

**Report of Director of City Development**

**Report to Strategy and Resources Scrutiny Board**

**Date: 15<sup>th</sup> February 2021**

**Subject: Future Ways of Working and Workplace Realisation**

Are specific electoral wards affected? If yes, name(s) of ward(s):	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Has consultation been carried out?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Are there implications for equality and diversity and cohesion and integration?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
Will the decision be open for call-in?	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No
Does the report contain confidential or exempt information?	<input type="checkbox"/> Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No

**Summary**

**1. Main issues**

- The Council has c8,000 desk based staff many of whom since 2012 have been taken through the Changing the Workplace Programme to allow them to work from home and other locations, and therefore reduce the amount of desk space required within our estate. As the first COVID-19 national lockdown was announced in March 2020, all of these staff took to working from home for all of their working week, facilitated by the equipment and technology distributed through the changing the workplace programme and IT infrastructure upgrades.
- The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated a number of trends including changes to the way staff are working, the way services can be delivered and therefore the expectations and requirements of our estate. Additional drivers for change are the financial pressures that the Council is facing as well as the need to ensure that we minimise our carbon footprint as we seek to become carbon neutral by 2030.
- We therefore anticipate that in the future there will be more blended and flexible working patterns; greater partnership working; a more distributed workforce; a stronger focus on staff wellbeing and an even greater and evolving use of digital technology. This will mean that the workplace will have a new focus and that we will need fewer buildings.
- Leeds City Council is the largest property owner in the city with an estate comprising of c700 individual operational buildings excluding schools and housing, of which 200 support front line service provision in the form of Children's Centres,

Community Hubs, Libraries, Leisure Centres and Museums or provide office accommodation for c8,000 office based staff.

- To address our future ways of working and changing service delivery requirements we will continue to remodel and reduce the size of our estate, which is the focus of this paper, to ensure we have an optimum operation footprint to support service delivery.

## **2. Best Council Plan Implications** (click [here](#) for the latest version of the Best Council Plan)

- The Council's land and buildings facilitates a range of service delivery and therefore contributes to the objectives, outcomes and priorities set out in the Best Council Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Health and Well Being Strategy. The rightsizing and remodelling of the Council's estate supports the Best Council ambition to be 'an efficient, enterprising and healthy organisation'.
- In addition, having a smaller, better maintained and more flexible and efficient estate will reduce the Council's Carbon footprint by reducing the energy demand across our buildings but also through reducing the need for staff to travel as far to a workplace or to carry out their duties. Good quality workspace and facilities will also support people to be their best.

## **3. Resource Implications**

- The current and future budget pressures is one of the key considerations of the remodelling and rightsizing of our operational estate along with our service deliver plans and the climate emergency. The aim is for the Council to have a sustainable, efficient, well maintained and well utilised estate which supports services to be delivered efficiently and effectively to residents across the city.

## **Recommendations**

a) Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- I. Note the contents of this report.
- II. Comment and advise on the proposed approach to remodelling our office buildings and ensuring the most effective utilisation of our wider operational estate.

### **1. Purpose of this report**

- 1.1 This report follows on from reports to Scrutiny Board in November 2020 and January about the way in which staff will work and services will be delivered in the future, and the technology and digital development offer to support this. This paper provides details around how our estate will support these changes.

### **2. Background information**

- 2.1 Leeds City Council has a large operational estate with over 700 operational buildings of which 200 provide front line service provision or office accommodation. This includes Children's Centres, Homes for Older People, Adult Day Centres, Community Hubs, Libraries, Community Centres, Leisure Centres, Museums,

events venues. Our operational buildings also equate to around 60% of the Council's carbon footprint.

