeted and informed approach to improve the workplace offer which supports flexible working arrangements including hybrid working.
- 6.2 The recommendations will increase the organisational capacity to deliver services and respond to changing needs and circumstances by providing a more flexible workplace and maintaining a valued flexible working offer to staff.

6.3 The funding is to provide the facilities, equipment, systems, and resources across the city for staff to do their job effectively.

7. Financial implications

7.1 The council's Modernisation Fund is resourced from capital receipts which are a finite resource with competing demands and therefore scrutiny of requests for resources from the fund is important. The Modernisation Fund makes use of the capital receipt flexibilities currently allowed by government to fund revenue expenditure and must be focused on delivering either efficiencies, improved service outcomes, improved customer service, or revenue savings, or any combination of these. Requests for resources from the Modernisation Fund are submitted as business cases using a standardised format which are then considered by the Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board (CMDDB). This is the officer body responsible for scrutinising and approving business cases and is chaired by the Chief Executive, and attended by Executive Directors, the Chief Finance Officer, Director of HR, and officers from the Programme Management team. The overall resources to be provided for the Modernisation Fund cover a 4-year period but are reviewed and approved by Budget Council annually as part of the council's Capital Strategy and Capital Investment Programme. During each year, any business case or request submitted to CMDDB that includes an element of capital expenditure, or exceeds £0.500m, if endorsed by CMDDB, will also need to be submitted to Policy & Resources Committee for approval in accordance with Financial Regulations.

7.2 The Modernisation Fund has many demands on it, reflecting the significant level of change across the organisation as well as the substantial annual savings programmes for which the fund is a key resource to enable delivery. As a result, at any one time, the fund can be oversubscribed but this risk is closely managed by CMDDB. The risk is managed through a combination of factors as follows:

- Many business cases and programmes run across more than one financial year and therefore this provides flexibility to manage the profiling of resources, particularly where 'slippage' occurs
- Business cases are based on prudential and, often, high level estimates and, as good practice dictates, usually include headroom (contingency) and therefore many programmes come in at a lower cost than originally projected
- Some business cases and initiatives do not reach implementation stage because of a change of service direction, legislation, or policy that supersedes them
- Business cases can be 'value engineered' where necessary to reduce overall resource demands.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the overall size of the fund is reviewed each year as part of the budget process and can be increased subject to approval of Policy & Resources Committee and Budget Council.

- 7.3 Phase 2 of the Future Ways of Working (FWOW) programme was reviewed and approved by the Corporate Modernisation Delivery Board (CMDDB) at its July meeting. The programme is considered to enable many benefits for improved ways of working and the improved use of workspaces. In particular, the programme would enable completion of an Accommodation Strategy review which could enable significant future savings by supporting much more efficient and sustainable use of the council's workspaces. However, due to the high level of demand on the Modernisation Fund at present, the committee are advised that the overall size of the fund will need to increase to accommodate any further significant business cases to ensure they can be supported. In this respect, the FWOW programme requires an addition to the current Modernisation Fund of £0.223m to be funded by capital receipts from disposals. The overall size of the fund will be reviewed again as part of the 2023/24 budget process, taking into account business cases and other requirements that come forward between now and February 2023.

Finance officer consulted: James Hengeveld Date consulted: 21/9/22

8. Legal implications

- 8.1 There are no legal implications arising directly from this report.

Name of lawyer consulted: Alice Rowland Date consulted: 16/9/22

9. Equalities implications

- 9.1 This programme supports flexible working arrangements including hybrid working using inclusive workplace design, tools, and technology.
- 9.2 To improve the workplaces and standard across the city and provide greater flexibility in how workplace space is used and access to technology.
- 9.3 Includes Customer Service hybrid interview rooms to provide flexibility in access and technology through digital inclusion and support of customers.

10. Sustainability implications

- 10.1 Release and changes in civic offices provides the opportunity for equipment repair and reuse for example, furniture and equipment in other locations.
- 10.2 Opportunities for surplus/ non-standard furniture and equipment to enter the local circular economy.
- 10.3 Reciprocal arrangements with other regional public sector organisations to reduce staff travel distance and work journeys by using shared workplaces.

11. Other Implications

Social Value and procurement implications

- 11.1 Release of workplace spaces through more effective use can enable high social value projects through the provision of affordable space.
- 11.2 Vacated space could be used to establish 'Circular Economy Hubs' to temporarily store equipment and materials before being redistributed or refurbished, repaired, and reused.

Supporting Documentation

Appendices

1. FWOW workplace improvements
2. Summary of FWOW engagement and feedback
3. Joint Working Group report and recommendations