



OFFICER REPORT TO COUNCIL

SURREY COUNTY COUNCIL - CIVIC HEART MOVE TO WOODHATCH

KEY ISSUE/DECISION:

For Council to consider the move of the Civic Heart from County Hall to the Canon site, Woodhatch, Reigate, Surrey from 1 January 2021.

BACKGROUND:

1. The Council has a commitment to be closer to residents in all that it does and to enable new, modern ways of working for the organisation. The Moving Closer to Residents programme of rolling out agile working across the council was underpinned and advanced by confirmation of a desire to have a new Civic Heart located in Surrey.
2. At its meeting on 10 December 2019, Council agreed to move the Civic Heart from County Hall to Midas House, Woking, subject to the purchase of the property. Following the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic, the purchase of Midas House was reviewed and did not go ahead due in large part to the impact on timescales of the pandemic and uncertainty on the office space requirements for the future. At that time, the search for an alternative Civic Heart was paused. The plans to dispose of County Hall are progressing with the site being marketed, the submission of a change of use application and an intention of seeking planning permission for a mixed-use site early in the new year.
3. In the summer 2020, the Council purchased the Canon site at Woodhatch, Reigate, which presented a strategic opportunity to develop the site for corporate and service needs and rationalise the organisation's medium term office requirements. The site will form one of four potential "hubs" throughout the County offering multifunctional and flexible workspace, enabling the delivery of a broad range of public services for the benefit of Surrey's residents.
4. In addition to the principal service uses proposed for the site, the existing office accommodation presents the opportunity to relocate the Civic Heart to within the County of Surrey. The buildings offer multipurpose workspaces which can be used as a Council Chamber, public committee rooms and meeting spaces with residents when

required. Accommodation also exists for the Chairman's office, civic office functions, and support to councillors and political groups.

5. The cross party Member Task Group formed by Council to support the planning and design of Civic spaces and functions, including for full Council meetings and associated Member facilities, has been considering how best to design and use the available space to provide members with a modern and agile working environment. The Council Chamber and Committee rooms will not be fixed spaces ensuring they can be to put multiple uses when not needed for formal meetings and give members the ability to meet in person at other venues in the County to best serve residents and engage with the public.
6. It is proposed that the Civic Heart facilities will enable remote and hybrid meetings to offer a much more flexible way for members and the public to engage, both in the coming months when public meetings may not be held in person, and in the future to be time and travel efficient. The buildings are currently being fitted out with the necessary facilities to support a fully agile operating environment with light touch refurbishment works, acquisition of new furniture to support an agile workforce and the necessary IT infrastructure. The cost of the Civic Heart facilities will be met from these approved budgets.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

That Council agrees that the Council's Civic Heart be based at Woodhatch, Reigate, Surrey from 1 January 2021.

Lead/Contact Officers:

Paul Evans, Director of Law and Governance
Email: paul.evans@surreycc.gov.uk tel: 02082132584

Sources/background papers:

None.