- 2.2 Since 2010, the Council has made good progress in rationalising its estate and leveraging its assets to support the Council's priorities. As outlined to Scrutiny Board in November, this has been delivered through the established Changing the Workplace programme which has facilitated the delivery of key buildings such as Merrion House, Albion House in Yeadon and Kernel House/ Killingbeck Court, and through wider partnership working. In particular, the delivery of integrated Health and Care teams across the city as a partnership between the Council and health partners including Leeds Community Health and the NHS has seen staff across organisations sharing space within our buildings and partner workspaces.
- 2.3 The principles of the Changing the Workplace programme were around a more agile approach to work with staff able to work remotely from home or other locations, and crucially moving away from individual staff having their own fixed desk to an average of 10 members staff sharing 6 desks. This and a programme of IT infrastructure and equipment upgrades provided the resilience for over 8,000 staff to swiftly pivot to work from home from the beginning of the first national COVID-19 lockdown. In addition the pandemic has been a catalyst for a range of service delivery changes to allow the continuation of services during periods of national and local restrictions. As the pandemic has continued, these changes have become more embedded and the need for a wider ranging reviews has emerged which will help to support the Council's financial position which has also been heavily impacted by the pandemic, but crucially will mean that our estate requirements will be very different in the future as the Council has rapidly adopted greater digital skills and technologies.
- 2.4 In January, the report to Scrutiny Board about our future ways of working outlined a number of considerations in determining our future policies and approaches. However, there is a balance to be struck between what is good for individual members of staff, service need and corporate requirements, and what the Council is able to provide in terms of technology and workspaces.
- 2.5 This paper focuses on how our estate will support these changes whilst also delivering savings to support the Council's position and respond to the climate emergency.

### **3. Main issues**

- 3.1 As outlined to Scrutiny Board previously, in March 2020 at the outset of the first national lockdown, a great deal of work was undertaken to close down buildings which were not required given the large number of staff working from home but also due to services having to redefine the way they worked in order to continue to deliver front line services. As the Government introduced COVID Secure standards, a programme of delivery was undertaken to ensure compliance across our open estate, which remains in place and is reviewed in light of any changes to guidance issued. However, the way in which we utilise and occupy buildings will never return to the format of March 2020.
- 3.2 A number of Pulse Surveys have been undertaken along with an extensive staff survey in Summer 2020 which identified that in the future around 80% of staff had a

desire to spend at least half of their working week working from home, whilst a little over half of respondents wanted to work from home permanently. As enforced working from home has continued, we have anecdotal evidence that sentiment has understandably shifted slightly towards less time at home. We will again test this as part of further staff engagement planned for the coming months.

- 3.3 In November/ December a number of staff focus groups were undertaken with staff in City Development to better understand their thoughts about how they will work in the future. Whilst continued agile and home working was still supported, the importance of the workplace was also identified to support wellbeing, staff development and team bonding, but also to support collaborative working to bring forward creative solutions, mentoring and team knowledge. However, the overarching conclusion was that the team rather than the space was the destination point.
- 3.4 Individual choice must be balanced with service requirements and council wide resource. As well as consideration towards the consequences for wider city wellbeing. These consideration are consistent with those being considered by both public and private sector organisations across the country as the long term impacts of the pandemic begins to be understood.
- 3.5 In the future there will be an expectation that staff will regularly come into the workplace to support team cohesion and staff development, albeit not necessarily for desk based activities. However, this will vary between services but it is unlikely this will for many be more than 2 days a week. For staff who require more time in the workplace for health and wellbeing reasons, space will continue to be made available given the challenges that some people will inevitably have with a more agile working culture.
- 3.6 Whilst subject to further consideration and engagement with staff, we see the following as core components of our future working approach:



- 3.7 A further key area of change and development which will influence our workspaces is around the planned upgrades to our digital infrastructure. The primary focus for this is the roll out of Microsoft 365 which will provide not only upgraded office software but also new and enhanced digital collaboration opportunities. As part of M365 there will be an early phased migration to Microsoft Teams to replace the Skype platform. This will become the Council's default virtual meeting platform and will transform the online meeting experience for many staff across the organisation. However, there will continue to be a need for continued access to other platforms to effectively engage with communities, partners and other organisations.

