

County Hall Move and Agile Programme (CHAP) Task Group, 6 November 2020

Members: Ayesha Azad, Will Forster, Tim Hall, Nick Harrison, Rachael Lake, Chris Townsend

Witnesses: Brendon Kavanagh, Leigh Whitehouse

1. Leigh – the situation is fast moving and changing constantly. Brendon – moving fast but all moving towards what's in the report.
2. Nick – what does AOP (Agile Organisational Programme) include? Brendon – AOP is what's pulling all this together. When decision to move to Woodhatch on 31 December was made, we had already closed down the MCTR programme. AOP was started in August and includes disposal of County Hall, standing up of Woodhatch and agile working. Takes existing projects underway and puts them under one wing to work towards one goal. Woodhatch completion is due for 14 December for occupation 2 January. Since this report was sent out, BT have completed infrastructure so WiFi is ready at Woodhatch. Decoration is done, chamber planned, ordering furniture. Leigh – WiFi went live 4 November
3. Will – latest cost on Woodhatch? All refurbishing costs of Civic Heart on the office side of things. Brendon – IT&D cost is £1.4m split between infrastructure and property technology, all on track and in budget. Will – is there an extra budget on top of that? Brendon – there is an extra budget in terms of furniture and work to the building itself. That's sitting within Land and Property and Brendon not sighted on that. Leigh – will come back with written response to that. Will – if costs are overrunning we want to know early on.
4. Will – electricity usage and energy efficiency of Woodhatch is not mentioned in report. What is the energy efficiency rating and cost of running property? Brendon – rating is a C at point of acquisition and work is being done on installing LED lighting to improve rating. C is good. It's a modern building. Brendon to find out budget/cost for running building and report back. Will – how does the Kingston County Hall compare with Woodhatch? County Hall is costly to run. Brendon – health and safety aspects and maintenance are part of what make County Hall costly to run. Can find costs of those. As the Woodhatch building is more modern and efficient, the maintenance and health and safety costs are lower.
5. Chris – visited Woodhatch and was very impressed with the site. Member Development Steering Group is due to take place on 25 November, not 24 November as mentioned in the report. Brendon – will get clarification on this date.
6. Chris – what is the position on travel to Woodhatch? Number of car parking spaces doesn't really answer the question. This is a real challenge. Brendon – we are engaged with rethinking transport and met with Atkins who are doing transport consultancy for Woodhatch and other sites. Atkins' technology maps home address locations and travel routes, and SCC is engaging with them to map the travel. We need to map those, document them and see where the problems are. Chris – a Cabinet Member mentioned walking from Redhill to Woodhatch, but this is not necessarily possible. Also regarding travelling by train, many Members will have to change trains more than once to get to Woodhatch, meaning they'll have to leave very early to get to a 10am meeting. Car is much quicker than train for getting to

Woodhatch. A significant proportion of Members will be driving. Brendon – will be doing a survey on preferred modes of transport to County Hall staff and Members, then will do the work with Atkins.

7. Tim – Visited Woodhatch and walked there from Reigate station. The walk from Reigate is a lot further than people think. Travel planner suggested he go via Charlwood and come at Woodhatch from a strange direction. There is a bus route that goes past but doesn't stop very closely and isn't very frequent. The Gatwick line is somewhat infrequent too: two trains an hour within 15 minutes, then nothing for 45 minutes. Brendon – that's why the survey is being done, so we can scope the problem and solutions. Will be looking from Members', residents' and officers' perspective.
8. Nick – went to Woodhatch and there was discussion about the council chamber which is a long thin room. Quite useful but not really good for encouraging participation at meetings. Brendon – there is design being done on that room. It's available for meetings if needed. Acoustics being done, furniture being ordered. All in hand and being checked ergonomically. Will – there is the member development group looking at how the civic space will work. Three points to look at for next report to the Task Group – transport, energy costs and budget/spend on Land and Property.
9. Onto moving out of County Hall. Brendon – two elements: decant and disposal. On decant, we've started the mobilisation of staff. The artefacts have now all been catalogued. Will be looking at this with Leigh ahead of Member Steering Group on 25 November. Records management involves deciding what we can destroy and what needs to go with departments so they can maintain their function. Plan was to start digitising before Christmas but have moved that back to new year because of lockdown.
10. Tim – has seen an email from planners asking for 5,000 or so boxes for decanting into. Decant will take some time. Planners are debating where to find resource. Is there any support/resource for decant? This is a longer and bigger project than anyone guessed at the start. Brendon – not asking for any department to do the move themselves, just asking them to identify what they use and how frequently. Will need three HGVs to move the documents in December and that's being arranged. Also arranging people to do the heavy lifting. Identifying paperwork and storage planning. Tim – that message hasn't circulated as we would have expected. Brendon – have had that feedback elsewhere too. Understand the profile of departments where we haven't got the messaging right. The fact we haven't always got the messaging right is a symptom of pace we're working at.
11. Nick – political groups stored stuff in their group rooms, how is that to be done? Is the AOP in touch with political assistants? Brendon – yes, a lot. Work is being done on the design of what group rooms will look like. Looking at design of the lodge. Very engaged with Democratic Services on this.
12. Will – we asked a question about what the cost is of the health and safety improvements. Leigh – health and safety works with urgent priority in County Hall would cost just under £1.2m over the next year. If we tried to keep County Hall open for longer (i.e. beyond December 2020), would have to spend 150k a month on those works, as part of the £1.2m.

