

CONSTITUTION & DEMOCRATIC SERVICES COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday, 6 November 2024
Report Subject	Member facilities following office rationalisation
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Corporate Services
Report Author	Chief Officer (Governance)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Council is moving forward with the redevelopment of the County Hall Campus to address the future needs of the Council.

This move has implications for the facilities that will be available for the democratic function of the council. The Constitution & Democratic Services Committee is required to review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge Democratic Services functions.

This report therefore sets out the main considerations for the Committee ahead of vacating County Hall.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1	That a Working Group be formed from the Committee membership to consider what facilities can be provided to Members following the relocation from County Hall to deliver the democratic functions of the council.
2	That the Working Group reports back to the Committee at the January 2025 meeting.

REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING THE MEMBER FACILITIES FOLLOWING OFFICE RATIONALISATION REPORT
1.01	<p>A report was presented to Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee (CROSC) (10-Oct-24) and Cabinet (15-Oct-24) titled Office Rationalisation Programme and County Hall Campus.</p> <p>The report outlined the proposal to move forward with the redevelopment of the County Hall Campus to address the future needs of the Council. It is split into 3 phases.</p>
1.02	<p>Phase one of the project has already commenced and will run until 28th February 2025. The main objective of phase one is to move as much and as many people out of County Hall as is possible.</p>
1.03	<p>The need to vacate County Hall by 28th February 2025 had been fixed given the relocation of the Data Centre, after which time there will be no network and/or WiFi facilities at County Hall.</p>
1.04	<p>Vacating County Hall and relocating to an alternative location (likely Ty Dewi Sant) will have an impact on the democratic functions of Council, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• where Council meets,• the provision of a physical location for 'Member Services',• provision of physical meeting space(s) for political Groups,• the location (if any) of a Chairman's room,• storage for Civic memorabilia,• display of artefacts / gifts,• name boards,• Civic pictures (i.e. previous Chairs).
1.05	<p><u>Council Meetings</u></p> <p>The council currently offers meetings in 'hybrid' form. It is widely accepted that the Chair and meeting facilitator attend a meeting in person but offering 'hybrid' meetings allows other attendees to join remotely from a different location.</p> <p>County Hall has two rooms that are suitable for hosting 'hybrid' Council meetings: the Lord Barry Jones Council Chamber and the Delyn Room.</p> <p>The Delyn Room is used for Committee meetings and is suitable for up to 30 attendees. The Council Chamber is then used for larger meetings, including Full Council, being able to seat around 100 attendees.</p> <p>At Ty Dewi Sant, meeting room space is at a premium, with only the Auditorium of a suitable size to accommodate meetings with more than 30 physical attendees.</p>

The Auditorium will therefore be utilised for the Council's smaller **Committee** meetings, which will continue to be offered as 'hybrid'.

Capacity in the Auditorium may be an issue for Full Council meetings due to the numbers of people in attendance: up to 67 Elected Members, plus Chief Officers, Democratic Services Officers, other Officers, and members of the public.

Alternative ways of hosting larger meetings may need to be explored, such as:

- Making use of facilities at Theatre Clwyd when it re-opens following refurbishment.
- Allocate space in the Auditorium based on the political make-up of the council. If this approach was used, assuming seating capacity in the Auditorium is set at 50, based on the current political make up of the council, the number of seats allocated to each Group would be as follows:

Group	No	%	Allocation
Labour	29	43%	22
Independent	13	19%	10
True Independent	7	10%	5
Eagle	6	9%	4
FPV	5	7%	4
Lib Dem	3	4%	2
Conservative	1	1%	1
Other	3	4%	2
	67	100%	50

There are some Local Authorities who have adopted this approach and so more work needs to be undertaken to explore the practical application of this option further.

- Make use of other local community facilities.

1.06

Member Services

There is an area at County Hall which includes resources for elected Members. It is a relatively large area that consists of 3 separate rooms with 'pigeonholes' for elected Members' post, a 'library' with copies of reports and publications, a photocopier/printer, 'dining room', desktop pc, and even a television. Free refreshments for Members were provided, and it was well attended by Councillors who were often in County Hall visiting other officers and/or attending physical meetings.

Member Services also provides support for the Chairman of Flintshire County Council. It is also where all of the Civic and ceremonial regalia is stored.

