

Runnymede Borough CouncilCIVIC OFFICES REPROVISION SUB-COMMITTEE24 April 2007 at 7.30 pm

Members of the Sub-Committee present: Councillors J.R. Furey (Chairman), P.J. Waddell (Vice Chairman), Mrs L.M. Gillham, C.J. Norman and Mrs J. Norman

Member of the Sub-Committee absent: Councillor N. Thewlis.

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Groups mentioned below had notified the Chief Executive Officer of their wish that the changes listed be made to the membership of the Corporate Management Committee and this Sub-Committee. The changes were for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and thereafter the Councillors removed would be re-appointed both to the Corporate Management Committee and the Sub-Committee. (The substitution of Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham for Councillor A. Alderson applied only in respect of the Sub-Committee since Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham was already a member of the Corporate Management Committee).

Group Requesting Change	Remove from Membership	Appoint Instead
Conservative	Councillor J.E. Haas	Councillor Mrs J. Norman
Runnymede Independents	Councillor A. Alderson	Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham

The Chief Executive Officer had given effect to these wishes in accordance with Section 16(2) of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

MINUTES

The Minutes of the meeting of the Sub-Committee held on 23 January 2007 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

Apologies for absence had been received from Councillor N. Thewlis.

PROJECT CONSTRUCTION PROGRESS REPORT

The Committee received a presentation from the scheme architects, Feilden Clegg Bradley, regarding the construction of the building, which had now reached the half way point. The Committee was also informed of progress by Buro Four Project Services, who were managing the Civic Offices project. .

The Sub-Committee noted that the frame of the building had now been constructed and noted the appearance of the car park, the mezzanine level, the front of house area, the west and east elevations and the elevation to Station Road. Ducts running across the floor plates had proved challenging to contractors. The quality of light within the building and the mass of the building, which should result in a comfortable temperature, were noted. The Sub-Committee expressed some concern about the appearance of the brickwork and the fact that it appeared to be covered in salts. It was noted that this should improve with the sharpening of the pointing and cleaning of the brickwork immediately before the removal of the scaffolding. The recent dry weather had been good for bricklaying. The curtain walling and interior packaging were about to commence and the dry lining process was in its early stage. The Sub-Committee were pleased with the appearance of the front-of-house space and with the views from the Council Chamber and from the Members' Room. Work

was in progress on colours, graphics and the development of branding opportunities, within the building. The Sub-Committee expressed general satisfaction with the progress of the work and thanked all Officers involved.

Willmott Dixon continued to report that the works would be complete on 2 November 2007. The cost continued to be contained within budget. The contract packages had now been completed by the consultants and issued to Willmott Dixon. The Council continued to develop its operational strategy. The schedule prepared by the Design Team identifying when decisions were required, so that they did not impact on the build programme, continued to be updated. Feilden Clegg Bradley had been developing the front of house arrangements with the Council and the Police.

Design work for Safer Runnymede had now been completed, and was being costed. Final conclusion of the provision of back up power supply and cable entry points needed resolution for the purposes of BSI accreditation. The IT cabling had been procured by the Council's IT section, after a formal tendering process, the details of which were reported elsewhere on the Agenda. These works were now being instructed under the main contract.

The Council was just short of an "excellent" rating under BREEAM (an assessment of the environmental sustainability of the new building). A number of strategies were being examined in order to achieve the excellent rating. A report would be submitted to the Sub-Committee if it transpired that the additional measures required to achieve "excellent" BREEAM status breached the cost principles which had been set out at the start of the project.

The building contract and bond with Willmott Dixon were in place. Sub contractor warranties had been received and were being checked by the solicitors. Warranties in favour of the Police would be prepared upon the execution of their lease agreement. Party wall matters had been concluded. Relationships between Willmott Dixon's site team and the Design Team continued in a positive manner. Sensitive issues over finance and the programme had arisen, and progress was being made on their resolution.

Progress on site had been hampered by the installation of the pre cast concrete panels. This had been delayed by the need to install supporting cleats. There had also been a number of alterations necessary to the steel frame. As a result of these delays, Willmott Dixon had submitted a claim for a three week extension of time, although they had established a mitigation strategy to maintain the target completion date. Under the building contract, Feilden Clegg Bradley, as contract administrators, had to assess the validity of the claims. The claims were awarded against two criteria, time and cost. Feilden Clegg Bradley had reviewed the first claim (delays in installation of the concrete ducts), and had decided that they could not allow any additional time for this. They would be reviewing the other two claims.

