

CABINET

20 April 2004

RECEPTION AREAS FIRST PHASE – PROPOSED OFFICE ACCOMMODATION MOVES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCE

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RECENT REFERENCES:

CAB577: City Offices and Avalon House Reception Facilities - Update, 12<sup>th</sup> February, 2003

CAB677: Cash Office - Temporary Facility, 3<sup>rd</sup> September, 2003

CAB793: Reception Areas First Phase – Improving Customer Service through establishing a Contact Centre, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2004

CAB811: Athelstan House Occupation Costs, 11<sup>th</sup> February, 2004

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Cabinet agreed that part of Athelstan House would be used for office accommodation in order to release space in City Offices for staff for new functions, to provide improved facilities for Members and to alleviate overcrowding. Occupation of Athelstan is nearing completion. Preparations are being made for further moves, outlined in this report, and these are expected to cost about £70,000. The opportunity is also being taken to redecorate City Offices as part of the moves and this will incur further costs of about £35,000.

An update is given on the cash office project and approval is sought to additional expenditure of £13,000 in connection with the external doors in order to provide a better solution.

Additional space may also be taken at the Depot and if this is no more than £10,000 it will be found from within current budgets.

There is provision of £410,000 in the capital programme for 2003/04 for various works in connection with Council offices and the unspent part of this will need to be carried forward to 2004/05.

A copy of this report has been sent to TACT for comments and a verbal update will be given at the meeting.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That approval be given to the costs of office moves of £70,000, redecoration of £35,000 and of automatic sliding doors and associated works for the cash office of £13,000.
2. That approval be given to the carry forward of up to £410,000 within the capital programme for work in connection with Council offices.

CABINET20 April, 2004RECEPTION AREAS FIRST PHASE – PROPOSED OFFICE ACCOMMODATION MOVESREPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF FINANCEDETAIL:1 Introduction

- 1.1 Cabinet agreed at its meeting in February (CAB811, refers) that part of Athelstan House would be used for office accommodation in order to release space in City Offices for staff for new functions, such as licensing, to provide improved facilities for Members and to alleviate overcrowding.
- 1.2 Occupation of Athelstan is nearing completion with the move of the Community Services Department scheduled for 19<sup>th</sup> April. The space released allows further moves to take place and these are outlined in this report, together with indicative costs.
- 1.3 An update is given on the cash office project and approval is sought to additional expenditure in connection with this.

2 Proposals for City Offices

2.1 In summary the proposals for City Offices are as follows:

- a) The cash office will be moving to the annex – plans are already in hand to achieve this.
- b) The Members' rooms will be relocated to the second floor – next to the Chief Executive's Department, Committee Secretariat and a large meeting room. The space will include an office for the Leader and slightly larger Group rooms.
- c) Legal and the enlarged Licensing function will remain on the second floor. There will be some movement on the second floor for all staff in the Chief Executive's and City Secretary and Solicitor's departments to accommodate the Members' rooms and to occupy the space vacated by Community Services.
- d) Revenues will be vacating the Ground Floor, in order to make room for the customer service centre – which will be next to the refurbished reception area. Taxes and Benefits will relocate to the first floor – to the space currently occupied by the Members' rooms and some of the Health and Housing area.
- e) Health and Housing staff may move to Abbey Mill and will use some or all of the area currently occupied by Housing reception. Additionally, some staff may move to space within the Depot to work alongside SERCo. This may incur an additional cost that, if not more than £10,000, will be found within current budgets. The Mill is currently let in part to the County Council, the

Chamber of Commerce and the City Centre Manager and it is proposed that this continues.

- f) Small break out areas will be provided for staff on each floor of City Offices and a toilet for people with disabilities will be provided on the ground floor.
- g) The ground floor reception works will be done in two parts. Once the current cash office has closed work can start on refurbishing that area. This will mean a reduced area for reception and some disruption for the public. It is proposed that the Benefits and Taxes counter staff operate from the Housing reception on the first floor whilst the work is done.
- h) Once that part is complete the reception will operate from the refurbished part and the remaining works will be completed. The Benefits, Taxes and Housing reception staff will then operate from the ground floor service desks. Housing reception will close.
- i) The second floor reception for Licensing and Electoral Registration will remain in the meantime, probably until the Customer Service Centre is operational.

