

## **Shared Accommodation Project at Brympton Way Offices**

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### **Purpose of the Report**

To update members of Scrutiny Committee with the outcomes of the shared accommodation project, and any further work being undertaken or planned as a result of the changes

### **Forward Plan**

This report appeared on the Scrutiny Forward Plan with an anticipated Committee date of February 2016.

### **Public Interest**

In addition to facilitating revenue savings for both organisations through more intensive use of a single facility, there is an added dimension of public interest in the shared accommodation project because key public services have been brought under one roof and are now delivered from the same location in Yeovil

### **Recommendations**

It is recommended that Scrutiny note the findings of this update report, and the works ongoing as a result of the shared accommodation project.

### **Elements of project, and ongoing work as a consequence of office moves**

#### **Lease and Preparation Works**

- The Lease comprised several related documents and all had to be agreed before SSDC could start works (and incur significant expenditure). These negotiations started late December 2013 and concluded in August 2014.
- As time was tight, in parallel with the negotiations the Property and Engineering team prepared plans for the works to Brympton Way, applied for planning approval for the car park extension, and sought tenders for the car park extension, removals and ancillary works (electricals, car park lighting, fire risk assessment, security system etc. This meant we were ready to press the green light as soon as documents were signed.
- Completion of the 'Agreement to lease' document meant that both parties were committed to the project, and could not back out. Once this was signed, we were able to carry out our office moves, and free up the red floor, as well as award tenders for the works SSDC agreed to do internally, and start the car park extension externally. Deadlines were set in the agreement for SSDC in order that there would be enough time for SCC to vacate Maltravers House in time to meet the break clause in their lease.

- Once we were ready to hand over the red floor, the lease could be signed, and this was done in early October 2014. The council also received the first rental payment and service charge in advance to cover the period up to Christmas. There were some further deadlines for SSDC to meet in accordance with the lease by December 2014, including the new door with swipe from the canteen to access the new car park at the rear of the building which is used by SCC staff.
- As time was tight, we also agreed to carry out some work on behalf of SCC, which included the installation of 3 phase electricity to the red floor. This was done during the weekend following the vacation of the red floor, with their contractors starting on site the week after, so close coordination was essential.

### **Office Moves**

- There were several drafts of the new office layouts during December 2013 and January 2014 during an extensive staff consultation exercise. We also carried out an occupation survey, and the combination of the two allowed us to create a 'best fit' for team size, office use, and spaces available.
- We used our own version of the 'hot desk' model with the fundamental principle that no one 'owns' their own desk any more. This allows greater utilisation of space because it is agreed that desks can be shared, and foreseeable factors such as staff holidays/sickness/training etc mean that fewer desks are required and space can be saved. Studies show that offering 7 desks for 10 staff is more than adequate, and we have actually achieved 8.3 desks for 10 staff.
- A further guiding principle was that we wanted to fit the teams into the spaces available, rather than spend money creating new spaces. This ensured the amount of building work we needed to carry out was kept to a minimum.
- We also wanted to 'add value' with some efficiencies where possible, so for example Customers First are all now based on the ground floor, the Licensing service (who have the highest number of visitors) are also on the ground floor, Building Control are sited alongside Development Control, and GIS now work alongside ICT.
- The modest building works and office moves were carried out during August and September 2014 and completed on time. Spare office furniture was moved to a vacant unit at the small business centre for sorting, and this was all cleared by April 2015 when the unit was leased to a business that had suffered a fire and needed to move quickly.

### **Car Park Extension**

- As described above, by the time the Agreement to Lease was signed, we were ready to start the car parking works. SCC asked for 120 spaces, and creating them included a new car park at the rear of BW, new visitor spaces behind the flagpole and at the entrance to the service yard, and the creation of additional spaces utilising shrub beds, and trialling some 'tandem' spaces as an efficient use of space and to meet planning requirements. The net loss to current arrangements for SSDC is 14 spaces, which surveys indicated could be easily accommodated.
- The new car park at the rear and the changes at the front, was all completed by mid-December 2014.
- Members expressed concern about the potential for parking off site on the Lynx estate. Much emphasis at meetings with SCC staff was placed on preventing this, but with SCC charging for staff parking permits, some staff have chosen to park off site. However, this is limited due to the new double yellow lines that were painted (coincidentally) towards the end of 2014.
- The whole of the car park has been made subject to a car parking order, which means that enforcement action can be taken if necessary. Car passes have been issued to SSDC officers and Members and these must be displayed at all times.

