

**NEW HEADQUARTERS & OTHER ACCOMMODATION
PROJECT CLOSE REPORT
(Report by New Accommodation Project Co-ordinator)**

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The New Headquarters and Other Accommodation Project has delivered two new built assets, the operations centre (Eastfield House) and headquarters (Pathfinder House), it has worked in conjunction with the Customer First project to deliver the physical environment for face-to-face customer interaction in Huntingdon and has been the catalyst for a number of major business change projects. The latter have included radical changes to the management of mail handling and document production, the move from a plethora of personal PC peripherals to 17 MFD (multi-functional devices) and rationalisation of document storage in association with the implementation of electronic document management.
- 1.2 The new Pathfinder House includes the Civic Suite which has transformed the experience for members of the public wanting to engage with the democratic process by attending meetings of the council and its panels. Also as a venue for planning inquiries and other publicly accessible events its scale and fit-out help local people engage with local decision making.
- 1.3 With both built assets the project has through the selection of sites, design, construction and ongoing operation demonstrated the best principles of sustainable development achieving an excellent BREEAM rating for Pathfinder House and a good rating for Eastfield House.
- 1.4 But this was not a demonstration project. It was born out of the need to replace failing, inefficient and uneconomic buildings. The project's purpose was to provide the council with accommodation that was fit for purpose, flexible enough to respond to the inevitable changes in local government during its 60 year design life and to create assets for the people of Huntingdonshire that have commercial value that could be realised if necessary.
- 1.5 However, in reviewing the project as it draws to a close there are three key questions that need to be considered
 1. was it the right project?
 2. was it delivered effectively?
 3. does it represent value for money?
- 1.6 The Headquarters & Other Accommodation: Project Close Report which is included with the papers for your meeting sets out to answer these questions and highlight lessons learnt that are transferable to the inception, development and delivery of future projects.

2. CONCLUSION

- 2.1 Faced with assets that were no longer fit for purpose the council explored the available options in a rigorous manner before deciding on its preferred option and delivery method. It used the procurement process to appoint a development partner whose tender clearly represented the best value in 2005 and has delivered the entire project in 2010 at a cost below the value of the second lowest tender received in 2005.
- 2.2 By optimising its use of the assets created the council has managed to reduce its headquarters space, releasing both land and buildings for disposal. Unfortunately the state of the economy and its impact on the property market has prevented the early disposal of these redundant assets.
- 2.3 The council has benefited from a development agreement which passed the construction cost risk to the developer, except where variations were ordered by the council. Procurement outside of the scope of the development agreement has been managed to deliver value for money.
- 2.4 The buildings have been designed to be low energy for their type and this has been confirmed by their BREEAM rating and energy performance certification. Although the completed Pathfinder House has not yet been occupied for a full year a preliminary forecast shows that its eventual annual energy consumption is less than that of the headquarters site before it was redeveloped. This is notwithstanding that the new building delivers a vastly improved working environment.
- 2.5 Key to the success of the project were the robust governance arrangements put in place as early as 2003 and in which the cross-party Headquarters and Other Accommodation Members' Advisory Group played an influential role. Whilst the project was primarily concerned with the delivery of built assets it was a catalyst for a raft of business change initiatives and the integrated planning of these was crucial to realising the full benefit of the investment both in the assets and the new arrangements. Throughout the project the council's in-house team have been supported by external advisers with experience of managing the delivery of projects of this scale and without whose support the developer would have had a considerable commercial advantage.
- 2.6 The council now has assets that are fit for purpose and the new Pathfinder House provides a very visible and accessible base for local administration for years to come. The assets are capable of responding to the council's changing needs and if they are not required, in part or whole, have commercial appeal.

Background Papers

Files O4/12/10 to 17 held by New Accommodation Project Co-ordinator.

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