

North Somerset Council

Report to the PCOM Policy and Scrutiny Panel

Date of Meeting: 21st July 2022

Subject of Report: Accommodation Strategy

Town or Parish: All

Officer/Member Presenting: Amy Webb, Director of Corporate Services

Key Decision: N/A

Reason: N/A

Recommendations

None. The report is provided for information only.

1. Summary of Report

The report provides the PCOM Policy and Scrutiny Panel with an update on delivering the Accommodation Strategy, which was approved by Council on 23 February 2021 and an update in relation to:

- Accommodation Strategy Scrutiny Steering Group
- Summary of work to date
- Programme and Key Milestones

2. Policy

This project supports the aims and objective within the Council's Corporate Plan, Economic Plan, Climate Emergency Plan, Medium Term Financial Plan and Capital Strategy.

3. Background

Council decisions

In February 2021, the Council agreed to:

- The adoption of the following corporate strategies:
 - Strategic Asset Management & Property Plan (SAMPP)
 - Accommodation Strategy (AS)
 - Development Strategy (DS)
- Feasibility and Business Cases proceed, in relation to the recommendations arising from these strategies
- The allocation of capital funding to progress these strategies
- To deliver in accordance with the key timelines of June 21, October 21 and March 22 and utilise the findings of the business cases to inform the Council's 5-year Capital Programme

Accommodation Strategy overview

- NSC undertook an organisation-wide Office Amalgamation Programme and an ICT Transformation Programme between 2007 – 2012
- This programme improved desk ratios from 1:1 to 7:10 (based on 1200 staff = 840 workstations)
- Since this programme, overall staff numbers across NSC have reduced from c.1800 to c.1400 and this will have impacted on office space requirements
- COVID-19 has increased the amount of flexible working and there is a clear acceptance from managers and staff to maintain a flexible working model into the future

In February 2021, the Council agreed to the progression with the accommodation strategy in order to find the optimum flexible working model which takes in to account the following drivers:

- Reduced staff travel linked to our climate change ambition
- Improved work: life balance due to reduced commutes
- Improved productivity
- Opportunity to reduce our asset base in line with our Medium-Term Financial Planning (MTFP)

The Council acknowledged that this work could lead to the closure of Castlewood, but this was not a primary driver.

4. Update / Progress to date

PCOM Policy and Scrutiny Panel

It was agreed at the PCOM Policy and Scrutiny Panel meeting on 3 March 2022 an Accommodation Strategy Scrutiny Steering Group to be established; to include PCOM members and members who had expressed an interest in being more involved with the programme.

The inaugural meeting was held 28 April 2022 and an update pack was provided. The Group agreed:

- A copy of the plan on a page (POAP) to be provided to members (monthly) by way of a route map for the programme
- The rhythm of scrutiny engagement meetings to be 2 monthly and to align with the Programme Board dates

The Group met on 7 July 2022 to discuss and review activity and progress to date; the latest iteration of the Plan on a Page for the Accommodation Strategy (Appendix 1) and update pack was provided to support the meeting.

The Group agreed to:

- Identify and agree areas / topics to focus on for a deep dive (for discussion and review)
- Focus on areas of concerns / blockages
- Costs against budget being a standard item update

Summary of work to date

Work has continued to progress the detailed design and delivery of the reconfiguration of the Town Hall site at Weston.

Town Hall - Concept Layouts

Following the appointment of ONE Creative (Design Team) the concept layouts have been developed for the first, second and third floors of Weston Town Hall, building on the Arcadis test fit concepts. These concepts layouts (RIBA Stage 3) were approved by Programme Board (CLT) on 6 July 2022 to allow progression into RIBA Stage 4 – Technical Design; this stage is the final design stage.

A number of design issues have been identified through the design development. These include fire safety, toilet provision, building services, access and facilities. Given this, a 4 week strategic review; approved by the Programme Board (CLT) on 6 July 2022 is to be undertaken, to ensure needs are being met and make any final decisions before the commencement of RIBA Stage 4: Technical Design. As from this point onwards any changes to brief and scope become more difficult to manage and result in abortive work and therefore additional cost.

R&M backlog works

Kier (AA Projects Ltd) have been appointed and work on R&M surveys will commence on 13 July 2022, to provide a feasibility report on R&M work required, with the fire safety review to be prioritised. The initial findings are due by 9 August 2022.

Castlewood Transition

A Castlewood transition plan (for teams, partners and tenants) is in progress, to detail the timeline for all team moves.

A number of teams will not be transferred to the Town Hall in this phase due to the nature of their work and their specific requirements (service / space / storage) – e.g., access to vehicles, equipment, storage needs e.g., music service. These teams will remain in Castlewood until either appropriate space / storage can be made available at Town Hall or alternative accommodation is agreed e.g., depot for Highways teams. Flex desks will be available on all floors for these teams to work in the Town Hall to collaborate with other colleagues and partners.

Consultation and engagement with these directorates and organisations is being undertaken and it is recognised that further work and decisions are needed, including locking down the final number of teams and colleagues to remain in Castlewood until alternative and suitable options are agreed. The proposals and recommendations will be provided to the Project and Programme Board for approval.