Four planning conditions remained outstanding. Responsibility to action these had been identified. Buro Four had also reported on financial matters relating to the project and this was included in the report on the updated Project Cost Plan, which was a separate item on the Agenda.

It was agreed that Officers would consult with Members on arrangements for a visit for Council Members to the new offices, which would probably take place at around the end of May. The visit would last for about an hour and a half, in order to cover the whole of the building. It was agreed that it would be appropriate to also invite some local organisations. The visit could either be undertaken as part of the "topping out" ceremony at the end of May or could be arranged separately. Officers would liaise with the site manager on the best option.

FRONT OF HOUSE PILOT - PROGRESS REPORT

(Ref: Minutes of Corporate Management Committee, 1 March 2007, page 1009, para 573)

The Committee was informed of progress on the Front of House Pilot Project.

At its meeting in January 2007, the Sub-Committee had approved the adoption of a three stage programme over the next 18 months designed to further enhance the handling of telephone and personal callers to the Civic Offices, improve the resilience and flexibility of the Front of House service and relieve pressure on back office specialist staff. The first phase of the project was to be the implementation of a six month Front of House pilot in which reception and call handling functions would be separated and existing departmental reception staff co-located. Preparations for the first

phase pilot, led by a Project Manager, were now nearing completion and the implementation of the project was currently scheduled for 14 May 2007.

The new, unified Front of House resource would deal with most personal callers and receive most incoming telephone calls at switchboard (existing direct dial arrangements and main switchboard facilities in high volume areas of works such as benefits would not be disturbed). The intention was to create a service capable of providing a wide range of information on Council services and undertaking a variety of routine transactions at first point of contact, in addition to the normal onward referral of telephone callers and visitors to back office sections. Members of the team would rotate between switchboard and reception duties.

The core main desk Front of House resource was to be augmented by up to six operators dispersed throughout the departments, (to be known as "virtual switchboard" operators). These staff would be trained and supported in a similar fashion to the central team. In addition to overflow call handling they would also form the pool from which cover for the front desk (whether reception or switchboard) was drawn. This would enhance knowledge and skills, team cohesion and resilience. It would also overcome the need for service departments to identify other back office staff to provide adequately trained cover for what would become an increasingly complex role. "Virtual" staff would, however, remain located within their respective departments and continue to devote the majority of their time to their existing duties. Budgetary provision existed to support the backfilling of their duties if necessary.

The direction of phase 2 of the project, to be implemented upon migration to the new offices, would be determined following evaluation of the pilot. A judgement would be made at this stage as to which elements had been successful and whether minor adjustment or an entirely new approach was required. A decision on whether to purchase a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) software package would be made during this second phase. A CRM was likely to be associated with a contact centre solution, which usually required this form of software support. There should at this point be a better understanding of the nature, depth and volumes of enquiries from the public and the extent to which integration in to back office systems would yield operational, service and efficiency benefits.

The final phase of the project, some months after occupancy of the new offices, would be conditioned by the lessons learned and a satisfactory outcome from phase 2. This was likely to move towards a further enhancement of call handling, perhaps with the benefit of a CRM, and an extension of the number and range of enquiries dealt with at first point of contact.

The initial scope of the pilot Front of House operation would be those duties currently undertaken at main reception and the Housing/Finance reception, together with a range of straightforward self-contained (mainly non Planning) functions drawn from the Technical Services front desk. The current Housing/Finance reception area would be closed from the outset. The depth of the tasks presently performed by Technical Services administrative staff was such that a very significant training programme would need to be put in place in order to accommodate full integration of their duties from the start. Efforts would be made to identify additional Technical Services functions which could be brought within scope once the pilot had been established. In the meantime, the Technical Services front desk would be closed in order to replicate as closely as possible the arrangements in the new offices. Administrative staff would come forward to meet callers at the main reception when the need arose.