- A new lighting scheme was implemented at the same time as the work to create the new spaces. This replaced columns and lighting units that were starting to fail. The new bulbs are LED, which are particularly energy efficient.

### **Liaison with County staff moving across**

- An SSDC project team coordinated the whole process on behalf of this council, but in addition a joint project team was formed to represent both councils, and they considered the many issues that inevitably arise when sharing a building from start to finish of the project. SCC had only recently started to share with Sedgemoor DC, so knew the likely priorities, and the team ensured problems were dealt with prior to the moves whenever possible.
- Agreement was reached on a comprehensive shared office protocol dealing with matters such as security passes, post, opening hours and so on.
- SSDC continued to operate the reception service and now act as contact point for SCC visitors. A protocol for the extent of this work, how a recharge is calculated and a process for dealing with complaints has been jointly agreed. Recently they have agreed to part fund the security guard, which is a welcome development.
- A 'welcome' programme was originally planned, but the moves have been happening gradually as different SCC facilities are moved, and the last staff to be based at Brympton Way are not scheduled to move until April. In the meantime, a joint facilities management group meets regularly and has become the main focus for joint working problems and successes. An example of the latter was the installation of the solar panels on the council chamber and extension roofs, which was accessed from county parking spaces. An agreement was reached to allow certain members of the SCC staff to park in the new visitor spaces by the service yard, and the installation went without a hitch. Other opportunities are also being taken to integrate SCC staff in to the life of the BW offices, which includes participating in the blood doning sessions, use of the canteen etc, and recently they used the council chamber for a series of all staff meetings, which worked out very well. Subject to availability, it is anticipated they will be invited to participate in our health and wellbeing programme.

### **Review**

- Immediately after the moves, staff were invited to let us know of any problems for them, and many staff suggestions and requests were actioned immediately, for example requests for additional furniture, shelves and so on. These were all completed and signed off.
- A more formal review was carried out in March 2015 to consider the actual experience of working in the new arrangements, and this together with our observations and experience highlighted a number of issues that could be further considered. One of these was the need for a space that could be used by staff who are part of smaller team, or single staff, or staff that only access the office occasionally or for short periods, and are therefore not aligned to one particular team. When the Benefits enforcement team transferred to DWP in 2015, the opportunity was taken to address this by moving HR into the space they had occupied. This had the positive effect of giving HR a dedicated room and greater confidentiality. Their former space on the other side of the legal team was then utilised to form a 'hot desk' area, which is now fully utilised by the staff mentioned above. A further issue to be addressed this year will be the additional staff expected following the success of the Leisure team in attracting grant funding. Other more significant change put on hold at least until the business cases for shared or solo working are considered, are consideration of the more effective use of meeting rooms, and the space used by Directors and Assistant Directors. Other issues would require funding and additional space to be found to provide (for example) additional showers and lockers to enable more people to cycle or walk to work.

- Although as part of the project all the car parking spaces requested by SCC were delivered, they are experiencing pressure for their spaces on particular days and times and they have asked us for any assistance we might be able to offer. As part of this work, we are carrying out a review of the use of SSDC spaces, which we will be able to compare with the survey work we did before sharing, to see whether we are also experiencing increased pressure on 'our' side of the barrier and whether this suggests what the reasons might be. This work should be completed over the next few weeks.

## Financial Analysis

The table below shows the budgets allocated to the project for both capital and revenue, and the associated spend against each.

<b>Capital</b>	£
SSDC Original Capital Allocation	254,000
Contribution from SCC	<u>12,000</u>
Net Budget	242,000
Spend on extension of car park & associated works	208,000
Underspend returned to balances	34,000

<b>Revenue</b>	£
Original Revenue Budget	100,000
Spend on:	
Employee & premises expenses	1,322
Supplies & Services	46,300
Payments to Contractors	<u>57,066</u>
Total Spend	104,688
Overspend covered by public offices budget	4,688

The ongoing revenue budget is summarized in the table below.

<b>2015/16 Revenue Budget</b>	£
Rental & Service Charge Income	189,200
Less Security Costs	<u>22,000</u>
	167,200

Additional income is being raised from an annual contribution of £11,470 for Reception Services and negotiations are currently ongoing with SCC for a contribution of £7,500 towards the security guard. Further savings are also expected from electricity and business rates costs.

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