

15th January 2018

Policy, Projects and Resources Committee

Town Hall Update

Report of: *Greg Campbell*

Wards Affected: *All*

This report is: *Public*

1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 The Town Hall project is progressing in line with identified timescales. All services both front office and back office have relocated out of the Town Hall and continue to be run successfully from the new sites.
- 1.2 The second phase of construction will soon commence and to avoid too many change requests officers are seeking approval to work with the commercial sector to deliver the right and appropriate space for Start Up Hubs.

2. Recommendation(s)

- 2.1 Approval is sought from Members for Officers to engage with commercial organisations and business partners to identify specific requirements and needs for start-up businesses, as part of the Council's Community Hub.**

3. Introduction and Background

- 3.1 The Town Hall project is soon to enter the construction phase. This report provides an update on the progress of the Town Hall Remodelling project including how the temporary relocation of services went, the expected progress over the next few months and agreement to develop commercial discussions for the start-up hubs that are proposed.

3.2 Relocation out of the Town Hall was completed on schedule and all staff vacated the Town Hall by the 31st October 2017. A summary update of how this has gone is set out below:

3.3 Seven Arches Road. (SAR)

- This has become the Council's face to face point of contact. It has delivered a revised working model; moving towards digital platforms through IT hardware including i-pads and scanners. It has introduced floor walkers who aid customers by working through online forms. This shift will aid customers to feel more comfortable to self-serve and use their own PC's to transact and communicate with the Council in the future.
- Weddings have now started taking place at Seven Arches Road and when the wedding room is not in use it becomes the main meeting room for the site.
- Mind have also relocated to Seven Arches Road as well as Papworth Trust (both relocating from the Town Hall).
- SAR is also the main office for CCTV and Parking
- Three pilot schemes continue to offer drop in sessions in reception. These are Family Mosaic, Provide and CAB, who all seem to have settled into the new surroundings.

3.4 Regus Warley:

- 130 staff now work out of the Regus office from 76 desks shifting greatly towards hot desking and remote working. The office is functional, and officers have risen to the challenge of working in this new environment. Regular meetings with Regus are held to ensure any issues get resolved however in general the office is working well.

3.5 Depot Warley

- The Depot now makes better use of its space and has increased its desk capacity to 34 to cater for approximately 45 staff.

- Licensing is now run from this site which enables Taxi drivers to receive the full service they require from one location.
- The Print Room has consolidated large format printing into its services and relocated to a smaller area specifically designed for the service.

3.6 Merrymeade

- Electoral Services have relocated to two offices at Merrymeade which was the first service to relocate in June 2017 and has proved successful thus far.

3.7 Members Services

- Members' pigeon holes are now located in the meeting room at the rear of Seven Arches Road and can be accessed twenty-four seven. Committee meetings have started from Brentwood County High School and whilst there have been some teething problems these appear to have now been overcome.
- A recent tour of the building allowed Members to see the facilities at Seven Arches Road for themselves

3.8 Information Technology

3.9 The relocation out of the Town Hall has gone well and has galvanised and been supported by officers with a can-do attitude which has been greatly assisted by ICT who successfully transferred services to the Azure Cloud. This was no small undertaking especially when given the timescales involved. This enables officers to engage with their programmes and information, so they can carry out their duties and assist customers from any PC, Chromebook or laptop. It means officers are not tied to one desk or location. The advancement in ICT provision really has been a success for this organisation in its strive to work differently and change culture. This has been recognised by Microsoft who have published case studies on the work accomplished at BBC.

3.10 The Community Hub

3.11 The Council's Hub partners are continuing to be included in conversations and the Council is pleased that The Department for Works and Pensions 'Job Centre Plus' are now going to be relocating to the Hub in 2019 along with other partners including Council for Voluntary Services, Citizens Advice Bureau and Mind.