13. Will – How is County Hall going to be monitored and secured for a six-month period before being handed over. Brendon – regarding security, cost is minimal. Will still have securities management presence in the building. Security side of things is part of what facilities management will be doing. Will – how many facilities staff will be based at County Hall? Brendon – if security is maintained as it is at the moment, the cost would be £1,420 a month. Brendon will provide details of staff numbers, including whether they would be new or existing facilities staff, outside the meeting.
14. Tim – how much of that will we have to spend anyway to keep the building watertight and upright? Leigh – probably another amount on top of the £1.2m.
15. Will – when will we have a clearer steer on the council's decision making about selling/developing County Hall? The next meeting of the Task Group can be organised with this in mind. Leigh – By next meeting, bids will have closed on County Hall. There have been three or four formal viewing sessions held. Next week or so will have more info. Will – Task Group would like to scrutinise before the decision is made on selling County Hall.
16. Chris – what sort of numbers will interested parties be bidding on County Hall? There has been genuine concern that people now know we're leaving so they can be aggressive in their bidding in a way that means we won't necessarily get the value we would have hoped. If the bidding will close at a certain date, we need to look at that. Leigh – not sure how helpful it would be for me to speculate on numbers. In terms of marketing on basis we're moving out, understands point, but SCC couldn't just announce we were moving by announcing we'd sold the building from underneath everyone.
17. Nick – wouldn't have thought we'd get any serious interest amongst prospective buyers of County Hall unless it was going to be vacant possession. Depending on more than one market for the building.
18. Nick – regarding the date of next meeting, the agile office strategy is going to Cabinet on 14 December. What will that cover? Is it a holistic strategy covering the four bases? If it's fundamental, Nick suggests we should meet when the papers are available but before 14 December meeting. Leigh and Will agree. Leigh – we will share with you that paper, and can be flexible to some extent to fit around the meeting. That paper sets out overarching and comprehensive strategy and proposed direction of travel and route to final decision. Looked at entire office estate and moving to hub and spoke model, with four hubs. Conducting engagement with various officers to rationalise and fit into top down analysis of where our offices should be.
19. Tim – going back to disposal of County Hall. There was an interesting planning brief put out for consultation that included a variety of elements such as car park and flats. Are you expecting a bid for the whole site or a variety of responses? I.e. someone may not want all of County Hall. Leigh – the whole County Hall site is being looked at as one, but the Bittoms car park is treated separately. The Bittoms is quite complicated as there are various leases and subleases.

