



**RHONDDA CYNON TAF COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE**

**27<sup>TH</sup> NOVEMBER 2023**

**THE COUNCIL'S OFFICE ACCOMMODATION STRATEGY – RELOCATION OF  
THE COUNCIL CHAMBER UPDATE.**

**REPORT OF THE HEAD OF DEMOCRATIC SERVICES**

**1. PURPOSE OF THE REPORT**

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to receive an update from the Head of Democratic Services in respect of members facilities and accommodation, following the decision of Cabinet to relocate the Council's HQ, and Council Chamber, to 2 Llys Cadwyn Pontypridd as part of the Council's Office Accommodation Strategy.

**2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

It is recommended that Members

- 2.1 Note the update in respect of the work undertaken to date in respect of the relocation of the Council Chamber.

**3. REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 3.1 On the 15<sup>th</sup> May 2023, the Cabinet approved the Office Accommodation Strategy, which included relocating the Council's headquarters into the heart of Pontypridd town centre, utilising vacant floor space at Llys Cadwyn.
- 3.2 As part of the report the Head of Democratic Services was charged with assigning suitable and sufficient office accommodation and services to meet the resource and facility requirements of Elected Members.

**4. BACKGROUND**

- 4.1 At the [July](#) meeting of the Democratic Services Committee, Members considered the report before them in respect of the Council Headquarters relocation to 2 Llys Cadwyn, Pontypridd.

- 4.2 During the Meeting the Head of Democratic Services provided Members with details in respect of the new chamber and member facilities. It was acknowledged that the move to 2 Llys Cadwyn, would provide significant improvements in respect of the accommodation offered to Members and the Head of Democratic Services confirmed that in his statutory opinion **the accommodation provided to Elected Members was 'sufficient' and would be remarkably enhanced following the relocation to Pontypridd.**
- 4.3 Details within the above-mentioned report included Member Accommodation, Council Chamber, Public and Press Access and Parking arrangements.
- 4.4 Members welcomed the relocation and spoke positively of the new arrangements being provided. Queries were raised in respect of the facilities to be provided and the Head of Democratic Services was tasked to take forward these queries with colleagues in Highways and Corporate Estates, which will be addressed later within the report.
- 4.5 Members of the Committee welcomed the proposal of a site visit to the building in advance of any building work.
- 4.6 An oral update in respect of the work was provided by the Head of Democratic Services at the Committees September meeting, where Members were provided with responses in relation to their queries surrounding Toilet provision, Car Parking and Political Rooms.
- 5. WORK UNDERTAKEN TO DATE**
- 5.1 Following the relevant procurement procedures the Council have appointed Knox & Wells on the first stage of a 2-stage design and build contract.
- 5.2 Meetings have also been taken forward with officers within Public I, the Council Business Unit, Corporate Estates and welsh translation in respect of the work needed to be undertaken in respect of the Council Chamber and Committee room, to ensure that the new Chamber is equipped for Hybrid meetings and webcasting arrangements.
- 5.3 On the 8<sup>th</sup> August 2023 a site visit was undertaken by members of the Democratic Services Committee, which was also extended to Group Leaders, where Members were walked through the floor plans whilst on site. Members in attendance commented that the visit provided them with a clearer picture of the new offices and in particular the Council Chamber.
- 5.4 During September a survey of Members was undertaken to capture Members views on how the 'Member's Area' within Llys Cadwyn should look, feel and operate with questions in relation to 'Member Hotdesking' arrangements and equipment and facilities. Can we thank Members for their responses, as we look to incorporate the suggestions in with the designs for the area.

## **6. GOING FORWARD**

- 6.1 The Council are working to a timescale of relocation during the beginning of the New Year (2024).
- 6.2 As previously advised, to enable the relocation of broadcasting and hybrid meeting 'kit' to the new location, from the 21<sup>st</sup> November 2023 and into the start of the New year, committee meetings will need to operate on a virtual basis only.
- 6.3 It is anticipated that meetings will reconvene on a hybrid basis early in the New Year once sufficient testing of the equipment has been undertaken.
- 6.4 The building will host a reception area, staffed by an appropriate officer to assist Members of the Public and visitors to the new Council Headquarters. Once the building works are complete arrangements will be made to provide Members with appropriate access arrangements (i.e key fob) so that they may frequent the Members Area to undertake hotdesking, access to Committee meetings or general attendance to meet officers / public within the designated meeting rooms.
- 6.5 For security purposes it will be important that Members wear their Lanyards when onsite within the building and will need to sign in and out of the building for fire safety reasons, through logging of their fob at the reception area.