Work and engagement with partners and tenants will continue, with updates being provided and attendance at the tenant stakeholder meetings.

Castlewood options

Following the Programme Board (CLT) approval for the options for the Castlewood site to be taken forward outside of the Accommodation Strategy Programme, the re-development proposals have been disaggregated and are being treated as a separate distinct project from the accommodation work. A separate report on the re-development of Castlewood has been provided.

The Accommodation Strategy Programme will continue to manage the transition of staff to the Town Hall and the exclusions works and report against this.

Managing the use of energy in Castlewood

The PCOM update in March 2022 advised that a project was underway to understand measures that could be implemented to reduce the usage of energy in the building since it is underutilised.

Summary of current position:

An initial review undertaken by the Council's energy engineer has identified opportunities to install a small split air conditioning system to allow cooling of the server room enabling switch off, from the main system.

A review of building management controls and a circulation pump replacement programme to provide more energy efficient solutions is required. A reduction in hot water storage capacity has also been identified as a potential cost-effective measure.

It is noted that the current cooling / heating system is based on vertical zones rather than horizontal which is challenging to manage in terms of a reduction in services aligned to a reduced occupancy in the building.

Funding has been confirmed by the Finance Team to undertake further analysis. A feasibility study is to be commissioned to include provision of budget costs and a cost benefit analysis of the measures identified to achieve a reduction in energy consumption and associated savings to the Council.

Programme and key milestones

Key points to note:

The programme sponsorship has been transferred to Amy Webb, Director of Corporate Services as sole sponsor.

A further workstream for travel and parking has been incorporated within the programme, to consider and address the immediate needs for colleagues, the Town Hall works and to ensure alignment with the Council's strategic approach. The scope of this workstream and key dates will be progressed and progressed over the next period of activity.

Town Hall - reconfiguration works

The indicative programme and key milestones for the reconfiguration of the Town Hall has been defined further with the design team; this will be updated to consider and reflect the design issues identified during the strategic review period.

The table below shows the strategic review period (4 weeks) included. These remain subject to change and any decisions to be reached on the Repairs and Maintenance (R&M) backlog work to be undertaken (based on priority and compliance) and the extent of these works, as this will impact on the overall programme, dates and delivery.

Key Milestones	Timescale
Contractor appointment	October 2022
Furniture procurement	October 2022 – February 2023
*Phase 1 works (4 weeks)	15 February – 14 March 2023
*Phase 2 works (4 weeks)	15 March – 11 April 2023
*Phase 3 works (4 weeks)	12 April – 9 May 2023

*The phasing and timescales reflect the original brief and assumptions with regards to the scope comprising reconfiguration of the existing furniture, provision of new furniture where required and minor enabling works to the electrical and data cabling to facilitate the new layout. As set out the design development process has identified compliance issues relating to fire safety and toilet provision based on the proposed increase in numbers of staff which will need to be addressed. It is anticipated that incorporating these works once defined will likely have a negative impact on the programme, extending beyond the timescales set out.

Climate Change and Environmental

The programme team continue to work closely with colleagues to make sure we are joined up to support the Council's ambition to be a net zero carbon council by 2030 and are working with the Waste Team and the Sustainable Travel teams to ensure:

- The principle of repair, reuse, reduce and recycle will be used for any future, fittings and equipment (FFE)
- Any surplus furniture can be re-purposed in a way that benefits the local community.
- The energy efficiency of the Town Hall is assessed and for any changes needed to be considered as part of the design and investment works
- The Green Travel Plan objectives are considered and incorporated (reflected) within the programme

5. Consultation / Comms and Engagement

A Comms and Engagement plan on a page (POAP) has been developed for key stakeholders and staff; this will continue to be reviewed and updated. Consultation and engagement will continue to be undertaken with directorates and colleagues.

6. Financial Implications

Full cost plans are being developed.

7. Legal Powers and Implications

N/A

8. Climate Change and Environmental Implications

Engagement with the council's Climate Emergency Project Manager in the delivery of the Accommodation Strategy, including the development of the business cases and new ways of working continues to ensure that it aligns with the Climate Emergency Action Plan.

9. Risk Management

A risk register continues to be updated as part of the programme. Risks will be captured and fully assessed and managed by the Working Group Leads with oversight from the CLT Programme Board.

10. Equality Implications

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) have been completed and circulated for feedback; including to chairs of staff forums and unions (meeting 30 June).

11. Corporate Implications

The Accommodation Strategy has been developed within the overarching priorities contained within the Corporate Plan and the emerging priorities from 2038 Local Plan.

12. Options Considered

N/A

Author:

Amy Webb, Director of Corporate Services

Appendices:

Appendix 1: Accommodation Strategy Programme - Plan on a Page (POAP) – 20 June 2022

Background Papers:

Accommodation Strategy – COU 168 Council 23rd February 2021

Accommodation Strategy Update – Strategic Outline Business Case: The future of Castlewood – COU 15th February 2022

Accommodation Strategy Update – Castlewood - 10th May 2022

Accommodation Strategy Scrutiny Steering Group - update pack (28 April 2022)

Accommodation Strategy Scrutiny Steering Group - update pack (7 July 2022)