3.8 In addition, the Core Services Review will deliver substantial process changes to some areas of the Council's activity which remain heavily paper based. This too will lead to changes in the way staff work and our estate requirements. Furthermore, during the pandemic there has been a shift in the way that members of the public have accessed Council Services, with the greater use of on-line and telephone facilities. This is particularly notable in relation to customer access which will lead to longer term changes for our estate requirements.

### **How will our estate respond?**

3.9 There are therefore a number of key drivers which guide the future size, shape and use of our estate:

- Our ways of working
- Service delivery requirements
- Our financial pressures
- The Climate Emergency

3.10 Whilst the Changing the Workplace journey has led to substantial changes to the way some of our office buildings have been used, this has not been universal and as a result of the drivers set out above and the factors and principles outlined in this paper, this programme of refurbishment and activity will evolve.

3.11 Whilst the detail is still being worked through, it is paramount that we drive better utilisation into our estate and therefore it is essential that we consider all of our buildings and not only our existing office locations when reviewing future use.

3.12 In doing so there are some emerging key principles for our future estate:

- **Team Space:** The team is the destination not the building, therefore Directorates/ Services will have a dedicated 'Team space' in multi occupied buildings or a locational base;
- **Geographical Choice:** Staff will be able to use more buildings and workspaces across the city in a more flexible way to support their work, which will have the benefit of reducing travel demands both in terms of commuting but also that is required for work purposes;
- **Greater Collaboration Space:** There will be a greater proportion of our retained floorspace laid out in a way which facilitates collaborative working – a working targeting being 60% of our total floorspace with a corresponding reduction in the amount of pure desk space; and
- **Booking:** A principle of booking both desk and collaborative spaces across the estate utilising an online booking system which has been developed initially as a response to meeting COVID Secure requirements. This will consider capacities and critically utilisation so spaces can be better managed by real time data.

### Collaborative Spaces

3.13 One of the most significant changes for the estate is the proposed move towards greater areas of space given over to collaborative working. As set out at paragraph 3.3, there was a strong emphasis from the focus groups already held for collaboration space to support every day work. However, this demonstrated that

collaboration means different things to different people, and the expectations of our workspace will be wide ranging, but will extend from informal co-working, training support, small group discussions or 1-2-1 meetings through to larger workshops, events and formal meetings and training. As such, spaces need to be adaptable to accommodate this range of requirements. In addition, it is recognised that there will be substantial demand particularly in some service areas to undertake work of a confidential nature including confidential telephone calls. This means that our workspace need to cater for a wide range of uses presenting a challenge in how this flexibility can be delivered over time within a decreasing estate footprint, providing similar opportunities both in the city centre and for those whose work is more locality based.

3.14 Internationally recognised architects and designers, BDP, who specialise in workplace and health space and advised on the refurbishment and development of Merrion House, have provided specialist support to develop design concepts around how our accommodation can be changed to address these challenges. Their initial focus has been on Merrion House to test the proposition, but their work has expanded to provide advice on areas within the core office estate and develop principles for buildings outside the city centre. They have helped us to break down and understand our requirements and have identified the following characteristics which can be seen as key success factors in developing collaborative areas:

- Inviting – Spaces must be attractive and draw people to use them.
- Comfortable – The furniture used needs to be comfortable and practical.
- Variety – there needs to be a range of different types of spaces and furniture available to suit our wide ranging work requirements.
- Dividable – to maximise utilisation of the precious space we have it must facilitate small group and individual use and be scalable to allow larger events and workshops.
- Flexible - our workspace must be able to accommodate a range of uses by different cohorts of staff, partners and in some cases the community and external organisations.
- High-tech – The spaces need to be ‘tech’ enabled, but the requirements will vary between the different types of spaces available.
- Low-tech – some people will find that they get the most out of discussions where flip charts and post it notes are used for example and this must also be accommodated.