2.2 Clearly, this will mean disruption for staff, Members and the public - in particular during the work to the reception area.

### 3 Cash Office

3.1 Approval has already been given to the relocation and refurbishment works for the cash office for £27,000. Since then a further suggestion has been made in relation to the external doors which will provide a better solution but will incur more costs.

3.2 The current doors to the annex are set back from the street and are quite wide. Doors that open inwards reduce the amount of space inside the cash office for the public and may also be potentially hazardous for people waiting behind the door where there is space for it to open. An automatic sliding door could be installed if the frontage is altered so that the door entrance is not set back from the street. Unfortunately, because the offices are in a conservation area, it will be necessary to effect similar cosmetic changes to the offices on the other side of the arch – so that the symmetry of the building is preserved. This adds to the cost – making it almost, but not quite, twice the cost.

3.3 Whilst the additional cost – of £13,000 – is significant, it is considered that it should be spent to secure the best outcome for the facility and to remove the possibility of an accident.

### OTHER CONSIDERATIONS:

#### 4 CORPORATE STRATEGY (RELEVANCE TO):

4.1 The proposals are part of the ongoing work to improve services, to make best use of facilities and to provide proper accommodation for staff and Members. The proposals underpin all aspects of the Corporate Strategy. In addition, customer Service is a key priority in the Council's Corporate Strategy with a specific remit to *provide a high standard of customer service in all that we do.*



RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

- 5.1 The outline costs of the proposed office moves have been reported previously as being in the order of £50,000. Within the inclusion of a toilet for people with disabilities, and now that more detailed work has been done, this estimate has been revised to £70,000. An outline of costs is as follows:

	£000
Partitions	20
Network and telephone points	10
Labour (furniture moves etc)	7
Miscellaneous (carpet patching, screens, lighting, etc)	13
Break out areas	10
Toilet for people with disabilities	10
<b>Total</b>	<b>70</b>

- 5.2 In addition, whilst staff are vacating areas the opportunity will be taken to decorate. Other than particular areas, such as toilets and the staff stairwell, no general decoration has been done in the City Offices since the refurbishment in 1989 and much of the space is in urgent need of attention. The removal and relocation of partitions throughout the building will exacerbate the situation. This is expected to cost in the order of £35,000 and it is proposed that this also be funded from within the capital provision in order to leave the small revenue maintenance budget available for other works that may be required during the year. It is acknowledged that the intention is to relocate to one single office in a few years, but, if use in the order of five years can be achieved, this is considered a reasonable approach.
- 5.3 An additional £13,000 is required to provide automatic sliding doors for the cash office. There may be additional costs for space at the Depot – if this is no more than £10,000 it will be found from within current budgets.
- 5.4 Included within the capital programme is a long-standing provision for work to the City Offices of £210,000 and Avalon House of £200,000. Some of this provision was made some years ago, originally for repairs works, but has not been used solely for that. It has been allocated, with Members' approval, for funding various associated office costs. In addition, there is provision of £120,000 for relocating the Avalon reception.
- 5.5 The costs of the City Offices reception work are not yet known but are likely to be in the order of £150,000. Thus there is sufficient in the budget for the works as outlined in this report and for the later works in connection with the Reception refurbishment.
- 5.6 However, as before, this does leave less available for essential repair work to the offices. The extent of such work has not yet been assessed and it has been acknowledged that further funds may be required in the future. One item that will need to be considered shortly is the access control system. This is nearly ten years

old and is now proving troublesome to support when problems arise. Maintenance is still being undertaken by the supplier but this will not continue indefinitely.

- 5.7 The provisions referred to above are in the capital programme for 2003/04 and will need to be carried forward to 2004/05 – Cabinet can approve such carry forward. If further carry forwards are requested there may be a need for Council approval for future requests if the total exceeds £1.5m.

6 TACT COMMENTS

- 6.1 A copy of this report has been sent to TACT for comments and a verbal update will be given at the meeting.

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:

Working papers within the Finance Department

APPENDIX:

Capital project appraisal form