Equalities Comprehensive Impact Assessment v3 - Head of service review

Reference: ECIA579568592

Submitted: 23 January 2024 08:44 AM

Executive summary

Title of policy / **decision:** County Hall Transformation Strategic CMA

Policy / **decision type:** Cabinet Member Action (CMA)

Overview of policy / **decision:** ECC has an approved Property Strategy and Workplace Strategy that sets out how the way we use our core offices needs to change in line with our new ways of working. Our overall aim is to help ECC deliver a smaller, better and greener estate by reducing surplus capacity across the whole estate.

At County Hall in Chelmsford, we have hibernated the officer areas of C and D block to achieve cost savings. We now want to build on the initial rationalisation work at County Hall by going further with the space we still use in A, B and E Block and, taking steps towards the longer-term transformation of the whole campus. This will right-size our space, deliver operational cost savings, enable us to generate capital receipts or other income streams, reduce our CO2 emissions and provide a more modern workspace for our staff that build on the excellent services we provide.

County Hall costs ECC approximately £5m to operate per annum, which includes an allocation of Mitie overheads. Even with the rationalisation of the Officer areas of C and D Blocks in 2022, the remaining areas used in A, B and E Blocks have a typical utilisation of around 25% when comparing staff attendance over the course of the day against the total number of desks. Occupancy levels (the number of staff in the building at any one time) will be even lower. Furthermore, changes to how we work and use County Hall has resulted in a very high amount of surplus space across the whole campus. This is inefficient for ECC to continue to operate and does not provide value for money for our taxpayers.

The long-term aim is to use C and D Blocks as the core office for both Members and Officers and in the short-medium term, we will continue to use A and E Blocks - right-sizing our space in these buildings to help achieve further savings in utilities and facilities management costs.

In order to achieve our long-term aspirations, we will commission a property and building specialist to carry out detailed technical site surveys and designs to inform the best route forward for progressing a market-led redevelopment of the whole campus. An outline business case will then follow to provide a firmer position on costs, and to seek approval to progress to the procurement phase for a construction development partner however, the long-term work is expected to take five years to deliver. Our people cannot continue to operate as they are until then. We will therefore need to design interim workspace improvements in E Block to support service excellence and more modern ways of working. The scope of this work will be mainly focused on office furniture and layout to support a range of flexible work settings (which can be relocated in future) rather than undertaking costly structural changes to the buildings. A separate full business case will then follow to implement this.

This phase of the project will focus on designs, implementation plans and approval of campus transformation proposals but will not include implementation. Changes and/or workplace improvements will be implemented as part of phase 2 of the project. Separate business cases will follow for the short- and long-term projects. These will seek endorsement to implement the rationalised space and interim workspace improvements for E Block, and to proceed to the procurement stage for a construction development partner for the campus transformation.

What outcome(s) are you hoping to achieve?: The County Hall Transformation Project forms part of the Estates Transformation Programme and will contribute to the delivery of a smaller, better and greener ECC estate:

- Smaller – Buildings that are right-sized based on their typical use; Reduction in operational costs; Income generation e.g. through rental or capital receipts.

- Better – More modern workspaces that reflect the excellent services we provide; Improvement in staff productivity; Support recruitment and retention; Partner colocation and community benefits.

- Greener – Reduction in CO_2 emissions; Reduction in energy use; Reduction in travel.

The objectives for this initial first phase of the County Hall Transformation project are:

- Short-medium term: A, B and E Block rationalisation and interim workspace improvements

Confirm the right-sized space in A, B and E Block for our services to work in for the next five years which will help ECC achieve savings in energy and facilities management costs.

Co-design with services an improved workspace in E Block which supports service excellence and new ways of working, which is informed by our Workplace Design Guide but is cognisant of the longer-term plan for the site.

- Long-term: County Hall campus transformation

Produce specialist designs and technical due diligence to inform cost planning and viability.

Confirm an appropriate procurement structure and route for a development partner for the whole campus.

Two business cases will follow for the short- and long-term projects with firmer details on costs. These will seek endorsement to implement the rationalised space and interim workspace improvements for E Block, and to proceed to the procurement stage to seek a development partner for the whole campus transformation.