3.15 As outlined above, the Council’s technology and IT infrastructure is changing, all of which will create new and better collaboration opportunities. However, our meeting rooms and collaborative spaces need particular consideration to ensure that they are compatible and consistent with our broader IT offer. This means that video conferencing technology already available will need to migrate to support meetings by Microsoft Teams as the default meeting platform but also provide access to other platforms such as Zoom. In addition the ‘digital’ offer within the new collaborative spaces is being scoped to support more effective collaboration both in place and through hybrid options. This will likely mean the introduction of more interactive technology such as digital whiteboards and the more widespread use of apps and software to capture ideas and creativity as it happens and provide the same experience whether you are in the space or participating virtually.

- 3.16 There is a particular focus on the 'hybrid' meeting concept which is where meetings may take place with a number of people in one location and others joining via their own devices from home and other workspaces. This is standard practice for working with geographical dispersed partners. Whilst this has happened in the past, the experience was often not sufficient for people who were 'outside the room', and this needs to be addressed given that the pendulum for those joining remotely vs those in the room will swing constantly for different meetings. To deliver hybrid meetings effectively this will require the right technology, space and personal skills. Part of the solution is around how meetings are chaired and the protocols adopted for joining and contributing to discussions and some of the solution lies in the technology, including location of microphones and acoustics of meeting spaces to ensure good sound quality for those joining remotely. This will be worked through in the coming months and will continue to be reviewed in response to user experience, however, HR and DIS will be leading a training programme to ensure these meetings are as effective as possible.
- 3.17 In response to the BDP work, a prototype collaboration space was delivered in Merrion House in Summer 2020. This adopted the principles set out above and has allowed early staff engagement about the space. This has been received extremely positively and on this basis a longer term roll out of these test spaces is phased over the course of the next 18 months across the city is to be delivered as detailed in Appendix 1. In the early phases this will utilise furniture that we already have within our estate, but it is recognised that in order to ensure that staff can work in the most effective way, some investment will be required in both technology and furniture to optimise the utilisation and flexibility of our buildings. All learning will be then taken into the future phases and we will constantly adjust spaces to respond to user feedback.

#### 'Home Spaces' and Work Space booking

- 3.18 Through the staff engagement and the ongoing focus groups, the need for teams to have space to come together in one location for desk based activities has come through strongly. This not only allows for the sharing of information but also supports learning and development particularly for apprentices and newer members of staff. To support this, each directorate will be allocated 'Home Space' which they then manage across their services, but the overarching principle will be that all desks and larger collaboration spaces will be bookable and that there will be a proportion of unallocated touch down desks to support this provision. This is essential given that there will be a lower proportion of space to support desk based activities available as they make way for the new collaborative working.
- 3.19 A space booking app has been developed to facilitate this which is available through the Council's intranet pages. This was originally developed to support the Council to deliver a COVID Secure workplace, but can easily be expanded to cover workspaces across our estate. This will be developed further not only provide good functionality to staff and facilitate a more agile and flexible approach to working, but will also allow us to better understand the utilisation of our workspaces, which will support further review, changes, potential future investment, or release of buildings.

#### Testing our workspace and working principles

3.20 Since autumn 2020, work has been ongoing with social work teams to explore opportunities for them to move from outdated and underutilised buildings at Hunslet Hall in Beeston and Hough Lane in Bramley into fit for purpose accommodation, currently proposed to be Adams Court in Hunslet, which will take on-board the principles outlined above. This work will deliver a transformational change in how the teams and individual staff are supported to work and the type of workspace they have. This is being embraced by the teams involved and will allow us to test and critically adapt our new and emerging working principles and translate to better support front line service areas as they are implemented over the months to come.

