People Select Committee (Task & Finish Group)
Review of Smarter Working in Stockton – Accommodation and Buildings
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

The review will contribute to the following Council Plan 2019-22 theme and objectives:

Our Council
- Deliver a balanced and sustainable medium term financial plan.
- Ensure the Council uses its assets effectively.
- Continue to improve the efficiency and effectiveness of our services.
- Continue to attract, develop and support diverse, capable and resilient employees.
- Deliver effective communication.

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

Ongoing budgetary pressures and declining workforce numbers are leading Local Authorities across the UK to consider their office workspace offer and determine if there is a need to rationalise Council buildings. In addition, advances in technology have given rise to alternative working practices, particularly around mobile and home working.

As outlined in the Council Plan 2019-22 (*Our ways of working*), Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council is committed to:

➢ Providing digital access to its services
➢ Using existing and new technologies to help it work differently
➢ Making optimum use of the places where it works
➢ Ensuring that its policies, processes and procedures are as efficient and productive as they can be
➢ Ensuring its infrastructure is fit for purpose for a modern organisation

The Council's Smarter Working in Stockton (SWiS) programme is challenging and changing the way the organisation thinks about work, how it does it, and how it can work smarter. The programme consists of four main strands – *Customers*, *Information*, *Technology* and *Workspaces* – which, if developed together, should improve customer engagement, reduce time spent on non-productive work, and have a positive impact on staff morale. Cabinet receive an annual report on the programme's progress, and have previously supported the rationalisation of the Council's

existing buildings to ensure it operates efficiently and effectively.

Current accommodation and office environments are expensive to operate, have an array of maintenance issues, and currently there is surplus capacity with opportunities for further reductions. This review will therefore focus on the area of *Workspaces*, examining current workspace provision and assessing options for the future use and number of Council buildings. It will aim to ensure that the Council has appropriate value-for-money infrastructure in place, and that it is equipped to keep pace with changes expected by staff and its customers.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

What / where are the existing Council buildings / workspace (Member and Officer accommodation), occupancy and costs – how has this changed over recent times?

Future workspace options and potential benefits / risks.

Impact of changes to workspace provision, facilitation of alternative working practices, and staff wellbeing. How will changes to the number and location of buildings, if applicable, be communicated internally and to wider partners and the public?

Learning from workspace developments within other Local Authorities and organisations.

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Cabinet, Council, staff.

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

3 months (reporting to Cabinet in October 2019).

What information do we need?

Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):

- Cabinet report: Smarter Working in Stockton (September 2018)
- Feedback from SWiS workshops (April and May 2019)
- Government Guide to Smarter Working (Civil Service)
- Scrutiny Review of Sickness Absence (2017)

Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)	*What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?*
Finance and Business Services	Current shape of Council accommodation including buildings, occupancy, costs, future needs and potential options.
SBC staff	Feedback from SWiS staff workshops
Other Local Authorities and organisations: - Thirteen Group - Cleveland Police	Experience of workspace rationalisation and/or future plans (including site visits)

- Middlesbrough Council

How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)
Meetings, research, SWiS workshop feedback, site visits (including to: Municipal Buildings, Church Road, Tithebarn, Stirling House, Kingsway, and Queensway)

How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?
Meetings, site visits.

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?
The Public Sector Equality Duty requires that public bodies have due regard to the need to advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between different people when carrying out their activities.

This review will need to be mindful of the impact on all users of Council workspace (staff, Members, visitors) when considering any future accommodation developments. |

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?
Consideration of the health and wellbeing of Council staff will be a factor within this review, specifically in relation to proposed changes in infrastructure and the effects on current working practices / environments.

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:
The outcome would be a view and recommendations around principles for the future use of workspace to ensure Council accommodation is used efficiently and effectively. This review will form part of the SWiS programme (complementing as opposed to duplicating other work), and will outline views on the current position and views on potential future provision of accommodation.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	**Prior to 28 June**	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	**28 June**	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	**8 July**	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	**TBC**	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Background Presentation / Appointment of Task and Finish Group Overview of SBC accommodation, feedback from staff Visits to SBC buildings Visit to other LAs and Partner organisations	**8 July** **July - August**	Select Committee Task and Finish Group
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	**TBC (informal)**	Task and Finish Group
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	**September 2019**	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	**TBC**	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	**7 October**	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	**[22.10.19]**	Executive Scrutiny Committee
Report to Cabinet/Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	**17 October**	Cabinet / Approving Body