This phase will have minimal impact on people communities and localities as there will be minimal change to existing set-up however stakeholder groups will be engaged with throughout the duration of this phase to ensure that the future direction is well communicated and understood and, the organisation and service users are prepared for the change.

Executive Director responsible for policy / decision: Tom Walker (Economy, Investment and Public Health)

Cabinet Member responsible for policy / decision: Cllr Chris Whitbread (Chancellor of Essex)

Is this a new policy / decision or a change to an existing one?: New policy / decision

How will the impact of the policy / decision be monitored and evaluated?: - Monitoring and evaluation
The delivery of the project will be managed by the County Hall Transformation Project Board. This will consist of senior management representatives from Property, Facilities Management, People, Finance, Legal, Procurement and Technology, together with the core project management team of the two workstreams. The Director for Property, Investment and Delivery will Chair the Project Board.

The County Hall Transformation Project will report up to the Estates Transformation Programme Steering Board, which is made up of ECC's Executive Directors (not including the CEO). The Steering Board will receive regular key updates and provide strategic direction relating to key decision points.

The Property Task Force / Members Reference Group will receive regular key updates and provide political direction relating to key decision points.

- Policy, practice and delivery
This phase will seek to outline details of project contribution towards Everyone's Essex commitments, the People Plan, Whole Council Transformation goals and the Property and Workplace strategies. It is also expected that a positive impact will be observed in relation to the ECC climate agenda, levelling up and physical/mental health and wellbeing of the Essex population however this is yet to be revealed through discovery work. As implementation will not form part of this phase, there will be no/minimal implications on policy, practice and delivery at this time.

- Benefits management
Robust and comprehensive change management plan and a communications and engagement strategy outlining approach to stakeholder management and change controls to facilitate the change process and support benefits realisation.

Benefits will be tracked and reviewed quarterly to ensure ongoing alignment with desired outcomes however benefits realisation is not expected until phase 2 of the County Hall Transformation project.

Will this policy / decision impact on:

Service users: Yes

Employees: Yes

Wider community or groups of people: Yes

If the policy decision impacts on employees, provide details here and include potential impacts on identified groups later in the form: Although minimal impact is expected through the initial rationalisation phase, employees and any other stakeholders present at County Hall are likely to have immediate exposure and knowledge of the project once it begins. This may in turn be unsettling for some, particularly if assumptions are made regarding its purpose and end result. We intend to be clear that jobs will not be affected through this project and an employee restructure is not within scope. To manage expectations and ease anxieties a robust Change Management Plan and Communications and Engagement strategy will be devised and executed.

As part of this phase, we will carry out a requirement gathering exercise to understand the current utilisation for County Hall and identify opportunities for downsizing our operating space. Designs will then follow meeting requirements of services and service users. During this phase, minimal impact on service users, employees or wider community/user groups is expected.

What strategic priorities will this policy / decision support?: Strong, Inclusive and Sustainable Economy, High Quality Environment, Health, Independence and Wellbeing for All Ages

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Economy?: Good jobs, Infrastructure, Future growth and investment, Green growth, Levelling up the economy

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Environment: Net zero, Minimise waste

Which strategic priorities does this support? - Health: Place based working

What geographical areas of Essex will the policy / decision affect?: Chelmsford

Digital accessibility

Is the new or revised policy linked to a digital service (website, system or application)?: No

Equalities - Groups with protected characteristics

Age

Nature of impact: None

Disability - learning disability

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - mental health issues

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - physical impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Disability - sensory impairment

Nature of impact: Positive

Extent of impact: Medium

Sex

Nature of impact: None

Gender reassignment

Nature of impact: None

Marriage / civil partnership

Nature of impact: None

Pregnancy / maternity

Nature of impact: None

Race

Nature of impact: None

Religion / belief

Nature of impact: None

Sexual orientation

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: The rationalisation and design works included in this phase will produce proposals for approval. As no changes will be implemented in this phase there will be minimal impact on protected characteristics. This will be revaluated at submission of FBC for implementation of interim workplace improvements for E Block and OBC for procurement of development partner for the whole campus transformation.

