

Runnymede Borough CouncilCIVIC OFFICES REPROVISION SUB-COMMITTEE22 September 2005 at 7.30pm

Members of the Sub-Committee present: Councillors J.R. Furey (Chairman), J.E. Haas (Vice-Chairman), Mrs L.M. Gillham, P.A. Greenwood, R.K. Habgood and Ms C.M. Simmons

Members of the Sub-Committee absent: None

NOTIFICATION OF CHANGES TO SUB-COMMITTEE MEMBERSHIP

The Conservative Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor C.J. Norman be removed from membership of the Sub-Committee and that Councillor Ms C.M. Simmons be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting and that thereafter Councillor Norman should be reappointed.

The Runnymede Independents Group had notified the Chief Executive Officer of its wish that Councillor A. Alderson be removed from membership of the Corporate Management Committee and from this Sub-Committee, and that Councillor Mrs L.M. Gillham be appointed in his place for a fixed period ending on the day after the meeting, and that thereafter Councillor Alderson should be reappointed to the said Committee and this Sub-Committee.

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 6 September 2005 were confirmed and signed as a correct record.

POTENTIAL WORK PROGRAMME AND REPORTS

Detailed consideration was given to the shape of the Sub-Committee's work programme and the matters upon which it wished to receive reports.

Members were of the opinion that one of the principal tasks would be to firmly establish the Council's service aspirations, performance and process requirements in the new offices. Clear definitions of the principles to be applied were essential to the planning of service provision and the utilisation of the new office space. This was illustrated by the proposals for the implementation of a Customer Relationship Management solution where it would be necessary to arrive at a clear view of the desired outcomes before the process mapping could be completed and any final procurement decision made.

Other aspects of the project requiring the attention of the Sub-Committee included Member training requirements, the Council Chamber and Civic space and a variety of IT and Safer Runnymede investment decisions. Members were also to receive costed options in respect of fixtures and fittings while a range of issues concerning front of house arrangements, such as configuration and the effect on relationship mapping, would need to be determined. It was agreed that the full cost plan, principally the responsibility of the retained Quantity Surveyors, should be reported to every meeting of the Sub-Committee to assist with budgetary control of the project. If necessary, the Sub-Committee would also seek to identify value engineering opportunities in order to manage any cost pressures as might occur. Although the recent Alexi Marmot report had indicated that there was no significant desire for changes to council services on the part of the public, it was recognised that there was, nevertheless, a need to plan for technological advances and changes in service standards and public expectations. The Council would therefore have to confront issues such as the use of wireless technology, and departmental relationships where there was linkage and overlap in process and responsibilities.

Members considered it essential to involve other Councillors in the establishment of the service and process framework which would guide the work of the Sub-Committee. To this end it was felt that all Members should be invited to participate in a preliminary scoping exercise to be undertaken along 'Planning for Real' type lines. The reports of the various Officer level project groups and the IT Member Working Group would also inform the Sub-Committee's deliberations, as would the findings of the Alexi Marmot report in respect of the aspirations of residents and the business community. It was emphasised that the scoping process needed to be manageable and restricted to those who were sufficiently acquainted with the parameters of the project.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the Sub-Committee's work programme should include the matters referred to below:**

**Front of house aspirations and options
Re-engineering opportunities
IT and Safer Runnymede investment options
Options re examples of fixtures and fittings
Council Chamber and Civic space
Definition of performance and process requirements
Member training requirements;**

- ii) reports and recommendations be submitted to the Sub-Committee from the relevant Project Groups and IT Member Working Group on these matters as appropriate;**
- iii) a preliminary scoping exercise be undertaken with all Members to further inform the Sub-Committee's deliberations; and**
- iv) the full cost plan be submitted to each meeting of the Sub-Committee.**

STAGE D DESIGN PROPOSALS

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 8 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

Further consideration was given to the design and cost proposals for the new Civic Offices in the light of the general presentation of the design concept to all Members on 20 September 2005.

The Sub-Committee noted that the feedback from the presentation had confirmed the view that the Stage D proposals were broadly consistent with the objectives for the project. Significant reservations remained only in respect of the corner treatment of the Council Chamber and aspects of the Station Road frontage, including the extent of the brickwork cladding and the use of narrow supporting pillars. In particular, concern was expressed at the angular nature of the external elevation on the corner of the Council Chamber and the potentially awkward juxtaposition with the adjoining properties. Proposals to address this by setting the new building back from the line of shops would serve only to expose the side of the Chamber, which was unrelieved by glazing in order to respect the privacy of its immediate neighbours. It was considered that the positive statement which the angular features sought to make would inevitably be compromised by the imperfect nature of the available sightlines. Members noted that the architects would be revisiting these aspects of the proposals with a view to meeting the concerns expressed.

RESOLVED that -

the Stage D design proposals be approved as meeting the objectives of the Civic Offices project, save for the reservations outlined above in respect of the corner treatment of the Council Chamber and aspects of the Station Road frontage.

NEGOTIATIONS WITH PROSPECTIVE OCCUPIERS OF 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 paragraphs 7 and 9 of Schedule 12A to Part 1 of the Act.

The Sub-Committee received details of the ongoing negotiations with those public agencies which had expressed an interest in co-locating services in the new Civic Offices.

Members were informed that discussions with the Police Service for the accommodation of its Addlestone staff with the Safer Runnymede facility were at an advanced stage. Talks were also taking place with Surrey County Council's Library Service with a view to the incorporation of a library/resource centre in the new building. It had, however, so far proved to be difficult to establish with any clarity the needs of a third potential partner.

In noting the nature of the proposed transactions, the financing arrangements and the likelihood of an agreement in each case, the Sub-Committee recognised the potential policy and service benefits arising from the co-location of services but emphasised that the Council could not expose itself to the associated construction costs on a speculative basis. Agreement would need to be reached with the prospective occupiers on Heads of Terms before the detailed design (Stage E) was signed off and the tendering process commenced. It was important, however, that the attempt to secure the participation of partners on acceptable terms did not significantly delay the overall project. Members therefore agreed that negotiations with the interested parties would have to be concluded by the middle of November in order to prevent slippage in the timetable. The terms would be structured in such a way as to safeguard the financial interests of the Council and provide for the recovery of the costs of provision.

RESOLVED that -

- i) the current position on negotiations with potential occupiers be noted;**
- ii) the principles guiding the negotiations with third parties outlined above and in paragraphs 3.6 and 3.7 of the agenda report be endorsed; and**
- iii) Officers be asked to bring the negotiations to a conclusion by the middle of November, so that the project timetable can be broadly maintained.**

Chairman

(The meeting ended at 9.50pm)