

Meeting	Full Council
Date	Tuesday 27 th July 2021
Report Title	Democratic Services & Governance Team Office Move
Agenda Reference	16
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Officer's Recommendations

To give the Chief Officer delegated authority to proceed with moving the Democratic Services & Governance Team to the upstairs meeting room. To reconfigure the existing downstairs office to allow for storage and a breakout space. To allocate a budget of £15,000 to be funded from General Reserves (approx. £435,000 available).

Background

The recent restructure has resulted in the appointment of new members of the team impacting upon the existing lack of desk space. It has been recognised that the downstairs office space is cramped and staff alleviate this by working in the upstairs or downstairs meeting rooms due to not having any room bookings during the pandemic.

Room hire is due to restart with a closely monitored soft relaunch in August, with the normal service resuming from September.

From 1st September the restructured team will be fully staffed (eight staff members to include the Chief Officer). There follows a period of at least four months close training and mentoring taking place. There is little capacity during this period for home working however when this is reintroduced it is unlikely to be more than two days per week for certain officers (Chief Officer, Deputy Clerk & Community Development). It is considered there remains the requirement for every member of staff to have their own desk, access to lockable filing cabinets and be in close proximity of their colleagues to aid communication, staff efficiencies and morale.

During the 'forming stage' of a new team's development, staff will have lots of questions for each other, reflecting their excitement about the new team and uncertainty or anxiety they might be feeling about their place on the team. It is crucial that the team operates from one office, with access to senior officers to ensure no one role is isolated.

For the purposes of this report the two part-time staff members (both under 15 hours per week) will share a hot desk. The Chief Officer will remain in their office and at times the Deputy Clerk will share this office space when working collaboratively on projects.

The proposed layout will accommodate 6 desks for seven members of staff. It will include a closed in area for confidential meetings to take place and double up as a quiet space for officers if and when required for report writing etc.



Considerations

POST Grounds Maintenance Facility

It is recognised the new Parks & Open Spaces Grounds Maintenance Facility will have capacity for additional office space. This will be used for POST meetings, the Head of POST and Deputy Manager. The Chief Officer & Deputy Clerk will use the space for meetings with the Head of Parks & Open Spaces.

Loss of the hire from the upstairs meeting room

Meeting hire income for the upstairs meeting room in 2018-19 equated to approximately 10% of the total income generated. The current downstairs office space can be reconfigured as a breakout space for up to 8 attendees and be adjacent meeting room.

This smaller space offers multiple uses and can be promoted as such eg. Occasional office space (with access to printers and scanners) for home workers, confidential meeting space (safeguarding groups take confidential calls in the stairwell currently) and breakout sessions space for main meeting room hire. The Council's existing hirers have been consulted and have indicated the breakout space downstairs will be sufficient size and space for their requirements and prefer to have all users on the same floor.

Meeting room storage

The downstairs office will be configured to include storage for the meeting hire. This will result in the downstairs meeting room to appear tidier and clear of all excess tables and chairs. It was also acknowledged that this will reduce the movement of equipment across the two floors, reducing the potential to scuff the recently decorated stairwell. Our existing hirers have commented this would be easier for them too and was storage downstairs was well received.

First floor weight limit

The space is used for hire of premises and up to 25 people use the room inclusive of the tables, chairs and storage in the eaves space. The Health & Safety Advisor has been consulted and advised that floor weight limits are under the remit of building regulations and will be dependent upon the materials used within the building. They consider the floor limit could be up to 250kg / m² but has asked an architect for further advice. The first floor will need to accommodate the furniture downstairs inclusive of the photocopier. The fire safe is not moveable and will need to remain on the ground floor.

Artists' picture rails

There are picture rails installed upstairs of the Artists' Group Exhibition which is held once per year. These rails can easily be moved downstairs if and when required.

