



Kettering
TOWN COUNCIL

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KETTERING TOWN COUNCIL

REPORT FOR DECISION

Item No:-

Committee:-	Council
Date:-	17 th May 2023
Author:-	Martin Hammond, Town clerk
Report Title:-	Relocation of Town Council Office
Wards Affected:-	None

1. Purpose of Report

To seek approval for arrangements to move offices and incur expenditure as a consequence.

2. Recommendations

Council is recommended to identify its preferred office accommodation from the list below.

3. Information

- 3.1. The Town Council moved to its current address in October 2022, following the ending of its lease at Bowling Green Rd, and the decision by NNC not to renew it.
- 3.2. Members will know that the operators of KCC exercised their break clause and decided to close the building, and made an announcement to that effect on 27th April. Their planned closure date is 5th July (it was initially 30th May).

This has left very little time in which to find new accommodation and arrange for an office move.

3.3. New premises, in a very thin market, have been visited at

- a) Brooklands Court, Kettering (Kettering Venture Park)
- b) Headlands Business Centre
- c) The Business Exchange
- d) Newlands Centre

3.4. Brooklands Court

This is a modern office within a wider development and is available now. It comprises 650 sq ft (slightly more than needed), and three reserved parking spaces. The annual costs comprise

- Rental £9000
- Service charge £ 960
- Broadband £ 600
- Utilities usage basis
- Rates £3842

The cost of this accommodation is therefore, at approx. £15000, significantly higher than our current premises, but is at least on a secure lease.

3.5. Headlands Business Centre

This is a converted building in the Headlands. The office comprises about 500 sq. ft. The annual costs comprise

- Rental £9600
- Rates £1875
- Broadband £ 500

The cost of this accommodation is £12000, similar to the 21/22 office costs. The office is in walking distance of the town centre.

3.6. Business Exchange

This is a single room space within the Business Exchange, with access to meeting facilities which may reduce reliance on the Toller Church Rooms. The room is smaller than our current space, which will create some difficulties for how Mayoral items are stored. The building is close to the town centre and the annual costs comprise a rental of £6324 plus a payment of £25 pcm for broadband.

3.7. Newlands Centre This site was visited on 9th May and details of the hire offer are still awaited and will be reported verbally. It is a former retail unit and therefore larger than required – it could accommodate meetings but would need fitting out with furniture, and some work to the premises is required decoratively. Officers have concerns that a very visible location such as this will attract customers seeking resolution to NNC issues.

3.8. In addition to the office costs, there will be

- removals cost of £1350 – to secure a slot in time, a provisional booking has been made with the company which moved us last time, who were at the time significantly cheaper than any others.
- Post redirection costs for the Town Council and the three charity accounts we administer -£285 x 4 for three months. With the building closing, there is no option of collecting stray mail in future, as we did with the last relocation.
- The opportunity cost of time taken to relocate – the approximate time taken last time was equivalent to 8 working days lost with a long tail of time spent thereafter on residual issues – this means that some non time critical work will need to be put back, e.g. launching a grants scheme for this year.

4. Other Options

Other sites – the Yards, Haylock House (RCI Building) were explored without producing a satisfactory option.

The potential of a move back to Bowling Green Rd had been raised with NNC but it would have required them to also re-provide space for items originally located in the old Mayor's parlour and such a move would not be acceptable if it was only for a few months.

The possibility of KCC being kept open remains, if the right package can be assembled but it is difficult to know when that would be and in the meantime, the options to move elsewhere in the time available would be slipping away. None of the sites in 3.5 above are guaranteed to be still available after the 18th May.

5. Consultation and Engagement

None

6. Finance, Legal and Resource Implications

- 6.1. The Council's current rental costs are £525 pcm (£6300) which includes all services charges, broadband and utility costs. There was a prospect that rates liability would be top of that, although there should have been a corresponding reduction in rental costs if that had been realised.
- 6.2. The new accommodation options range from £6650 to £15000. It is possible that for the Headlands and Business Exchange options, some reduction in the need to hire the Toller would result – a saving of £50 per meeting.

7. Climate change implications

The Business Exchange and the Headlands Business Centre are the more sustainable options as it is only a walk into the town centre where much of the Council's off site business is conducted.

8. Policy Implications

None relevant.

Background Papers

Notes of site visits and agents' materials