



SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL



Employment Committee


16 November 2022

Report of Councillor Kelham Cooke,
Leader of the Council

New Office Accommodation Update

Report Author

Sam Fitt, Corporate Project Lead

 Sam.fitt@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

This report provides Employment Committee with an update on the current progress of the new office accommodation project taking place.

Recommendations

- 1. That the Employment Committee notes the progress on the new office accommodation.**

Decision Information

Is this a Key Decision?	No
Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication?	No
What are the relevant corporate priorities?	High Performing Council

Which wards are impacted?

All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no specific financial implications arising from this report. The budget for the relocation and fitting out of new office accommodation has been approved by Full Council and expenditure is being managed accordingly.
Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 There are no legal or governance implications regarding this report. Procurement procedures have been followed using frameworks, and any contracts that are signed will be reviewed and checked with Lincolnshire Legal Services.

Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.3 South Kesteven District Council signed up to the National Local Authority Mental Health Challenge as a public commitment to supporting residents' wellbeing and wellness. A significant number of employees have felt more anxious and isolated than ever due to lockdown. Many have admitted to struggling with their mental health more than usual in recent months. A return to the daily commute lacks appeal to those who have had the flexibility of home working; a balance between the two is the logical solution, with a mix of office and homeworking favoured by the vast number of employees.
- 1.4 It is widely reported that communities have been massively affected by the drop in footfall of office workers' spending. Whilst it is acknowledged that some people do not want to return to their traditional commutes, placing office spaces near local high streets where people are living as well as working, helps to revitalise localities, as this places office workers amongst other businesses that rely on their trade.
- 1.5 Whilst there are no direct safeguarding implications associated with the content of this report, the provision of more modern accommodation is likely to assist members of the team with mobility issues by reducing the number of floors and doorways in the office space. Similarly, any design of the Council's Customer

Service Centre will provide opportunity to ensure there are no barriers to members of the public in terms of service provision.

An Equality Impact Assessment was completed as part of the relocation to the space previously.

Climate Change

- 1.6 As an older building, the St Peter's Hill offices provide limited scope for improved energy efficiency without considerable retrofitting investment. The newer cinema complex is built to modern standards with more efficient heating and ventilation and represents a significant improvement on the existing St Peter's Hill office accommodation and will contribute positively to the Council's Climate Change and Carbon Reduction Plans.
- 1.7 Supporting a shift to flexible working generally sees a reduction in home-to-work mileage that contributes to a reduced carbon footprint.

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 Approval was given at the Annual Full Council meeting held on 26 May 2022 to vacate its existing offices at St Peter's Hill, Grantham, and relocate to the empty office unit above the Savoy Cinema on St Catherine's Road.
- 2.4 A budget allocation of up to £500k funded from the Invest to Save Reserve was approved by Council to be used for the relocation and works to be carried out for the upstairs area.
- 2.5 The new design reflects the business need of the Council, compared to the existing layout, for example the removal of some internal walls and their reinstatement and the provision of some storage areas for office equipment. There has also been a need to undertake a full survey and obtain professional advice in terms of the air-handling within the space.
- 2.6 Design works and specification of the fitting out of the space has been moving forward, including consultation with all relevant stakeholders and the People's Panel. The design and floor layout for the upper floor previously agreed is starting to take shape, and works have now begun on the space. The works have been led by the Lindum Construction Group via the Scape Framework to adhere to the Council's financial and procurement regulations and was approved by Cabinet.
- 2.7 The current plan shows that the works Lindum Construction Group need to carry out will be completed prior to Christmas, and then members of the facilities and IT team will begin transferring furniture and IT equipment. This will allow staff to work from the new office in January 2023.

- 2.7 It was also approved at Cabinet that the temporary relocation of the Customer Services provision to the Guildhall Arts Centre can take place, so that there is no disruption to our customers, whilst the move is underway. Plans for this are underway and the move will take place towards the end of November 2022.
- 2.8 In parallel with the works being completed on the new Council offices, design work and specifications are being discussed for the two lower units located on St Catherine's Road, with positive discussions with other public sector bodies ongoing regarding its future operational use as a community service hub. This work is not part of the approved £500k budget for the new Council offices on St Catherine's Road. It is intended that a further report will be brought to the relevant meeting, in relation to this space at the appropriate time.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Not applicable as report is just an update for noting.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 Not applicable as report is just an update for noting.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 Not applicable as report is just an update for noting.

6. Consultation

- 6.1 Viewings of the first-floor space and St Peter's Hill offices have been undertaken by Members and employees (from across the Council). The response to viewings has been extremely positive. Trade Unions have also been regularly consulted as part of a standing item during monthly meetings.