Although it is too early to know impact on protected characteristics, we are expecting positive impacts associated with retention of ECC presence in the city centre as our core office is located in a central and accessible location. Implementation of workplace improvements and the whole campus transformation is most likely to generate a positive impact on those with accessibility needs and disabilities. These will be assessed as part of the next phase of the project.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?: N/A

Levelling up - Priority areas & cohorts

Children and adults with SEND, learning disabilities or mental health conditions (taking an all-age approach)

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Children on Free School Meals

Nature of impact: None

Working families

Nature of impact: Too early for impact to be known

Young adults (16-25 who have not been in education, training or employment for around 6-12 months)

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harlow

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Jaywick and Clacton

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Harwich

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Basildon (Town) housing estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Canvey Island

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Colchester (Town) - Housing Estates

Nature of impact: None

Residents of Rural North of the Braintree District

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Rationalisation and design work included in this phase will help determine impacts on cohorts listed.

There could be some impact on cohorts that are most likely to access County Hall or use services based there but it's too early for impact to be known. This will become clearer once A, B, and E blocks are rationalised and the whole campus transformation designs are developed. Impact will be reassessed ahead of mobilisation of changes. This will be included as part of preparation for phase 2 of this project.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Equalities - Inclusion health groups and other priority groups

Refugees / asylum seekers

Nature of impact: None

Homeless / rough sleepers

Nature of impact: None

People who experience drug and alcohol dependence

Nature of impact: None

Offenders / ex-offenders

Nature of impact: None

Victims of modern slavery

Nature of impact: None

Carers

Nature of impact: None

Looked after children / care leavers

Nature of impact: None

The armed forces community (serving personnel and their families, veterans, reservists and cadets)

Nature of impact: None

People who are unemployed / economically inactive

Nature of impact: None

People on low income

Nature of impact: None

Sex workers

Nature of impact: None

Ethnic minorities

Nature of impact: None

Gypsy, Roma, and Traveller communities

Nature of impact: None

People with multiple complex needs or multi-morbidities

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: No direct impact on groups above through rationalisation and design work during this phase.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Equalities - Geographical Groups

People living in areas of high deprivation

Nature of impact: None

People living in rural or isolated areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in coastal areas

Nature of impact: None

People living in urban areas

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: No direct impact on groups above through rationalisation and design work during this phase.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Families

Family formation (e.g. to become or live as a couple, the ability to live with or apart from children)

Nature of impact: None

Families going through key transitions e.g. becoming parents, getting married, fostering or adopting, bereavement, redundancy, new caring responsibilities, onset of a long-term health condition

Nature of impact: None

Family members' ability to play a full role in family life, including with respect to parenting and other caring responsibilities

Nature of impact: None

Families before, during and after couple separation

Nature of impact: None

Families most at risk of deterioration of relationship quality and breakdown

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: No direct impact on groups above through rationalisation and design work during this phase.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: N/A

Crime & Disorder

Crime and disorder

Nature of impact: None

The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances

Nature of impact: None

Re-offending

Nature of impact: None

Serious violence

Nature of impact: None

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact:
No direct impact on groups above through rationalisation and design work during this phase.

(If negative impact assessed) What actions will be undertaken to mitigate negative impacts, including timescales:

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?:
N/A

How could you strengthen any positive impact(s)?:

Climate

Does your decision / policy involve development or re-development of buildings or infrastructure?: Yes

Have you calculated the predicted operational energy demand and the carbon emissions (both operational and embodied) impact of the development / infrastructure / building?: Yes

Please provide details: County Hall costs approximately £5m to operate per annum. Following the rationalisation of officer space in 2022 and implementation of small-scale hibernation, energy efficiencies have been calculated and will be used as an indication for potential efficiency savings as we progress through with the rationalisation of A & E blocks and the long-term campus transformation.

