

Decision Notice

Delegated Decision

Decision No:	DD03
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Subject:	ONE PUBLIC ESTATE: WORKPLACE AND VIABILITY STUDIES
Notification Date:	1 July 2022
Implementation Date:	4 July 2022
Decision to be taken by:	Mike Davis, Strategic Director (Corporate Resources) and Section 151 Officer
Report of:	Martin Leggatt, Head of Assets and Building Control
Portfolio Holder:	Councillor Oliver Richardson, Portfolio Holder for Community and Corporate Property
Decision Type:	Executive Non-Key Decision
Call-in to be Suspended:	No (<i>Call-in does not apply to non-Key Officer decisions</i>)

Classification:	Unrestricted
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Delegated Authority:	Delegation C79 of Section 6 (Scheme of Officer Delegations) of Part 3 (Responsibility for Functions) of the Constitution to the Section 151 Officer: 'To make application for and to accept grants or other assistance on behalf of the Council'.
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Purpose of the report:	To accept funding from Kent County Council so that design professionals can be engaged to carry out workplace and viability studies at Dover District Council's Whitfield Offices.
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Recommendation:	To accept funding of £14,880 from Kent County Council so that design professionals can be engaged to carry out workplace and viability studies at the Council's Whitfield Offices.
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1. Summary

- 1.1 The Council is looking to engage with a reputable and experienced office design and refurbishment consultancy to successfully deliver the following outcomes:
- (a) Determination of how well the existing Whitfield Offices support the current needs and future aspirations of the organisation and its existing third-party stakeholders and end-users.
 - (b) Delivery of a viable full business case that demonstrates how the existing offices can be modified, refurbished, and repurposed to optimise operations and new ways of working whilst also accommodating a new principal third-party stakeholder (Kent County Council (KCC)).

- (c) Development of design and initial project briefs that clearly articulates both the scope of services and works required to deliver the key success criteria outlined in the full business case. This will include the budget that has been allocated to execute the project to the client's satisfaction.

2. Introduction and Background

- 2.1 The Council has become aware that since Covid-19 its offices at Whitfield are not being used in accordance with how they were designed.
- 2.2 Through the One Public Estate (OPE) programme an opportunity has arisen to carry out a viability study for contracting into a reduced but optimum operational footprint. An integral part of the study will be ascertaining whether space can be freed for occupation by a new principal third-party stakeholder (KCC) whilst ensuring that the business-as-usual functions of the Council and existing third-party stakeholders and end-users remains unhindered.
- 2.3 A procurement exercise has been undertaken in accordance with Council contract standing orders and procurement rules to identify a reputable and experienced office design and refurbishment consultancy that offers best value in terms of the services tendered.
- 2.4 Viability options will ascertain whether the Council and the new third-party stakeholder can function efficiently within the current footprint of the Whitfield Offices.
- 2.5 Post-Covid business and operational needs will be considered, as will incorporating new ways of working if required.
- 2.6 Consideration will only be given to options that work within the existing constraints of the building including utilising existing vertical escape routes. There is no remit or budget within the existing brief for constructing extensions or introducing new staircases or lifts.
- 2.7 This is not purely a spatial planning exercise. The consultants will have to determine how the current space works and how the Council, various stakeholders, its departments and staff function in the areas provided. Qualitative and quantitative evidence will be gathered and interpreted within the full business case and strategic brief. The presentation of this material will need to clearly demonstrate an understanding of existing location, time-based, activity-based and space typologies and how these can evolve through design development to inform new ways of working that can enhance the future productivity, efficiency and well-being of the end-users.
- 2.8 At the end of the process the project brief will be sufficiently developed and costed to ensure that a design team can be appointed to deliver a project that has a clear vision, set boundaries and a direction of travel that has been agreed with all the principal stakeholders.

3. Identification of Options

- 3.1 Option 1 - Recommended: To accept funding from Kent County Council so that design professionals can be engaged to carry out workplace and viability studies at the Council's Whitfield Offices.
- 3.2 Option 2: Not to accept the funding and to cancel the workplace viability study.

4. Evaluation of Options

- 4.1 Option 1: Proceeding with this option will enable the development of a costed project brief for the reconfiguration of the Whitfield Offices for the purpose of optimising

operations, facilitating new ways of working, and determining the viability of accommodating a new third-party stakeholder (KCC).

- 4.2 Option 2: Cancelling the One Public Estate project and the associated workplace viability study will maintain the current status quo in terms of how the Council, various stakeholders, their departments and staff function, and end-users' function and engage within the existing office space.

5. **Resource Implications**

- 5.1 There are no direct capital implications to the Council for carrying out the workplace viability study. The cost of commissioning the design professionals will be met from the monies provided from the Cabinet Office through the One Public Estate initiative. Kent County Council as an upper tier authority are acting as lead authority and co-ordinator of the programme on behalf of the Cabinet Office.
- 5.2 In terms of officer time there will be a requirement for limited input from the Client Sponsor and the nominated DDC Project Champion along with representatives nominated by the appropriate Heads of Service.
- 5.3 The service representatives will take part in workplace study interviews over the period of one day.
- 5.4 The limited officer time provided by both the Client Sponsor and the DDC Project Champion will be drawn down either from existing Dover District Council budgets or from the OPE funding depending on confirmation of funding requirements.

6. **Climate Change and Environmental Implications**

- 6.1 The proposal seeks to enable the existing asset to be used to its optimum potential both in terms of creating the ideal physical and digital workspace to enable the Council and its third-party stakeholder to work efficiently and sustainably in carrying out their business-as-usual services.
- 6.2 The project will require Dover District Council to operate from a reduced but optimum operational footprint and this will have the effect of reducing the Council's green-house gas emissions.

7. **Corporate Implications**

- 7.1 Comment from the Director of Finance (linked to the MTFP): Accountancy has been consulted and has no further comment. (DL)
- 7.2 Comment from the Solicitor to the Council: The Solicitor to the Council has been consulted and has no further comments to make. (HR 25/5/22)
- 7.1 Comment from the Equalities Officer: 'This report does not specifically highlight any equality implications. However, in discharging their duties, Members are required to comply with the public sector equality duty as set out in Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2010/15/section/149>' (KM25/5/22)'.
- 7.2 Comment from Principal Climate Change and Sustainability Officer: No further comment. (AM 25/05/22)

8. **Appendices**

Appendix 1 – Brief for the engagement of Professional Services.

9. **Background Papers**

None.

Contact Officer: Martin Leggatt, Head of Assets & Building Control