#### Flexibility and utilisation of our estate

- 3.21 In addition to the underutilisation of our estate, the Council's financial pressures and climate emergency response are key considerations which underpin our estate remodel and rationalisation plans. The current list of buildings to be retained for workspace provision can be found at Appendix 2, although this remains under review as we work through the potential release of buildings, and opportunities that may emerge through wider service reviews. The list been drawn together on the basis of ensuring a good geographical spread of buildings, but also on the sustainability, running cost, level of recent investment and condition, and are the buildings where remodelling work as set out in this paper and at Appendix 1 will be delivered on a phased basis.
- 3.22 Historically our buildings have been underutilised on both Monday's and Fridays with the busiest times being Tuesdays and Wednesdays. If we are to achieve the aspirations set out in this paper, staff and teams will need to be more flexible and make fuller use of the times at which they access buildings to ensure that we improve utilisation and that everyone has the opportunity to access workspaces.
- 3.23 Our vision is also to ensure complete flexibility for staff across our workspaces, allowing the opportunity to access any of our core buildings for touch down, meetings and collaboration, all supported through the space booking app. This will allow staff to access facilities closer to where they live without the need to travel to their 'home space' every time they need to access workspace, but also to utilise spaces close to site or home visits being made. This has the potential to reduce not only travel demand in connection with work but also commuting. Equally our buildings will provide rest areas, meeting and welfare facilities for those staff who are not 'desk based' providing greater levels of inclusion and connection with the organisation.
- 3.24 The increased flexibility and utilisation of locality workspaces will support the economic wellbeing of our town and district centres. The increased throughput of staff and visitors to these buildings is anticipated to have an increase in spend within the locality particularly within convenience shops, sandwich and coffee shops and other service providers. This will support the Inclusive Growth of the city and small businesses within communities. The continued emphasis of our City Centre estate will also continue to bring the Council's staff into the city centre supporting city centre business, this being particularly important in the context of the city centre emerging from the economic impact of the pandemic.
- 3.25 Our focus on increased utilisation does not stop at our existing workspaces. As Scrutiny Board is aware, a large number of service reviews have been undertaken



or are progressing to explore how service provision may change in the future. This will inevitably have an impact upon our estate, but equally we want to ensure that the utilisation of facilities such as leisure centres, museums and adult day centres is maximised to help to sustain these important facilities.

- 3.26 To support this, a review of assets across the city is underway to explore opportunities to create additional workspaces within some of these front line buildings which will help to support the release of other buildings, or the provision of better quality spaces for community use and work with partners. This again will support the creation of a range of workspaces, but also facilities which may be used more flexibly and potentially providing additional income generation opportunities. This could facilitate the release of further inefficient, poor quality buildings allowing us to have an overall better quality and more cost effective estate.
- 3.27 Partnership working is particularly important and we already share some of our buildings with other organisations such as the Police, Leeds Community Health and the third sector. Opportunities to further this trend will continue to be explored as well as the way in which we can provide greater flexibility across the public sector estate, avoiding the duplication of facilities between organisations within the same geographic area. This is not straight forward due to the timing of lease events and ownership of properties as well as funding available to support remodelling and repurposing of properties, but is an area of focus as we seek to identify future efficiencies.

### Estate Rationalisation

- 3.28 From the evidence we have from the multiple staff surveys and the focus groups, we have a working target of a 50% reduction in our core office space and the work set out in this paper has so far allowed us to identify 17 workplaces to be explored for release over the course of the next 2 years. It is anticipated that this will be added to as additional opportunities as set out in this paper emerge. During the course of the last year the release of 6 properties has been progressed. Highlights include:
- Shire View in Headingley which was previously occupied by the Children's and Families Directorate and was vacated as a result of staff working in different ways, and utilising alternative Council owned and partner spaces. This allowed the property to be sold with completion in September 2020 for £1 million.
  - St George House which has not reopened since Lockdown One in March 2020, is one of the Council's city centre offices is also proposed for release due to underutilisation and greater remote working with the property being transferred into the Council's Investment Property Portfolio for the potential lease out to a third party.
  - Hough Top in Pudsey which was closed in early 2020 as staff moved towards more agile ways of working and space being utilised within city centre buildings. The site is now being brought forward for residential redevelopment.
- 3.29 Further notable properties being released from operational use in the 2020/21 financial year are Woodsley Green Offices in Woodhouse; South Pudsey Centre; and the former Bramley Housing Office as outlined to Executive Board on 10<sup>th</sup> February and are being brought forward for disposal, as well as Millshaw Offices

which provide opportunities for wider regeneration opportunities as part of the White Rose Office growth proposals.

