

CABINET 26 NOVEMBER 2019**REPORT OF MOVING CLOSER TO RESIDENTS TASK GROUP (Resources & Performance Select Committee)****Item under consideration: Moving Closer to Residents: Delivering Our Ambition****Date considered: 8 November 2019**

1. At its meeting on 8 November 2019, members of the Moving Closer to Residents Task Group considered the Moving Closer to Residents: Delivering Our Ambition report.
2. The Task Group heard from the Executive Director for Transformation, Partnerships and Prosperity, who explained the benefits relating to the proposed relocation of the Council's Civic Heart to Midas House, Woking, and a move to greater agile working, as well as associated risks. Measures put in place to mitigate those risks were explored by Members, who also heard details about other buildings in both Woking and Guildford that had been considered during the identification phase.
3. The Executive Director for Transformation, Partnerships and Prosperity explained that Midas House was chosen as the Council's new Civic Heart due to its close proximity to Woking train station and town centre, the young age of the building and its open plan design, financial considerations relating to both the cost of purchase and refitting, and the good amount of space available. The Task Group heard that there would be enough space for both meeting rooms and 820 workstations, the former of which would be created flexibly by using moveable acoustic screens.
4. The Task Group were informed that a Member Task Group would be established to support the planning and design of civic spaces and functions. They noted their concern that councillors from the east of the county may struggle to get to Woking and feel neglected as a result, and they sought assurance that a wide range of members would be consulted throughout the planning and design phase.
5. The Task Group highlighted risks associated with agile working and IT infrastructure, and emphasised the need for the Council to ensure all staff members are fully supported throughout the transformation period. It was noted that the move to Midas House was reliant on there being a widespread adoption of agile working practices by Council staff.
6. Concerns were expressed over the possibility of higher than expected staff attrition and the potential difficulties that could arise when recruiting. The Task Group heard that targeted recruitment local to Woking was going to take place and research had been undertaken regarding the local labour market.
7. A conversation was had about the proceeds from the future sale of County Hall in relation to the costs associated with the purchasing and refitting of Midas House. The Task Group asked about the possibility of an independent valuation being undertaken to ensure that the Council was paying a fair price for Midas House.

Recommendations:

8. The Task Group agreed the following recommendations:
 - a. That an independent property valuation of Midas House is undertaken to ensure best value.
 - b. That the Council ensures all members of staff receive support and training before, during and after the move to Midas House and transformation to greater agile working.

- c. That the Council consults with other local authorities and organisations that have moved to an agile way of working, including in regard to ranges of full-time equivalents/desk ratios, to ensure a smooth transition.
- d. The Task Group asks for assurance from the Cabinet that the future sale of County Hall will raise sufficient funds required to purchase and refit Midas House.
- e. That the Cabinet Member for Finance brings together all aspects in a full cost benefit analysis for the Cabinet.

Will Forster
Chairman of the Moving Closer to Residents Task Group

Cabinet Response:

I am grateful to the Task Group for their consideration and scrutiny of this hugely important project for the Council. In response to the specific points raised:

- a. An independent valuation of Midas House has been commissioned.
- b. Significant work is being done to communicate with, engage and support staff through the transition to agile working and move to Midas House, e.g. face-to-face 'listening and engagement' events are being held across the County and an active Jive page along with other communication channels and platforms are used to promote dialogue and discussion, as well as the creation of an Agile Champions Group and comprehensive set of FAQs. A new Agile Working Policy Framework is under development, which will include practical support to help staff transition to new ways of working, alongside a new agile leadership development programme designed to support managers leading teams in an agile environment. With regard to technical support, on-line training and specific 'agile' IT support will be rolled out in the New Year.
- c. Members of the MCTR project team have been visiting other Councils (e.g. Wiltshire, Westminster) to learn from their experiences. These have already led to some changes in our approach, notably around the proposed office environment, support and best practice tools.
- d. We are doing all we can to ensure that the receipts generated through the future sale of County Hall are maximised, although they will be subject to a number of variables (e.g. planning status, market conditions, future use mixes, etc.). We are working with the Royal Borough of Kingston-upon-Thames on planning matters and are in close contact with an interested potential purchaser. Reasonable, mid-range estimates indicate that receipts generated by the sale of County Hall, some adjacent Council properties and the Bittoms car park should match the acquisition and indicative fit out costs for Midas House, which will be further refined as more detailed survey and design work is undertaken.
- e. A financial analysis has been produced and presented to Cabinet in a Part 2 report.

Reply from Mr Tim Oliver,
Leader of the Council
26 November 2019