

MANAGEMENT COMMITTEE – 23 JUNE 2021**GROVE PARK MODIFICATION - FUTURE WAYS OF WORKING****REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR****Purpose of the report**

1. The purpose of this report is to consult Management Committee with regards to the approach to a proposed programme of works to adapt ESPO's offices at Grove Park to meet the new ways of working model.

Background

2. Government guidance on social contact and distancing during the Covid-19 pandemic has been for people to work from home wherever this is possible. Most office staff have therefore worked this way for approaching one and a half years.
3. In line with many other organisations ESPO has recognised that the Covid-19 pandemic has opened up new ways of working for office-based staff and therefore remote working is being fully embraced.
4. ESPO therefore intends to develop a future office model that reflects the needs of the organisation and staff to work flexibly whilst also meeting the needs of the customer. This model will align with ESPO's People Strategy which has an objective of ESPO continuing to be an organisation where people want to work.
5. This is consistent with guidelines and principles taken from the approach taken by Leicestershire County Council.
6. The schedule of works includes infrastructure improvements in areas such as the Wi-Fi network which will enable the new office model to be delivered and will future-proof the organisation.

Ways of Working Principles

7. There will be a variety of ways of working, based on the range of roles that exist within ESPO. These are broadly classified as staff who have to work from a fixed location and staff who have more flexibility.
8. Fixed Location – staff who work in a fixed location such as Customer Services have a specific need for access to workplace equipment to undertake their duties.

9. Fully Flexible – staff are able to undertake the majority of their role independent of a fixed location. The working week can be spent remotely with occasional attendance in the workplace.
10. These high-level principles have been established through engagement with ESPO's Heads of Service and all staff survey and feedback opportunities.
11. It is proposed that ESPO's workplace will be set up to better support collaboration, productivity, wellbeing and customer service. Space will be prioritised for activities, not individuals - flexibility is the norm and fixed desks will be kept to a minimum for operational or health reasons. Staff who require additional assistance for their wellbeing or disability may need to attend the office more often, and this will form part of ESPO's provision of reasonable adjustments. The decision on whether staff require a fixed desk will be supported by relevant Health & Safety risk assessments.
12. Staff will be encouraged to work as flexibly as possible, using a mix of workplace settings (offices, working from home, remote working) to best meet service and customer needs, and support staff wellbeing.
13. Staff in consultation with managers will be empowered to choose the most appropriate location to carry out their work with responsibility to meet service and customer needs first.
14. It is essential that all staff have access to the relevant IT equipment to best deliver their role. All corporately provided IT assets will be centrally provided and will be replaced before end of life – ensuring effective and productive technology is always in place. We will also ensure that staff have the necessary skills to use this IT equipment, and that managers are also able to support their team members remotely. New staff will also be aware of our approach through their recruitment process.
15. The success of these work modifications will be evidenced through the performance metrics set out in the balanced scorecard and other supporting data such as staff sickness rates.

Proposal

16. The design concepts are based on the offices retaining their Covid-secure accreditation. If necessary a risk assessment will be conducted by ESPO's Health and Safety team to cover any changes.
17. All staff returning to a work setting are required to attend induction training on the health and safety arrangement on site.
18. Staff who can work flexibly will use hot desks when they attend the office and will be provided with a locker for their office equipment and files.
19. IT equipment will be provided that enable lap-top users to connect via a docking system and other users will have access to desk top PC's.

20. The Wi Fi network will be upgraded to provide better coverage across the whole building enabling staff to log on anywhere in the office facility. This will also enable greater flexibility in the office layout without the need to connect a desk to a fixed network point.
21. A series of break out areas with both formal and informal seating areas, in some cases with networked screens, will be created to enable teams to work collaboratively and if required to be able to conduct virtual meetings with other stakeholders who are working remotely.
22. The programme will incorporate existing with newly-built meeting rooms and screened areas to create an inspiring working environment that meets the future needs of the organisation.
23. All meeting rooms and flexible desks will be subject to a booking system to ensure that the offices do not become congested.
24. Because some areas of the offices will have been largely un-used for 18 months it is proposed that a deep clean will be performed of all office prior to being repatriated.
25. It is envisaged that this will be ready for gradual occupation from October 2021.

Communications

26. Office staff will be briefed on the overall plan and invited back to the offices ahead of the refurbishment programme on a rota basis to remove any unwanted office belongings.

Costs & Timescales

27. The costs of the refurbishment will be met from existing building reserves.
28. ESPO's project manager will work in conjunction with the facilities team and external suppliers to deliver the refurbishment programme on the ground. Depending on suppliers and equipment lead-times the new layouts will take shape in the summer recess when most schools are closed. This will provide time to safely manage the movements and installations on each floor. It is envisaged that the offices will be ready for progressive occupation starting from October 2021.
29. A further update will come to the September Management Committee providing more detailed costings, schematics and timetables as required.

Recommendation

Members of Management Committee note and support the contents of this report.

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