3.12 The Police Relocation

3.13 The Police completed their successful relocation to the Lower Ground of the Town Hall on 20th November 2017. The office is fully working and is now in 24-hour operation, with 54 uniformed officers based and operating from the Town Hall.

3.14 Construction Work

3.15 From the 1st November the "soft strip out" began, this has remained on schedule allowing the next phase to start towards the end of the soft strip out to ensure future target timelines are met.

3.16 The Council is now in the process of agreeing the final remodelling contract for the Town Hall. The provider will be agreed later this month -January 2018 – and is likely to start in late February 2018. This will initially see the scaffolding erected, work to the roof started followed by the insertion of steels.

3.17 The work outlined in 3.16 above sees the project move in to an important phase of the redevelopment of the Community Hub.

3.18 In addition, some space remains and we continue to look at further opportunities to lease this for commercial return to the Council. This includes detailing requirements for space for start-up businesses.

3.19 The space which still requires more in-depth investigation is the Start Up Hubs on first floor. Whilst the space has been allocated it would be prudent to engage further with the commercial and experienced groups and determine whether additional space could be used. To progress and firm up the requirements officers seek approval to discuss business needs and to engage with and seek advice from appropriate commercial groups, this would include, as an example, the Chamber of Commerce and like groups.

- 3.20 Finally, following a motion carried at Full Council that '*This Council resolves to investigate as part of an overall review of safety measures the installation of a sprinkler system to be installed in the Town Hall building during alterations to the offices and during the conversion of the upper floors to 19 apartments,*' Members are informed that a review has been undertaken by a professional company and we are now awaiting a report with their findings. Should these become available in a suitable timeframe ahead of the meeting, this will be shared with the committee.

4. Summary/Recommendation

- 4.1 The Town Hall remodelling project remains on track in terms of time and resources with the formal appointment of the contractors due to be carried out later this month. The relocation out of the Town Hall has been successful and all staff are now working from alternative sites and have embraced new ways of working although it has been easier for some than others.
- 4.2 Approval is sought from Members to engage with Commercial organisations and for example the Chamber of Commerce, on the requirements and needs of a Start Up Hub to make it a success.

5. Reasons for Recommendation

- 5.1 The approval to discuss and negotiate with the commercial sector will provide more detailed commercial knowledge and information in which the Council lacks expertise. The Council should always strive to be its best and if that requires outside knowledge then this should be encouraged.

Early engagement means that there are likely to be less changes or issues later when the project finally comes to fruition.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Consultation was undertaken with the enablement company, our project management team for the project, and staff.

7. References to Corporate Plan

- 7.1 The Town Hall remodelling project fits with a number of corporate objectives set out in Vision for Brentwood 2016–19:

- Review the Town Hall project to deliver a community hub, shared by others
- Consider how Council assets can be utilised to promote sustainable development in the Borough
- Maximise Council assets to deliver corporate objectives and ensure community benefit
- Review our asset management governance strategy
- Develop new ways of working for the Council, improving service delivery and reducing costs and unnecessary bureaucracy
- Explore alternative methods of service delivery, including shared services and outsourcing

8. Implications

Financial Implications

Name & Title: Jacqueline Van Mellaerts, Financial Services Manager (Deputy Section 151)

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The engagement of commercial organisations and business partners will help underpin the financial assumptions made in the Town Hall Redevelopment Model for income from the Community Hub area. Further financial updates may arise when the project finally comes to fruition.

Legal Implications

Name & Title: Daniel Toohey, Monitoring Officer

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- 8.1 The Council must comply with its Contract Standing Orders and procurement regulatory requirements, regarding the entry into contracts for goods, services or works. Legal Services are available to advise as the matter progresses.

9. **Other Implications** (where significant) – i.e. Health and Safety, Asset Management, Equality and Diversity, Risk Management, Section 17 – Crime & Disorder, Sustainability, ICT.

- 9.1 There appears to be no other implications at this point

10. Background Papers

- 10.1 None

11. Appendices to this report

11.1 None

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