

Corporate Accommodation

- [Meeting of Corporate Scrutiny Committee, Wednesday, 9th June, 2021](#)
[6.30 pm \(Item 8.\)](#)

Report of the Strategic Director

Minutes:

The Strategic Director gave a presentation to Members.

Members understood the problems with the current building and acknowledged the work required to raise the standard and become more energy efficient. They also agreed on the importance of retaining Stenson House due to its heritage within the area.

The majority of Members were in support of the location of Customer Services into Coalville Town Centre as it would provide better access for the public, but a suggestion was made that other customer service hubs be considered for other areas such as Ashby and Castle Donington to make services more accessible throughout the District.

Some questions were raised in relation to the support to be provided to Members as there were concerns that they would be based in a different building to officers. The Strategic Director reassured Members that they would be included in all plans and as a customer, would be engaged throughout the process. He felt it was important to listen to Members' needs and would be consulting on all aspects including the refurbishment of Stenson House to form the Civic Hub.

Although generally positive about the proposals, there were some strong views in relation to the accessibility of officers to Members as they were often unable to make contact, and this had become much worse since officers were working remotely due to the Pandemic. There were concerns that if services were split across several buildings, and officers were to continue to work remotely, the service to Members would decline. The Strategic Director reported that the way of working due to the Pandemic had

proven that officers did not need to be co-located anymore and the future working model, that staff were currently being consulted on, meant that 50 percent of staff would be able to work in the new accommodation at one time, so it would not be a fully remote workforce. It was confirmed that Members would be briefed on the new working model in the coming weeks.

Comments were made on the level of service provided to customers as part of the proposals and the possible confusion due to the split across three separate buildings. A further comment was made on the current amount of time it took to navigate through the customer services options when calling the service line as it was a very lengthy process which led to abandoned calls. The Strategic Director explained that the public would be encouraged to visit the Coalville Town Centre office if they needed to make contact in person and there would be a bigger focus on digital connectivity. The front office would need to have as much knowledge as possible to assist the public and appointments with specific officers would be available if the issue could not be dealt with in person, on the phone or online. The Strategic Director also confirmed that officers were currently working on a new customer services strategy that would hopefully be presented to Members in the autumn.

During discussion, a Member raised concerns that the proposals to reduce accommodation size were being put forward too soon as other large companies were now taking the decision to bring staff back into offices rather than continuing to work remotely. The Strategic Director explained that consultation with staff on the future working model had received a positive result and it had been confirmed that services could continue to be delivered remotely. He added that the proposals would also reduce the current running costs associated with the building and hence helping to achieve the savings set out in the budget.

The Chairman thanked Members for their contributions and confirmed that comments made would be presented to Cabinet when it considers the report at its meeting on 27 July 2021.