



HOUGHTON REGIS TOWN COUNCIL

Peel Street, Houghton Regis, Bedfordshire, LU5 5EY

Town Mayor: **Councillor E Cooper**

Tel: 01582 708540

Town Clerk: **Clare Evans**

e-mail: info@houghtonregis-tc.gov.uk

15th July 2024

To: Members of the Corporate Services Committee

Cllrs: D Jones (Chair), E Billington, J Carroll, E Costello, W Henderson, M Herber, C Rollins

(Copies to other Councillors for information)

Notice of Meeting

You are hereby summoned to a Meeting of the **Corporate Services Committee** to be held at the Council Offices, Peel Street on **Tuesday 23rd July 2024 at 7.00pm.**

Members of the public who wish to attend the meeting may do so in person or remotely through the meeting link below.

To attend remotely through Teams please follow this link: [MEETING LINK](#)

Clare Evans
Town Clerk

**THIS MEETING MAY
BE RECORDED ***

Agenda

- 1. APOLOGIES & SUBSTITUTIONS**
- 2. QUESTIONS FROM THE PUBLIC**

In accordance with approved Standing Orders 1(e)-1(l) members of the public may make representations, ask questions and give evidence at a meeting which they are entitled to attend in respect of the business on the agenda.

The total period of time designated for public participation at a meeting shall not exceed 15 minutes and an individual member of the public shall not speak for more than 3 minutes unless directed by the chairman of the meeting.

- 3. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST & REQUESTS FOR DISPENSATIONS**

Under the Localism Act 2011 (sections 26-37 and Schedule 4) and in accordance with the Council's Code of Conduct, Members are required to declare any interests which are

**Phones and other equipment may be used to film, audio record, tweet or blog from this meeting by an individual Council member or a member of the public. No part of the meeting room is exempt from public filming unless the meeting resolves to go into exempt session
The use of images or recordings arising from this is not under the Council's control.*

not currently entered in the member's register of interests or if he/she has not notified the Monitoring Officer of any such interest.

Members are invited to submit any requests for Dispensations for consideration.

4. COUNCIL OFFICES

Pages 3 – 6

At the Corporate Services Meeting on 10th June, Members considered opportunities to enhance the council's service provision to residents through the relocation of the council offices to more suitable (visible) premises.

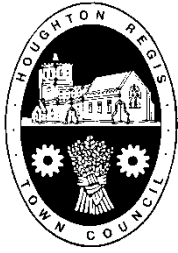
Whilst Members agreed in principle to the proposal, they requested a special meeting be held to discuss this proposal and other possible options in more detail.

Members will find a report attached.

Recommendations: To obtain quotes from design architects for the development of comprehensive remodelling options aimed at:

- 1. Enhancing the functionality and aesthetics of the main foyer**
- 2. Expanding office and administrative spaces, including the potential relocation of the council chamber if necessary**
- 3. Improving the external visibility and public presence of the council offices**

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Date: 23rd July 2024

Title: COUNCIL OFFICES

Purpose of the Report: To enable Members to consider future council office provision.

Contact Officer: Clare Evans, Town Clerk

1. RECOMMENDATIONS

To obtain quotes from design architects for the development of comprehensive remodelling options aimed at:

1. **Enhancing the functionality and aesthetics of the main foyer**
2. **Expanding office and administrative spaces, including the potential relocation of the council chamber if necessary**
3. **Improving the external visibility and public presence of the council offices**

2. BACKGROUND

At the Corporate Services Meeting on 10th June, Members considered opportunities to enhance the councils service provision to residents through the relocation of the council offices to more suitable (visible) premises.

This consideration was supported by both the approved HRTC Corporate Plan 2024/28 and the recently published Corporate Peer Challenge (CPC) Report and the draft CPC Action Plan.

The following were agreed:

Next Steps

- To support in principle the relocation of the town council offices to Retail Unit 1, All Saints View.
- For the Committee to further consider elements such as:
 - Budget implications and availability
 - Design and layout options & indicative costs
 - Location of the Council Chamber
 - Future use of the current offices

- Enter into more detailed conversations with CBC over the lease terms for Retail Unit 1, in particular to look for a length of term of over 25 years.