Calculations of current state:

- County Hall Utilisation

Annual Electricity consumption: 2,205,756 kWh

Electricity: CO2 Emissions: 456.8 Tonne CO2/yr

Annual Gas consumption: 4,102,569 kWh

Gas: CO2 Emissions: 750.4 Tonne CO2/yr

- Partial hibernation of C&D Blocks

Electricity consumption savings from partial hibernation of C & D block: 275,233kWh

Partial hibernation of C & D block Electricity: CO2 savings: 57 Tonne CO2/yr

Gas consumption savings from partial hibernation of C & D block: 511,917 kWh

Partial hibernation of C & D block Gas: CO2 savings: 93.6 Tonne CO2/yr

- Energy saving through hibernation of one floor of E Block

Electricity consumption savings if 1 floor of E block is hibernated: 183,116 kWh

1 floor of E block is hibernated Electricity: CO2 savings: 37.9 Tonne CO2/yr

Gas consumption savings from 1 floor of E block is hibernated: 340,585 kWh

1 floor of E block is hibernated Gas: CO2 savings: 62.3 Tonne CO2/yr

- Expected energy use for C&D block when reoccupied

Electricity consumption when C & D block are reoccupied: 614,973 kWh

When C & D block are reoccupied Electricity: CO2 savings: 127.3 Tonne CO2/yr

Gas consumption when C & D block are reoccupied: 1,143,812 kWh

When C & D block are reoccupied Gas: CO2 savings: 209.2 Tonne CO2/yr

Future efficiency saving calculations for interim workspace improvements and full council transformation will form part of phase 1 deliverables.

Does your proposal align with the Net Zero Carbon (in operation) definition being promoted through best practice and emerging planning responses at ECC?: Yes

Please provide details: This project sets out to release efficiencies aligned with ECC's Everyone's Essex commitments. Outcomes will contribute to net zero targets by 'ensuring that the council significantly reduces its carbon footprint, whilst also supporting an acceleration in the progress towards sustainable housing and energy, and active and alternative forms of travel across the county' (Net Zero, Everyone's Essex).

Our greener objective is based around the reduction in CO_2 emissions; reduction in energy use and reduction in travel however it is too early to identify details on how these will be achieved as discovery work must be completed first to inform rationalisation plans and designs that calculations will be based on.

For the rationalisation of A, B and E blocks some surplus space, furniture and equipment reduction may be implemented which will contribute to come energy efficiencies and carbon reduction however, this is expected to be minimal. Further detail will be revealed once the rationalisation is complete.

The longer-term campus transformation is expected to be where most energy efficiencies will be released. The OBC to follow this phase will outline this in more detail.

Have you assessed the upfront embodied carbon emissions (building life cycle stages A1-A5) of your proposed project and have you set targets in line with best practice to reduce embodied carbon emissions?: Yes

Please provide details: Utilisation emission figures have been disclosed above. Detailed assessments will be outlined as part of the next phase when designs and implementation plans are agreed.

Your development needs to be resilient to projected climate risks including flooding, overheating and subsidence. Please outline how you will achieve this: Detailed assessments will be outlined as part of the next phase when designs and implementation plans are agreed.

Does your decision / policy take place in, or make use of, existing buildings or infrastructure?: Yes

The use of existing buildings will always have a climate impact because it requires energy consumption. Please outline how you will mitigate against this impact: Detailed assessments will be outlined as part of the next phase when designs and implementation plans are agreed.

Does your decision / policy involve elements connected to transport, travel or vehicles? This includes travel needs / requirements of both service users and staff (including staff you're planning to recruit): No

Are you undertaking a procurement exercise?: Yes

Please confirm for purchase over £100k that you have a carbon reduction plan as part of your procurement: Yes

Please list which climate TOMS (Themes, outcomes & measures) you have included in your procurement and the weighting these have been given: Procured services are being provided through a pre-existing contract. It does not include the requirement for carbon reduction plan. It does however include a requirement for them to demonstrate where ECC can meet social value considerations which includes carbon reduction.

This contract used a non-standard approach to social value. The TOMs were not used and were replaced by a requirement to demonstrate where the organisation meets social value considerations covering a range of areas.

Does your decision / policy involve the purchase of goods or materials?: No

Will any waste be generated by this decision? This includes waste from construction, waste generated by service users / staff, and waste generated by replacing existing products / materials with new: Yes

Most of our activities will generate waste so it is important that this waste is managed properly. Generally, the more waste produced the greater the greenhouse gas impact. What approaches are in place to maximise reuse, recycling and composting of any waste generated by this decision? Please specify how you are:

Measuring the amount of waste being generated and setting targets to reduce, for example setting reuse requirements: The storage and office furniture and equipment review will look to identify surplus inventory. The project team will work with MITIE to identify the appropriate approach for these items.

