

### 9 NORTH DENBIGHSHIRE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION REVIEW

Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill, Lead Member for Finance and Assets presented the report seeking Cabinet's approval of the office rationalisation proposals for North Denbighshire together with the formulation of long term development plans.

The report outlined the work undertaken in respect of the North Denbighshire Office Accommodation Review together with an outline of the strategic considerations and recommendations. Councillor Thompson-Hill elaborated upon the rationale behind the final proposals which involved the vacation of Prestatyn Ty Nant offices subject to alternative use being identified. Long term proposals included potential development for the Prestatyn site and a new office building in Rhyl. Reference was also made to the consultation exercise and concerns raised together with the responses thereto. Councillor Barbara Smith advised that the review was part of the modernisation strategy and highlighted the involvement of the Modernisation Board within the process and the importance of progressing with the proposals as soon as possible.

Cabinet was pleased that progress was being made in reviewing assets and addressing the issue of surplus buildings. Members questioned various aspects of the office accommodation review process and findings in order to satisfy themselves that the final proposals presented the best way forward. In commenting on the report members expressed specific concern regarding the poor condition and high costs associated with 6 – 8 Nant Hall Road. Councillor Julian Thompson-Hill and officers responded to members' questions and comments as follows –

- acknowledged concerns regarding the poor condition and high cost of 6 – 8 Nant Hall Road detailing the reasons why it had not been included within the initial phase but would be addressed as part of the longer term proposals

- under current practice relocation expenses would be paid to affected staff who would travel further to work as a result of the proposals

- agreed that uncertainties surrounding the proposals could be unsettling for staff and if Cabinet approved the recommendations they would be progressed as soon as possible with sensitivity to staff and minimum disruption

- elaborated upon the role of Property Services, HR and ICT within the process to ensure a smooth transition and facilitate alternative working practices

- provided assurances regarding the leasing arrangements for Brighton Road whose landlord wished to retain the Council as tenant

- provided some indicative savings arising from the proposals in terms of operating and leasing costs but more definite figures would be produced following the marketing exercise and formulation of the business case.

Councillor Hugh Irving considered Ty Nant an asset showing the Council's commitment and presence in the town and raised concerns regarding the economic impact of the proposals. He felt it did not make business sense to continue to lease 64 Brighton Road when the Council owned Ty Nant outright and suggested that Brighton Road could be partially vacated and relocated to Prestatyn to reduce rental costs. He also expressed doubts about finding a tenant for Ty Nant and sought assurances that, if the proposals were approved, Ty Nant would remain in commission until a tenant had been found. The following responses were provided:

assurances were given that Ty Nant would remain in commission until the marketing exercise had been undertaken to determine interest and value

it was anticipated that, providing the Council was flexible, a tenant could be found quickly – however, if a tenant could not be found the matter would be brought back to Cabinet for further consideration

it was submitted that staff based in Ty Nant did not contribute significantly to the town's economy which would be mitigated in any event by securing a new tenant and potential significant investment from future development of the site

the leasing of 64 Brighton Road represented good value for money.

During debate it was accepted that the Council had too much office space and needed to reduce it in line with service delivery needs and in order to make cost savings. In light of the findings of the accommodation review the consensus was that there was no business case to retain Ty Nant and Cabinet supported the recommendations as set out in the report as the best option for rationalisation of office accommodation in the North of the county.

**RESOLVED** that Cabinet –

*(a) approves the vacation of the Prestatyn Ty Nant offices (subject to alternative use being identified and implemented) as the preferred option (option 3 as outlined in paragraphs 4.7 – 4.9 as set out in the report) for office rationalisation in the North of the County;*

*(b) approves the undertaking of a marketing exercise for the Prestatyn Ty Nant building on a medium term leasehold basis to facilitate the vacation of the building by Denbighshire County Council staff, and*

*(c) approves the formulation of a Planning Brief to facilitate a long term development plan for the Prestatyn site outlined in red in Appendix 1 to the report and the development of a design brief and feasibility study for the provision of a new office building in Rhyl.*