- 3.30 Work is underway to explore the release of 9 properties identified for 2021/22. This involves working with the Directorates and Services located within buildings to identify any bespoke requirements beyond the offer outlined in this paper, so that new home spaces can be found and any individual staff adjustments can be considered. As the outcome of this feasibility work is understood, the release of these properties will be the subject of future decisions, with the vacated properties then supporting the Council's Capital Receipt Programme or other priority programmes where they are suitable, and there is a clear justification and delivery programme.
- 3.31 The outcome of service reviews and associated consultations also has the potential to bring forward additional properties for release. This may provide opportunities for wider estate reconfiguration dependent upon the condition and location of properties. We will continue where possible to seek to retain and utilise our best quality and most sustainable buildings. This means that should a service take a decision to come out of a building which could be pivoted to other service delivery or workspace uses in a cost effective way, the scope for this to allow the release of other established but poorer quality buildings will be explored. This could mean more substantive changes to our estate as we constantly respond to wider organisational changes and ensure that our buildings continually evolve and respond. In doing so we will ensure that any changes are delivered through continued staff engagement and seek to deliver better outcomes for service users and communities.

## **4. Corporate considerations**

### **4.1 Consultation and engagement**

- 4.1.1 In June, the Council undertook a survey of all 8,000 staff who were working from home. Over 5,000 responses were received. As set out in the main section of this report, further engagement is proposed as our future ways of working are further refined and to seek views about the changes to our estate as they are rolled out. In addition in December 2020 a series of focus groups were held to explore the request to use work space for collaboration. Further focus groups will be established of the early to test emerging options and work space planning.
- 4.1.2 Where buildings are being considered for permanent operational closure, work with Directorates is taking place to facilitate vacant possession and ensure any specific activities which have particular processes, equipment or building requirements can be resolved to avoid service delivery impact. Through a coordinated governance approach working with Human Resources, early consultation and engagement will take place with Trade Unions about potential changes to our estate and associated working practices.
- 4.1.4 Ward members will be consulted on any property disposals or alternative re-use proposals and should any development proposals be brought forward by new owners which require planning consent, there is a statutory period of consultation required as part of the planning process.

## **4.2 Equality and diversity / cohesion and integration**

- 4.2.1 An Equality Diversity Cohesion and Integration screening form has been completed. Whilst there are no specific EDCI impacts resulting from the rationalisation approach as these will be considered by services, any building changes have the opportunity to enhance EDCI. The building changes delivered to date, including those seen as part of the refurbishment of Merrion House has established some clear principles around the facilities provided across our city centre estate and it is proposed to roll these out in an appropriate way as the rationalisation programme progresses and any refurbishment works are undertaken.

## **4.3 Council policies and the Best Council Plan**

- 4.3.1 The Council's land and buildings facilitates a range of service delivery and therefore contributes to the objectives, outcomes and priorities set out in the Best Council Plan, Inclusive Growth Strategy and Health and Well Being Strategy. The rightsizing and remodelling of the Council's estate supports the Best Council ambition to be 'an efficient, enterprising and healthy organisation'.