The duties of the smaller volume Leisure and Licensing front desks could be absorbed during the course of the pilot, once staff had gained some familiarity with their tasks. These desks would therefore be closed at some stage during the course of the pilot. One early benefit was likely to be the transfer of knowledge gained from dealing with personal callers to the switchboard operation. In some instances there was presently a difference in treatment of visitors and telephone callers with the same enquiry. Whereas a wide range of information was supplied at first contact to visitors to the respective receptions, a similar query received by phone at main switchboard would often be connected through to the back office. Once Front of House staff recognised and became confident in the subject matter, such telephone calls should also be capable of resolution at switchboard, thereby relieving demands on departmental Officers.

Over the long term, it was envisaged that certain back office processes would move to Front of House as skills and support/interrogation systems were enhanced. It would only be towards the end of the pilot that staff were likely to be sufficiently skilled and experienced in the full range of duties to

enable a proper evaluation to be undertaken. The situation would, however, be kept under constant review and the scope of the project could be widened or narrowed, as appropriate.

The new Front of House team would comprise 5 full-time equivalent (FTE) on the main desk drawn from reception (2 FTE), Technical Services Administration (1.5 FTE) and Housing/Finance reception (1 FTE) together with 0.5 FTE from departmental savings. Given the part time working patterns of the Officers concerned, this equated to approximately 8 members of staff. As one of the posts transferred from Technical Services was vacant and as other staff had taken the opportunity to reduce their working hours there had been a need to recruit externally.

Five virtual switchboard operators had also been recruited, including representatives from each department (2 from the Department of Administration and Leisure). These had largely been drawn from sections most likely to benefit from the new arrangements. Not only would the tangible benefits to be derived from the initiative help to secure the cooperation of line managers, but the staff themselves would also contribute relevant skills and knowledge to the team.

As there could be no certainty that the pilot structure would be maintained in its present form beyond the end of the first phase project, staff had been seconded to the Front of House team for an initial period of six months rather than being transferred into new permanent positions. External appointees were being engaged on temporary contracts. For the duration of the pilot, all members of the main desk team would be graded at Scale 6, consistent with the original proposals. There were no substantive changes to the terms and conditions of the virtual operators, although they would receive a small monthly responsibility allowance. Once the pilot was operational, line management responsibility for the Front of House team would lie with the Project Manager.

All main desk staff and virtual operators were about to commence a three week training programme, to outline the purpose of the pilot, to familiarise them with the basic functions and systems within the initial scope, including switchboard operation, and to build team cohesion. Short, practical half day training sessions led by the practitioners in each individual service area would be supplemented by the shadowing of the current Housing/Finance, Technical Services and main reception desks and the handling of dummy calls. The short period of time available for training and the need to minimise the associated disruption of services as staff were removed from front line duties, did, however, inevitably mean there would be ongoing training needs which would have to be addressed once the pilot was live. A comprehensive step by step procedure guide was currently being compiled.

The need to arrange sufficient time for training had meant that the project had slipped a fortnight from its original schedule. Officers would be reminded of the need to ensure that telephones were manned, or that voicemail and call diversion facilities were used.

Minor building works entailing physical adaptations to the ground floor reception area would be made to accommodate the new team. While the Housing/Finance and Technical Services desks would be closed to the public, effective use of the existing facilities and floorspace would continue to be made in order to minimise cost and disruption of services. Services for personal callers would be focused on the existing main reception desk, which would include a dedicated "meet and greet" position for visitor signing in and for queries which could be dealt with quickly and easily (known as "fast track" queries). The switchboard consoles would be relocated to the present Housing/Finance desk, which would be screened from public view. A small suite of public PCs would also be provided in order to replicate the existing provision for Planning and Land Charges enquiries and to facilitate access to web based public service information and self service functions on the Council's website. The equipment needed for the project to begin was either already in place or on order awaiting delivery.

Monitoring of call waiting times, volumes, distribution and type would be undertaken during the pilot, using enhanced switchboard software, to assess the impact on service performance and to inform the future development of the Front of House Project. Customer satisfaction would also be measured by sampling the views of 200 telephone callers each month, through the use of an automated questionnaire at the conclusion of their enquiry. Hard copy questionnaires would be distributed to personal callers.