20. Onto staff. Brendon – everyone has been allocated new administrative base. Where people contracted to but not necessarily where they'll work from. Video to be released explaining difference. Engagement with trade unions has been completed. High level allocation of each directorate to administrative base has been sent out. Personal letters to be sent out next week. Leigh's next engagement post to be sent out on Jive this afternoon. Have done Ways of Working poll to get an understanding of mood amongst staff. Some departments used to be very tied to their desks five days a week, but now they would only expect to go into the office one-two days a week. Staff have indicated they are more concerned about lockdown at the moment than vacating County Hall. Work to do on developing welcome packs e.g. explaining how people getting to their administrative bases. Included a summary of findings of the poll. Some functions staffed mostly by people living in Kingston, and most of them moving to Ashley Park House in Walton, which has good links to Kingston.
21. Leigh – informal consultation has been ongoing for many months. Short formal consultation period concludes today. Looking at suggestions for where teams' administrative bases will be. The change in base is a contractual change so subject to notice period in people's individual contracts. Met with unions week before last. They were concerned about shortness of consultation, but we explained to them that the consultation closing is not the end of the conversation.
22. Nick – paragraph 19 in report mentions business ops and customer services. When we were looking at Woking, there was discussion about pensions team moving to Leatherhead. What's the travel pattern of Walton compared with what might have been Leatherhead? We have operated remotely for months, so hopefully concerns are less. Brendon – Connection between Kingston and Walton is good.
23. Nick – also, more payment for additional travel costs? Brendon – this is the workplace relocation grant, mapping change in journeys to look at entitlements. Part of travel plans. Haven't completely solved it yet but we're looking at the difference and eligibility. Leigh – linked to workstyles.
24. Chris – you mentioned contract changes for some staff. That has got potential implications, presumably they can take redundancy if they want as their job has changed. If people find the travel too much, there is a concern there, although many people will want to keep their job because of pandemic. Leigh – administrative base is a contractual change. All members of staff will get a letter proposing that change in their contract. If not willing to accept the change, then we will try to find alternatives or ultimately redundancy. Optimistic that that will be minimal. Economy and experience of working away from office means people's experience has changed.
25. Rachael – concerned that most departments had the option of putting a preference of the office. Contact centre is the only one that don't have a choice and have been sent to Walton. Though we're working from home, have already lost lots of people from those departments. Will need to be looking for new staff. Leigh – has heard anecdotal evidence of people making decisions on the prospect of us moving anywhere. Once we get back into normal world and agile model, people will have more discretion about where and when they go into the office. In Walton, have tried to prioritise those teams where there's the greatest risk of operational disturbance from the move. For staff who have less discretion on where they work, Walton is easy to get to from Kingston and central London.

26. Will – are we seeing staff choose some offices over others? People flooding to one office space. Leigh – administrative workbase is fixed, so it would be quite exceptional that people would change this. There will be different push and pull factors. For staff for whom County Hall was convenient, Woodhatch may not be, but when you get there it's a fantastic space. People will use flexibility to work closer to client depts rather than base themselves closer to professional team. Tech will allow booking of space and desks to ensure there aren't wasted journeys.
27. Rachael – re people having a choice of workbase, didn't mean individually. Thought it was the team talking with their manager and having a preference where that department would work from. Not getting that vibe from what Leigh's saying. Leigh – work Brendon and team has done is to inform people's administrative sites. Their preference is reflected in the proposal we've made. If everyone decided they wanted to go the least distance from County Hall, we would have to prioritise. Post-Covid, we will see what that's like. In summary, people will have an administrative workbase, but will be able to hotdesk from elsewhere if they need to.
28. Brendon – re office strategy, the phase we're in now is County Hall and Covid; next phase is no County Hall but still Covid; next stage after that is no County Hall, no Covid, then we can be truly agile. There will be an evolving amount of agile space for people to work from and collaborate etc.
29. Brendon – bottom line is closure of County Hall is on track, prep of Woodhatch on track, sale of County Hall progressing, and staff moves being managed. Busy but on track.
30. Will – next meeting. Following up on issues today and wider office strategy is a focus. Keen to be reassured that the Council has fit IT structure and infrastructure. When for next meeting. Leigh – end of Nov, early Dec*. Should have office estate strategy, be able to update on County Hall and on staff moves as staff will have been informed, and update on files in County Hall. Will – want to meet before Cabinet meeting. Can we see a copy well beforehand? Leigh – if we're focusing on content rather than report, then that's easier. Aim for week of 30 Nov – 4 Dec.

*Following the Scrutiny Liaison meeting of 10 November, this will likely be moved to early January 2021.

Actions:

1. Brendon Kavanagh to provide a written response on the Land and Property costs associated with Woodhatch
2. Brendon Kavanagh to provide running (energy) costs for Woodhatch in comparison with County Hall
3. Brendon Kavanagh to clarify the date of the Member Development Steering Group
4. Brendon Kavanagh and Leigh Whitehouse to include in the next report to the Task Group details and progress made on:
 - a. Transport
 - b. Energy costs
 - c. Budget/spend on Land and Property

5. Brendon Kavanagh to provide details of the number of staff required to maintain security at County Hall, including whether they would be new or existing facilities staff
6. Democratic Services Officers to organise the next Task Group meeting for a time convenient for discussion of the office estate strategy