### Climate Emergency

- 4.3.2 One of the key drivers of our estate management approach is to reduce the carbon footprint of the Council's buildings. Currently approximately 60% of the Council's carbon footprint is associated with its buildings and through the priorities set out in the Asset Management Plan, one of which is specifically focused on the climate agenda, the Council seeks to make efficient use of its buildings and reduce the size of its estate. Through this work, we will ensure that services are appropriately located to minimise staff travel adding to further carbon reductions. In addition, the more flexible use of our estate and agility of staff has the potential to reduce travel demand, both in terms of commuting and work based journeys.
- 4.3.3 As part of the rationalisation programme, there will be a need to deliver some investment into our existing estate. Where the Council is refurbishing properties to be held on a long term basis, energy audits will be undertaken to inform works to reduce the carbon footprint of individual buildings. This is already being progressed for some of the buildings such as the Civic Hall, Leeds Town Hall and Unit 6 Waterside which was acquired in 2019 to support the relocation of Assisted Living Leeds from their current site on Clarence Road.

## **4.4 Resources, procurement and value for money**

- 4.4.1 Ensuring that the Council has an efficient, well utilised and affordable estate is a driver of the Estate Management Strategy and a number of the priorities set out in this paper contribute to this objective. Through the estate rationalisation process which will be achieved through more flexible use of our accommodation, we are seeking to reduce running costs associated with buildings as well as maintenance liabilities. However, it is important to note that it will be important to make investment into our retained estate to ensure that it is fit for purpose, appropriately maintained and sustainable. This will be crucial to deliver the remodelling proposals outlined in this paper with both investment in new furniture and technology to ensure the new spaces created can be effectively utilised.

4.4.2 The Council's Capital Receipt Programme has been crucial to supporting the delivery of front line service provision. The acceleration of disposals in the current financial year will help to bring much needed income into the Council with disposals in future years supporting the medium term financial strategy.

#### **4.5 Legal implications, access to information, and call-in**

4.5.1 There are no legal implications associated with this paper.

#### **4.6 Risk management**

4.6.1 There are a number of risks associated with the delivery of estate rationalisation. Delivering changes to and rightsizing the Council's estate is dependent upon our wider working policies and digital upgrades. As such it is essential for there to be strong relationships between the workstreams and robust programme management. In recognition of this requirement, additional programme management resource is being brought into the programme to ensure that the interdependencies are properly recognised and managed accordingly.

4.6.2 Whilst the Council has a substantial estate, it is limited given the variety of competing needs, service requirements and priorities. This is a constant issue when reviewing the future use of land and buildings and new processes are being embedded to ensure that decisions are made in an appropriate and timely way.

4.6.3 Finally, there is the potential for local sensitivities regarding possible building changes, closures and disposals. Whilst the Council may not be able to utilise buildings, local attachment to buildings is understood and there is a commitment to early ward member engagement to understand these sensitivities and to help to identify solutions which can be supported locally.

### **5 Conclusions**

5.1 Changes to the way we work and our digital infrastructure will underpin and inform changes to the size and form of our estate. However, reducing the size of its estate will help to support the Council's financial position and reduce its carbon footprint.

5.2 A remodelling approach for our estate is proposed which will respond to ongoing staff engagement through providing better opportunities for collaborative working, whilst improving utilisation and flexibility of our buildings.

5.3 Work is ongoing to explore the release of 17 buildings over the next 2 years, with a total of 6 properties released by the end of 2020/21. This builds upon the successful rationalisation programme which has been ongoing for almost 10 years.

5.3 Any property which is surplus to operational requirements will be considered for redevelopment or reuse to support the Council's priority programmes or disposal as part of the Capital Receipt Programme.

5.4 The importance of timely staff engagement is recognised and further surveys and engagement work is planned to refine our future working approach whilst seeking views about the prototype collaboration spaces being delivered.

### **6 Recommendations**

6.1 Scrutiny Board is asked to:

- i) Note the contents of this report.
- ii) Comment and advise on the proposed approach to remodelling our office buildings and ensuring the most effective utilisation of our wider operational estate.

Background documents<sup>1</sup>

7.1 None.

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<sup>1</sup> The background documents listed in this section are available to download from the council's website, unless they contain confidential or exempt information. The list of background documents does not include published works.