Requiring recycling - such as setting targets for waste recycled, or providing facilities to recycle: As part of our efforts to reuse and recycle we will:

- Explore options to reuse or repurpose across the organisation

- Retain as emergency stock

- Donate

- Share with our building cohabitants

- Faulty items will be assessed and repaired where possible.

These measures will contribute to the reduction of overall waste produced through this task.

Operating the service in a digital way to reduce use of material resources: Too early to know. This will be reviewed as part of the next phase.

Sharing goods and services with others to reduce resource use: The storage and office furniture and equipment review will identify surplus inventory. This will help inform how we can share excess/unused items. Details will be provided in preparation for phase 2 of this project.

Donating or selling materials and products that are no longer required to keep them in use elsewhere: The storage and office furniture and equipment review will identify surplus inventory. Once we know what the surplus consists of, decisions can be made on the best course of action which could be to repurpose, reuse or donate. Details will be provided in preparation for phase 2 of this project.

Avoiding over-packaged or difficult to recycle goods: No purchase of goods or materials expected during this phase.

Avoid single-use items, in particular single use plastic: No purchase of goods or materials expected during this phase.

Recycling and composting waste where applicable: Items that cannot be reused are taken to commercial recycling centres. Controlled waste is currently recycled by Cory Barking Operations Ltd at the Barking Recycling facility. Once tipped the potential recyclable materials contained within the load are either extracted mechanically or manually, generally the types of materials extracted for recycling consist of the following:

- Metal both ferrous and non-ferrous

- Plastic drinks bottles

- Tin cans

- IT Equipment (WEEE Regulations)

- Plastic (hard)

- Carpet Tiles

- Timber

- Pallets for resale and chipping

- Glass

- Concrete

- Fluorescent tubes

- Resilient flooring

- Textiles

- Cables including electrical & data

- Glass drinks bottles

- Plastic (firm)

- Corex

- Cardboard

- Floor tiles and metal pedestals

- Brick, block and soils

- Plasterboard

- Paper (office)

- Batteries

Where will waste be treated and disposed of? This includes general rubbish and recycling: MITIE will handle the disposal of waste generated through the storage and office furniture and equipment review. Transdec or Consolidated will normally be used for this type of job. Where surplus inventory cannot be donated, recycled or reused it goes through a rigorous environmentally friendly disposal process.

MITIE disposal partners will take steps to ensure as little as possible redundant equipment goes through the disposal route to a landfill. Products not suitable for re-use or remanufacturing are dismantled and individual materials are recycled where possible such as metal and wood. The rest will be turned into combustible material where its calorific value is recovered.

Nature of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Positive

Sustainable Transport / Travel: None

Waste: Positive

Extent of impact

Built Environment / Energy: Low

Waste: Low

Rationale for assessment, including data used to assess the impact: Once surplus inventory is reused, recycled or reduced we will begin to release some efficiencies in relation to the built environment, energy and possibly waste however, at this phase of the project, efficiencies are expected to be minimal.

The storage and, office furniture and equipment review will take a deeper dive into office inventory and its utilisation and suitability for our new ways of working to allow for a better understanding of what the surplus is composed of. This activity will involve the Facilities Management team and will consult with users for clarity on requirements. A detailed plan can then be presented along with calculations on efficiency savings most likely around the built environment, energy, and waste. Further detail will be available as we approach the next phase.

What actions have already been taken to mitigate any negative impacts?: Too early to know.

Action plan to address and monitor adverse impacts

Does your ECIA indicate that the policy or decision would have a medium or high adverse impact on one or more of the groups / areas identified?: No

Details of person completing the form

I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance: I confirm that this has been completed based on the best information available and in following ECC guidance

Date ECIA completed: 22/01/2024

Name of person completing the ECIA: Hanan Wahby

Email address of person completing the ECIA: hanan.wahby@essex.gov.uk

Your function: People and Transformation

Your service area: Transformation Delivery & Support

Your team: Transformation Delivery & Support

Are you submitting this ECIA on behalf of another function, service area or team?: No

Email address of Head of Service: Ben.Finlayson@essex.gov.uk