

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO CABINET

1st SEPTEMBER 2015

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR - RESOURCES

MAXIMISING USE OF OUR ASSETS – LEASING RAVEN'S COURT

1. Purpose of Report.

The purpose of the report is to inform Cabinet of the proposal to lease Raven's Court.

2. Connection to Corporate Improvement Objectives/Other Corporate Priorities

2.1 The project links to:

IP1: Working together to develop the local economy

IP6 : Working together to make the best use of our resources

In addition, the project is part of the Maximising the use of space and technology programme which sits within the Bridgend Change Programme and is in line with the Corporate Asset Management Plan 2021

3. Background.

3.1 The Council has been rationalising its administrative estate for a number of years and since 2010 has reduced the number of offices from 28 to 12 delivering revenue savings of £677,000 per annum.

In 2014-15, the Council disposed of Sunnyside offices generating a further £332,000 per annum in recurrent revenue savings and undertook remodelling works at the Civic Offices to enable the relocation of staff.

3.2 Officers have produced a business case, evaluating the potential of releasing Raven's Court offices (which are currently underutilised) and relocating staff to the Civic Offices and Sunnyside House, as well as introducing more flexible ways of working. The appraisal involved the financial and non-financial implications of three possible options:

Option 1: Status Quo (i.e. retain Raven's Court);

Option 2: Lease Raven's Court and relocate staff and increase homeworking;
and

Option 3: Dispose of Raven's Court and relocate staff and increase homeworking.

3.3 Officers appraised the three options in the business case, (which included a review of the lessons learnt from the recent Sunnyside move) and based on this evaluation , **option 2** was identified as the preferred option. The progression of this

option, however, is dependent upon completing a lease of the whole building. No staff will move until a tenant has been secured and the lease has been agreed. The environment in Civic Offices is already open plan and it is anticipated that no further works would be required to accommodate staff from Raven's Court.

- 3.4 Releasing Raven's Court would provide an opportunity to assist regeneration and economic growth in the town. The Council have been advised that there has been an increase in occupier confidence and optimism over the last 6 months and are hopeful therefore of taking advantage of this opportunity to let the premises.

4. Current situation / proposal.

- 4.1 As part of the process, a project team has been created that includes service area representatives who will work with and support directors, heads of service and managers to ensure that all relevant issues associated with the potential lease and subsequent office moves can be addressed.
- 4.2 Work has been undertaken to establish whether there is further available space in both Civic Offices and Sunnyside House. At a strict ratio of 3:2 (staff to desk) working, there would be capacity to accommodate the staff from Raven's Court in these two buildings. There is also some potential for hot-desking at other Council owned properties, such as the Hubs.
- 4.3 Property Agents have recently been appointed to market the property and Raven's Court is currently available to lease through the Council's agents. A web page, particulars and on-site advertising boards will ensure that the Council optimises the success of the campaign.
- 4.4 The project team have been keen to communicate progress on the project and a number of updates have been sent out.
- 4.5 Increased agile working (supported by technology solutions), would be required to facilitate a 3:2 staff to desk ratio, and there are additional capital and revenue costs associated with this. Moving to a 3:2 ratio will require investment in ICT to allow staff to access the software required to do their job, irrespective of where they are located. Approval for this expenditure will be sought from Cabinet as part of the capital programme in October.
- 4.6 Four options of ICT investment were considered in the business case and the solution that was recommended ensures business continuity and minimises risk - allowing coverage to support a minimum of 50% of the user base in the event that the primary storage fails (in line with a best practice approach to business continuity).
- 4.7 Health and safety and risk mitigation are essential elements of the project and officers are ensuring that all appropriate checks and references to policies are made.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework & Procedure Rules.

- 5.1 None

6. Equality Impact Assessment

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment is not required for disposals of land and buildings.

7. Financial Implications.

7.1 All financial implications are being evaluated. Any required capital expenditure will be subject to Council approval in October.

8. Recommendation.

8.1 That Cabinet note this report for information.

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