



Cyngor Castell-nedd Port Talbot
Neath Port Talbot Council

NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

Cabinet

22nd February 2023

Report of the Head of Property and Regeneration

Matter for Decision

Wards Affected: 'All Wards'

Proposal to close five operational staff accommodation buildings under Phase One of the Accommodation Review

Purpose of the Report:

To seek approval to close five of the Neath Port Talbot Council's ("the Council") operational staff based office accommodation buildings and declare them surplus to operational requirements with effect from 31st March 2023.

Executive Summary:

It is proposed that there is to be closure of five of the Neath Port Talbot Council's operational staff based office accommodation buildings and declare them surplus to operational requirements with effect from 31st March 2023.

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Background:

The Council has staff based in a range of civic and operational buildings located throughout the County Borough. The vast majority of these are owned freehold by the Council but a few are leased off other public sector organisations or private companies.

As Members will be aware, the Covid 19 pandemic accelerated the Council's introduction of agile/hybrid working for staff at a considerable rate of knots with many staff now continuing to work from home, partly from home and/or from no fixed base.

Initially the intention was to continue with the existing level of staff office accommodation for a period of up to 12/18 months to allow sufficient time for the Council to fully consider and evaluate staff working pattern and their needs and decide upon the future requirements for and location of the Councils Civic and operational staff office accommodation.

However, as Members will also fully appreciate, the global energy crisis centred around the ongoing war in Ukraine has significantly increased energy costs, and therefore heightened the need to urgently evaluate and decide on future accommodation requirements with the aim of reducing ongoing budget pressures on the Council.

Officers have now been embarking on an accommodation review and are undertaking this in phases that will see officers concentrate on different parts of the Civic and operational accommodation buildings over time.

Phase one is to identify some initial outcomes to achieve costs savings, Phase two will see officers consider options centred around the larger Civic accommodation buildings. Phase three will see consideration of our depot buildings. At each stage reports will be brought to members for determination on a manner to proceed.

Following a comprehensive review of staff based office accommodation, officers have identified and concluded that steps now be put in place to close the following buildings with effect from 31st March 2023 with the

circa 190 members of staff moving to alternative local existing civic and operational staff office accommodation.

- 36 Forge Road Port Talbot – Council owned.
- 36 Orchard Street, Neath –leased to the Council by Neath Port Talbot CVS.
- Cimla Hospital, Cimla Common, Neath - leased to the Council by the NHS.
- Baglan Resource Centre, Moor Road Baglan – leased to the Council by the NHS.
- Ffrwydwyllt House, Commercial Road Port Talbot – Council owned

In respect of 36 Forge Road and Ffrwydwyllt House, it would be proposed that these are declared surplus to operational requirements and handed over to the Head of Property and Regeneration, where steps will be taken to consider future usage.

In respect of the leased premises, it would be proposed to declare these surplus to operational requirements and delegated authorisation be granted to the Head of Property and Regeneration to continue with the preliminary discussions with the respective landlords and seek to conclude negotiations for early surrender/termination of the leases ideally to comply with the closure date of 31st March 2023 or as soon as possible thereafter. However, in respect of Cimla Hospital, in the short

term, there will continue to be a requirement by Social Services for a lease for up to 6 of the rooms currently included in the lease for specialised training purposes until such time as suitable alternative premises are secured to relocate to.

Financial Impacts:

By undertaking the aforementioned actions, it is proposed that financial savings in the region of £158,000 will be initially obtained. In respect of the freehold buildings, future financial benefits could be realised dependant on future uses. Again these will be subject to reports to members at the appropriate time.

Whilst from preliminary discussions it is not anticipated that there will be any significant dilapidation costs to fund on surrender/termination of the leases any such costs that do arise will need to be funded by existing budgets.

Integrated Impact Assessment:

A first stage impact assessment has been undertaken to assist the Council in discharging its legislative duties (under the Equality Act 2010, the Welsh Language Standards (No.1) Regulations 2015, the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Environment (Wales) Act 2016. The first stage assessment has indicated that a more in-depth assessment is not required.

Valleys Communities Impacts:

No implications.

Workforce Impacts:

The staff currently based in the aforementioned buildings will all be relocated in to other Council offices accommodation buildings. There is, however, one member of the Council's Corporate Cleaning Team will be

impacted by the proposal to close one of these buildings. There is, however, another vacant cleaning post within 3 miles with exactly the same hours of work, this vacancy has been offered to and will be held open to the person to allow time to decide whether to take up the post. Discussions will continue to be had with trade union colleagues on this particular individual

Legal Impacts:

In respect of the leases the Council has entered into they will contain appropriate provisions regarding the surrender of the Council's interests.

Risk Management Impacts:

Failure to take steps to achieve the surrender or address such buildings mean financial savings cannot be realised

Crime and Disorder Impacts:

No implications.

Counter Terrorism Impacts:

No implications.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts:

No implications.

Consultation:

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item. The Local Members for the properties affected have been consulted and

support the proposal. Similarly all impacted staff members have been consulted, together with trade union colleagues.

Recommendations:

It is recommended that having had due regard to the first stage Integrated Impact Assessment, members approve the closure of five of the Neath Port Talbot Council's operational staff based office accommodation buildings (as identified in this report) and declare them surplus to operational requirements with effect from 31st March 2023 and that delegated authority be granted to the Head of Property and Regeneration to serve the appropriate notices surrendering any leasehold interest in such buildings

Reasons for Proposed Decision:

To ensure greater rationalising of the Council's accommodation for office based staff and ensure that financial savings can be realised.

Implementation of Decision:

The decision is proposed for implementation after the three day call in period.

Appendices:

None

List of Background Papers:

None

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