Fire Safety

The fire exit is the main door on the ground floor building. The kitchen door closes when the fire alarm sounds and the downstairs doors will remain closed. The upstairs window opens wide enough to allow for use in extreme cases and a fire ladder and something to break the glass could be kept by the window in case of emergency. There

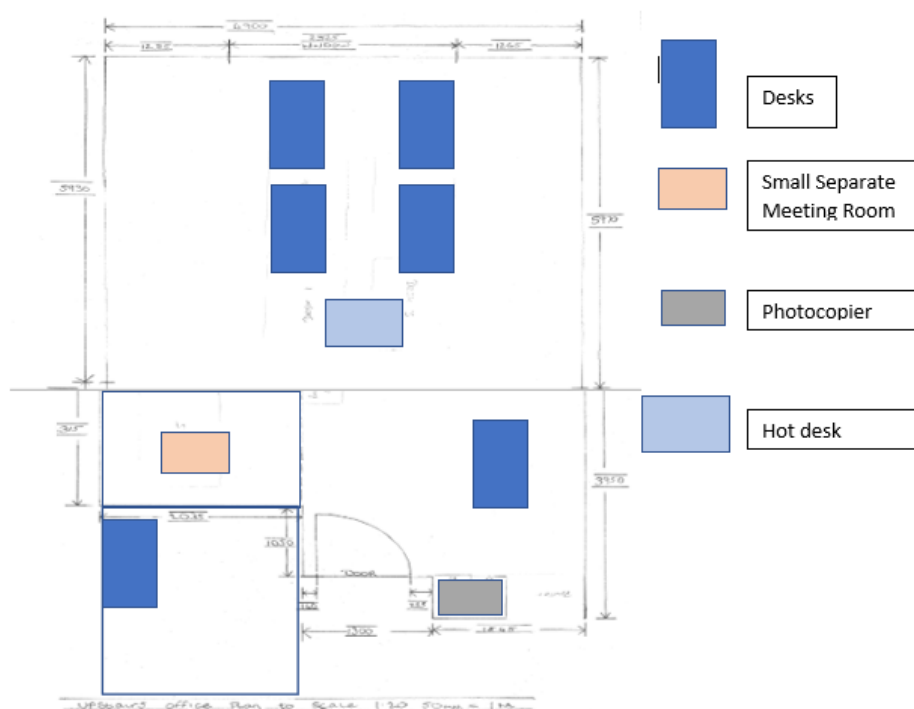


is also an exit from the Chief Officer's office window to the rear of the building. Fire extinguishers are in the upstairs room. The existing meetings spaces has previously been checked by a fire officer and no additional fire safety measures were required.

Accessibility

The office space upstairs is only accessible via the stairs. There are no current accessibility issues amongst the office team to prevent them using the stairs however further consideration should there be any changes in the future. With regards to current meeting space it was occasionally an issue for some enquiries. Council meetings will remain downstairs and be fully accessible.

Proposed Floor Plan



Costs

Electrician for data cabling, power sockets, lighting and telecoms

During the request for quotation stage the electricians provided many solutions such as trunking, floor boxes, power poles connecting from the existing projector wiring and cables being taken through the floor. During discussions, it was felt that the power pole coming down from the projector wiring in between the four connecting desks (see floor plan) would be more contained, less of a trip hazard and take less desk space, one power pole will be sufficient for all the desks and will then split into each individual desk by having its own power socket under the desk, the additional fifth desk can be connected via using the existing sockets going through the eaves.

The wiring for the telephone and data points can be wired through the ceiling. The fuse box in the Council Office is very out of date and the circuit is full, so the electricians would need to create a new power circuit and make amendments.



Front Door Access - Ring Video or similar

Two-way video can be set up to act as an intercom, it would mean the door will need to be manually unlocked by the person greeting the resident/councillor. Options for automatic release could be investigated in the future if the manual unlocking becomes an issue.

Air Conditioning

All air conditioning companies contacted gave a similar price for a reputable brand (such as Bosch, Samsung, or Phillips) to be placed on the external wall inclusive of fitting to a first floor level. Most providers confirmed due to the current heatwave, the demand for the air conditioning units is very high and they have a back log of requests from the pandemic. Units have an i-clean function which eliminates up to 99% of bacteria.

Other costs

Partitioning a small office space and reconfiguring the downstairs room for a breakout space – estimated costs.

Costs Overview

Job required	Option 1	Option 2	Other Costs	Timescale	Total
Electrician	Desktop Trunking £5,839.00	Power Pole £5,122.87	LED Lighting Upgrades £1,992.28 Circuit amendments £739.00	2 man job – complete in six days	£7,854.15 (Round up to £8,000)
Ring Video Access					£100
Air conditioning					£2,500
Partitioning a small confidential room upstairs and reconfigure downstairs office space to break out room					£2,000
Additional desks, chairs, storage x 2					£1,500
Contingency					£900
Grand total					£15,000