In the report to Corporate Management Committee on 1 March 2007 the details of the capital and revenue funding costs of establishing the pilot (£110,000) were noted together with the method of financing. Additional provision of £45,000 was approved for the current financial year. Expenditure committed to date totalled approximately £27,000.

Costings for the building adaptations were not yet available but were expected to be minimal. The extent of support necessary to backfill virtual operators' departmental roles was not yet known. It was anticipated, however, that overall project costs would be contained within the approved budgetary provision.

A Member requested details of the monitoring and measuring elements of the project.

Given the necessarily limited time available for preparation, the initial scope was relatively ambitious and capable, over time, of yielding benefits for back office staff and producing an enhanced customer experience. Some gradual development of the service was anticipated during the course of the pilot, but care would need to be taken to ensure that the scope was matched to capacity throughout.

The Sub-Committee endorsed the approach which was being taken and agreed that they should receive a further report on the progress of the pilot in approximately two months time.

PROPERTY RELATED ISSUES – UPDATE

Note: The Recommendation in respect of the Library Building in Church Road, Addlestone, referred to below in the fourth paragraph of this minute, is exempt from disclosure under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that it contains exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 as it relates to the business affairs of the authority and of other parties. The minute below provides a summary of the issues considered in the Recommendation, but does not disclose the exempt information. The full Recommendation appears in the exempt part of these minutes which follows this public part of the Sub-Committee's minutes.

By resolution of the Sub-Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Sub-Committee noted an update on the latest position in respect of each of the documentation and property matters associated with the Civic Offices project.

Members noted the details of recent discussions with Surrey County Council concerning the potential relocation of Addlestone Library to the new facility, gave consideration to the issues arising therefrom and agreed an Officer Recommendation regarding the way forward on this, which would be for the consideration of the Corporate Management Committee and Economic Development Committee. Although there had been positive developments since the last meeting of the Sub-Committee, a number of matters remained to be confirmed. If the issue could be finally concluded, the Sub-Committee agreed that the design and layout of the Library should be in keeping with the rest of the ground floor space.

It was hoped that the final documentation with the Police with regard to their co-location in the new offices could be completed in the near future. The Sub-Committee noted the arrangements for the marketing of the existing Civic Offices and Police Station sites.

FINANCIAL SUMMARY – PROJECT COST PLAN

By resolution of the Sub-Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Sub-Committee received the latest financial projections for the Civic Offices reprovision project. These showed scheme costs being contained within the original budget. The Sub-Committee noted the approved budget, the anticipated expenditure forecast at April 2007 and the value of the works to 31 March 2007, as well as the monthly cost report submitted by David Langdon (the consultant quantity surveyors), and a construction works summary. Davis Langdon had undertaken a detailed analysis of the procured contractual figures submitted by Willmott Dixon to ensure fair and reasonable payment. The adjustments to the value of the contingency remaining as advised by Buro Four Project Services, were noted by the Sub-Committee.

CONTRACT AWARD FOR CABLING FOR NEW CIVIC OFFICES

By resolution of the Sub-Committee, the press and public were excluded from the meeting during the consideration of this matter under Section 100A(4) of the Local Government Act 1972 on the grounds that the discussion would be likely to involve the disclosure of exempt information of the description specified in paragraph 3 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Sub-Committee noted the result of the tendering exercise to select a contractor for the installation of cabling for the new Civic Offices.

The contract for cabling the new offices had been advertised on the Council's website. Tender documents had been issued to those companies who had responded to the advertisement. In addition, tenders had also been invited using the Office of Government Commerce (OGC) electronic tendering procedures. The traditional tender and OGC electronic tender procedures had been run concurrently. Both traditional tender and OGC electronic tenders for network cabling had been evaluated simultaneously, allowing consideration of tenders from a number of specialist IT cabling suppliers who were not included in the OGC framework. The Sub-Committee noted the amounts of the five completed tenders which had been received. The criteria used by Officers to evaluate the tenders were price, design support and the resources to be allocated to the contract work. Adjustments had then been made by Officers, so that the requirements of the Contract Specification were met and so that the tenders could be compared on an equal technical basis. The Sub-Committee noted that the Contract had then been awarded to the tenderer as set out in the report and for the sum identified in the report.

It was anticipated that work installing the cabling would start in June and that this would be finished 6 to 8 weeks from the date of commencement.

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.00 pm)