Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Estates Master Planning (EMP)

15 December 2021

Recommendation

That the Resources and Fire & Rescue Overview and Scrutiny Committee consider and comment on the content of the report and the proposals for future activity to progress the Estates Masterplan.

1.   Executive Summary

1.1   The continued development of the Estates Masterplanning and Workplace Redesign for Shire Hall and Old Shire Hall has been aligned to the Reinstatement of Services. For the Period 19/7/21 to 15/10/21, five Pilot Teams have been working from Shire Hall aligned to the following objectives:

- To understand how all elements of the 'How we work Programme' support pilot teams to develop their hybrid working model and what adjustments we need to make to support this.

- Use the feedback obtained from this pilot to inform the future redesign of Shire Hall/Old Shire Hall and other buildings across the estate, as we seek to improve the utilisation of our sites/rationalise our Warwick portfolio.

- Understand how we successfully bring services back to a safe working environment and test some of the concepts of our final Workplace Redesign.

1.2   The five pilot teams were:

- Resources
  - Legal and Democratic Services
  - Strategic Finance and
  - HR Enabling

- Communities
  - Engineering Design Services and
  - Transport and Highways.

2. Conclusions

2.1 The Pilot has been and continues to be impacted by people being reluctant or nervous to come into the office. The pilot identified the following key findings:

- The top three reasons that staff are returning to the office relate to collaboration activity. As a result there is likely to be a requirement for additional collaboration space. Staff have indicated that they do not believe they need to be in the office to undertake their roles, but do wish to be able to attend to collaborate.

- A number of external factors have affected the desire/willingness of staff to return to the office during the Pilot. These include

  - the increase in Covid infection rates,
  - "Pingdemics",
  - people isolating to protect others,
  - the petrol shortage, and
  - to increase ventilation, all windows are opened, and areas can be found to be colder.

- Hybrid meeting room technology has been successfully introduced and is welcomed. There is a desire for this technology to be standardised and widely available

- The use of the terms "agile" to describe a way of remote working for staff and "hybrid" to describe the use of technology to accommodate both in person and virtual attendance at the same meeting can be confusing for staff and would benefit from greater clarity. Although we have seen some staff move away from flex time arrangements in favour of a move onto agile contracts, the move has not been as great as we would have hoped and demonstrated that more work should be done to highlight the benefits of agile working.

- Pilot Teams are not in the same place on the change curve. For some, freedom and choice were liberating, for others the lack of corporate set rules caused difficulties with embedding the offer within teams.

- It takes time to embed an agile working culture within a Service and the Services who had taken steps to adopt an agile working culture pre-pandemic adapted much more quickly.

2.2   In summary, the results from the pilot are not conclusive due to a number of matters outside of the control of the organisation and the differing positions of teams on the change curve. Further piloting will not overcome this. Moving to "normalize" working in Shire Hall is therefore considered to be appropriate.

2.3   To normalize working in Shire Hall, the Project is recommending an interim reshaping of Shire Hall to accommodate more collaboration areas at the expense of some individual workstations. This recognises the preferred workstyle of staff

3.   Analysis

3.1   At the outset of the pilot a number of success and productivity measures were created to support the pilot and help understand the results, these measures and findings are as follows:

- **Workstation utilisation is on average >75% Monday to Friday.** This measure was not met, desk utilisation is on average between 15% and 20% and typically staff are attending the office for a full day. Utilisation is currently higher on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays and low utilisation relates, in part, to the ongoing and changing Covid situation.

- **Hybrid Meeting technology was successfully used 90% of the time.** This measure was not met, technology was successfully used 80% of the time.

- **Understand why colleagues are using office space.** Colleagues came into the office for the following reasons:
    - I needed the support of colleagues and enjoyed the interaction – 20%
    - To collaborate with colleagues, members, partners or members of the public –17.8%
    - To attend a meeting 16.7%
    - My manager had asked me to come in 9.6%
    - I needed to support or provide peer to peer learning 6.2%
    - I needed a quieter working location 5.7%
    - I needed to attend a hybrid meeting 4.6%
    - Other 19.4%

- **The Percentage of staff on agile working contracts (WCC total) % of staff on agile working contracts (Pilot teams).** Except for Transport and Highways who pro-actively managed the transfer of staff from Flex contracts, there has been little change to Agile Contract take up.

- **Productivity Measure: Staff have said they feel more productive:**

  - Home or remotely 52%
  - Working between remote and office locations 36%
  - Working in the office 7%
  - My productivity was equal whether I worked from home or in the office 5%

4.   Financial Implications

4.1   There are no direct financial implications arising from this report. Once plans are developed, and benefits identified, for the next stage of the Estates Masterplan these will be costed and taken through the appropriate governance processes.

5.   Environmental Implications.

5.1   The Council is committed to reducing its environmental impact and becoming net zero by 2030. The Estate Masterplanning activity will contribute towards reducing the Council's carbon usage in a number of ways:

5.1.1   A lower carbon buildings strategy is being developed and will support a move away from fossil fuel usage.

5.1.2   The Estates Master Planning will align the lower carbon technology investment required to those assets that are most likely to remain operational in the long term.

5.1.3   Property is recognised as a substantial contributor to carbon emissions, therefore any reductions in office space will lead to reduced carbon emissions, supporting our net zero carbon targets

5.1.4   Reduction in mileage claims submitted by staff, given the promotion of agile working and the investment in technology.

5.1.5   Short term there is evidence to suggest that staggered commuting times as a result of introducing agile working will have a beneficial environmental impact with less congestion in Town Centres.

5.1.6   Over the longer term it is expected that utility usage will be reduced with a corresponding carbon reduction aligned to the size of the portfolio. This is likely to balance increasing utility costs.

6.   Timescales associated with the decision and next steps

6.1   Interim Collaboration space and revised booking systems will be implemented between January and April 2022.

6.2   By December 2022 the following activities (including relevant procurement and redesign work) will be undertaken

6.2.1   Introduction of interim agile working in Shire Hall (SH) to enable additional Services to utilise the space with emphasis on additional collaboration and 1:1 spaces.

6.2.2   Development of an "end state" Agile Working Protocol and design for Shire Hall that sets a vision of how we work across core settings.

6.2.3   Clarification and communication of our 'Working from Home' Offer which should be considered alongside the Agile Working Protocol.

6.2.4   Progress the future "end state" design of Shire Hall with an emphasis on increasing the amount of 1:1 and collaboration space available.

6.2.5   Enable the hybrid technology set-up in collaboration space to become our service standard for these spaces.

6.2.6   Senior Leadership Team will continue to advocate agile working and support the required culture change, checking in with their services, supporting and challenging when necessary.

Appendices

None

Background Papers

None

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