## **7 EQUIPMENT AND FURNITURE.**

- 7.1 Working with colleagues in Corporate Estates the Head of Democratic Services has been keen to ensure that existing furniture and equipment is reused within the new office accommodation.
- 7.2 Due to the need to remove furniture from Clydach Vale during the latter end of the calendar year there may also be a period where the Council Business Unit / Members Services will again revert to Home Working during this period rather than the hybrid arrangement currently in place. Members can be assured that all Officers within the unit will still be fully contactable.
- 7.3 In respect of the webcasting equipment, as previously mentioned this will be in general a 'lift and shift' of the Council's current equipment. However, due to the variances with the layout of the new Council Chamber, to that in Clydach Vale, improvements with screen placements have been identified, with the addition of small desk monitors being made available to improve the hybrid experience for all Members within the Council Chamber.
- 7.4 Landline telephone provision will be made available for Members to utilise when 'hot desking' in the designated Members Area.
- 7.5 The Members Lounge area will have facilities available for basic refreshments.
- 7.6 The logistics of potential booking arrangements for hotdesking are being considered.

## **8 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS / SOCIO-ECONOMIC DUTY**

- 8.1 An equality and diversity impact assessment was undertaken as part of the report to Cabinet in respect of the Office Accommodation strategy.
- 8.2 The delivery of the Office Accommodation Strategy will be built on user centred design principles and where possible will be fully accessible and support equality and accessibility.

## **9. WELSH LANGUAGE IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 A Welsh Language Impact Assessment was undertaken as part of the report to Cabinet in respect of the Office Accommodation strategy.

## **10. CONSULTATION / INVOLVEMENT**

- 10.1 Members of Democratic Services Committee have visited the new accommodation and have been consulted upon in respect of the work undertaken to date.
- 10.2 Group Leaders have also been consulted as part of the scheduled meetings undertaken with the Head of Democratic Services and as part of the visit undertaken in August 2023.

## **11. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 As outlined within the Cabinet report, the Office Accommodation strategy would deliver annual and recurring revenue savings of £435k. This level of saving is supported by rental income generated at Llys Cadwyn now being in excess of that assumed in the original business case enabling the Council to benefit from this.
- 11.2 Fit out costs will be funded from a combination of existing office accommodation budgets, any capital receipts generated from the delivery of the strategy and the annual revenue savings in the short term.

## **12. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS OR LEGISLATION CONSIDERED**

- 12.1 The Council's power to dispose of land and buildings is contained in Section 123 of the Local Government Act 1972
- 12.2 The Council's power to acquire land and buildings is contained in Section 120 of the Local Government Act 1972

## **13. LINKS TO THE CORPORATE AND NATIONAL PRIORITIES AND THE WELL-BEING OF FUTURE GENERATIONS ACT.**

13.1 The Office Accommodation Strategy contribute towards the priorities in the Corporate Plan:

- Ensuring **People: are independent, healthy and successful;**
- Creating **Places: where people are proud to live, work and play;**
- Enabling **Prosperity: creating the opportunity for people and businesses to: be innovative; be entrepreneurial; and fulfil their potential and prosper**

13.2 The Well-being goals which are particularly relevant to the Office Accommodation Strategy include:

- **A Healthier Wales:** a society in which people's physical and mental well-being is maximised and in which choices and behaviours that benefit future health are understood
- **A Globally Responsible Wales:** a nation which, when doing anything to improve the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales, takes account of whether doing such a thing may make a positive contribution to global well-being
- **A More Equal Wales:** a society that enables people to fulfil their potential no matter what their background or circumstances (including their socio-economic circumstances)

13.3 The Office Accommodation Strategy is consistent with the sustainable approach promoted by the with the five ways of working:

- Long term – the strategic approach takes into account that factors can change over time, we will continue to evaluate and monitor trends and will utilise a range of effective interventions to support our objectives for the long term
- Prevention – the strategic framework recognises that the Council needs to protect its assets to ensure that the land and building portfolio does not deteriorate or fall into disrepair and complies with statutory requirements. We will collaborate and share data and experiences with other public bodies to encourage early intervention
- Integration – a key feature of the Council's strategic approach to asset management is to ensure it is joined up, integrated, and coordinated with the Council's Digital and Workforce plans and the Council's Town Centre Regeneration Strategy
- Collaboration – intrinsic to the vision and objectives is collaboration with other public services and third sector organisations to make the best use of the public estate

- Involvement – communities and Council services will be involved with the delivery of objectives and have their say

#### **14. CONCLUSION**

- 14.1 The Council's Office Accommodation Strategy and Operating Model & Working Arrangements Policy sets out a clear direction of travel and framework for our longer-term ambitions for the Council's office accommodation portfolio for the period 2023/2030.
- 14.2 It is important that Members are equipped with appropriate meeting requirements to ensure that Members can conduct their role.

**LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

**AS AMENDED BY**

**THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT (ACCESS TO INFORMATION) ACT 1985**

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