Whilst Members agreed in principle, they requested a special meeting be held to discuss this proposal and other possible options in more detail.

3. ISSUES FOR CONSIDERATION

It was intended to provide Members will an options appraisal covering the following:

1. Remain in current premises as existing
2. Park View Room, All Saints View
3. Retail Unit 1, All Saints View
4. Townsend Centre
5. Houghton Regis Day Centre for Older People
6. Remain in current premises but undertake refurbishment to improve visibility and accessibility

Whilst undertaking more research it has been identified that the current office provides the following level of floorspace:

Internal floor area (nett) is 219.68 sqm (2364 sq ft)

External floor area (gross) is 237.50 sqm (2556 sq ft) comprising:

- Council (Debating) Chamber 54.43 sqm (586 sq ft)
- General office with 6 workstations 38.187 sqm (411 sq ft)
- Clerk's Office 16.12 sqm (173.49 sq ft)
- Managers' Office 14.30 sqm (153.95 sq ft)
- SMT Office 13.86 sqm (149.23 sq ft)
- Remainder: Toilets, kitchen, stores, Interview, Photocopier, Filing, Foyer and Circulation

Floor area in the above options is as follows:

1. Park View Room, All Saints View – approx. 163sqm
2. Retail Unit 1, All Saints View – 155sqm
3. Townsend Centre – not known
4. Houghton Regis Day Centre for Older People – not known

A significant desire from considering a relocation was to achieve one or more of the following:

1. Improved visibility – achieved only with Option 1 (Retail unit 1)
2. Community space – could possibly be achieved with Option 3 and 4
3. Scope for future expansion – could possibly be achieved with Option 3 and 4
4. Reasonable impact on the precept – as a guide using 2024/25 tax base a precept increase of £10,000 equates to a Band D increase of £1.45 per property per annum. This can be applied to any project / initiative which the council may consider undertaking.

When considered against these basic objectives it is not felt that options 1-4 above score especially highly. In addition to this, no conversations have been had with Central Bedfordshire Council in regard to options 3 and 4.

On balance, at this moment in time, it feels that the most appropriate option would be to look to continue to use the current office either as existing or to undertake some remodelling to improve the foyer area and the general visibility of the office to the community.

The council has expressed a desire to ensure that the council is fit for purpose in the short and medium term. This applies to its corporate structure, its staff structure, its services and its facilities. The current offices can accommodate 1 additional member of staff. Should the council seek to expand its staff team, options would include desk sharing, mandatory hybrid working or the relocation of the council chamber. It is suggested that over the next 12-24 months the office staff team may increase by 3 members of staff.

Members are invited to discuss this further.

4. HRTC CORPORATE PLAN

4 Management and Operations: To improve the efficiency and effectiveness of the Town Council as the key local service provider

4.5 Enhance the role of the council.

5. IMPLICATIONS

Corporate Implications

- Conformity with the adopted NHP
- Conformity with the Corporate Plan
- Conformity with the draft CPC Action Plan

Legal Implications

- There are no legal implications arising from the recommendations.

Financial Implications

- Budget available of £124,000 in an EMR for office provision.

Risk Implications

- Reputation – improved visibility and accessibility offers opportunities for enhanced reputational benefits

Equalities Implications

Houghton Regis Town Council has a duty to promote equality of opportunity, eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and foster good relations in respect of nine protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, sex and sexual orientation.

This project / issue does not discriminate.

Climate Change Implications

- There are climate change advantages to be secured by the council improving its facilities to a more modern and fit for purpose premises.

Press Contact

- There are no press implications arising from the recommendations

6. CONCLUSION AND NEXT STEPS

On balance it is felt that the alternatives put forward are too limiting in their offer for them to be considered as viable options.

It is therefore suggested that Members consider appointing a design architect to assess the current office and put forward remodelling suggestions with the aim of improving the foyer area and the visibility generally of the council offices.

7. APPENDICES

None.