Historically, several members of staff were based in Member Services, providing administrative support to Members who would drop in. Since the pandemic, when there was a move to deliver the services based at County

	<p>Hall remotely because of adapting to the lockdowns, Member Services has reduced to being resourced by 1X 0.8FTE member of staff.</p> <p>All Councillors now have access to IT equipment that enables contact with officers without having to visit them in person, including those who work in Member Services. Staff across a range of services can work remotely, and council meetings have moved to 'hybrid', meaning Councillors do not attend County Hall as frequently.</p> <p>There is still a need to have some physical presence to deliver Member Services – such as printing materials for the Chairman’s Civic Service and Charity Ball, completing claim forms for Councillors, and issuing payments.</p> <p>How Member Services supports elected Members after the move from County Hall will need to be reviewed to ensure it remains ‘fit-for-purpose’ and can meet the ongoing needs of Councillors.</p>
1.07	<p><u>Group Room(s)</u></p> <p>A number of rooms on the first floor at County Hall are reserved for use by the political groups of the council. The number in use at any one time can vary according to the political make up of the council. Indeed, this can change several times during each election cycle.</p> <p>The rooms have office furniture and equipment that were originally designed for use when meetings were held in-person, and Members did not have access to IT equipment.</p> <p>As with Member Services, since the pandemic, with elected Members visiting County Hall less frequently, the group rooms have been used less and less.</p> <p>It is usually the case that more Members attend County Hall on the day of a Full Council Meeting. However, and despite having a group room, some political groups reserve other meeting rooms before council meets, usually the Clwyd Room and/or Delyn Room.</p> <p>With space at Ty Dewi Sant at a premium, it is unlikely that a room can/will be made available to each group. How and where individual groups meet will need to be considered ahead of the move from County Hall.</p>
1.08	<p><u>Chairman’s Room</u></p> <p>The Chairman’s Room is located adjacent to, and with direct access to, the Council Chamber. It is furnished like a sitting room, has private bathroom facilities, and is where the Chairman has traditionally entertained guests.</p> <p>It is still used by the Chairman for private meetings, sealing documents, to prepare ahead of a Full Council, and to retire to during and after meetings.</p> <p>School visits are hosted from the Chairman’s Room, and there are a number of display cabinets that contain civic gifts and memorabilia that have been presented to the council by visiting dignitaries.</p>

	<p>What facilities are afforded the Chairman following the move from County Hall will need careful consideration. Care needs to be given to the facilities in order to protect the dignity, privacy and status of the Chairman.</p>
1.09	<p><u>Storage</u></p> <p>There is a storage room located in Member Services which is used for maintaining a stock of civic ceremonial regalia and memorabilia. Some of this is valuable and will require a secure location.</p>
1.10	<p><u>Display of artefacts / gifts</u></p> <p>There are a number of display cabinets at County Hall, containing historical artefacts, Civic regalia, and commemorative gifts. All of these will need to be relocated.</p> <p>An inventory of the contents on display and in storage at County Hall will need to be taken and categorised accordingly. Consideration will need to be given to where these will be displayed in the future.</p>
1.11	<p><u>Name boards</u></p> <p>There are a number of name boards displayed at County Hall. All of these will need to be relocated. Consideration will need to be given to where these will be displayed in the future.</p>
1.12	<p><u>Civic pictures/photographs</u></p> <p>There are a number of images displayed at County Hall, including former Chairman of the Council. All of these will need to be relocated.</p> <p>An inventory of the pictures and photographs on display, and in storage at County Hall will need to be taken and categorised accordingly. Consideration will need to be given to where these will be displayed in the future.</p>
1.13	<p>Paragraph 9.6.8 b) of the Council's Constitution states <i>The Constitution & Democratic Services Committee shall ... Review the adequacy of provision by the authority of staff, accommodation and other resources to discharge Democratic Services functions.</i></p> <p>The Democratic Services Committee therefore needs to give consideration to what facilities are appropriate to allow the democratic function of the council to operate effectively once County Hall has been vacated.</p> <p>It is important that provision of facilities for Members is realistic, and meets their needs within the financial constraints the council finds itself in, together with the requirement to ensure asset utilisation is maximised.</p> <p>Recognition needs to be given to the changes and evolution that has taken place in recent years in terms of how the council operates, specifically how meetings are delivered, and the limited space that will be available at other locations, including Ty Dewi Sant.</p>

	It is therefore proposed that a Working Group be formed from the Committee membership to consider what facilities can be provided for Members. The Working Group will be required to report back to the Committee at the next Constitution & Democratic Services Committee meeting on 21 January 2025.
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2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	These are documented in the report presented to Cabinet on 15 October 2024.

3.00	IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT
3.01	An Integrated Impact Assessment will need to undertaken when the Working Group present their suggestions to the Committee in January 2025.

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED / CARRIED OUT
4.01	Reports have been presented at Corporate Resources Overview & Scrutiny Committee and Cabinet. Further reports will be presented to CROSC and Cabinet as appropriate.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	None.

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	Corporate Asset Management Plan, as presented to Cabinet in October 2022, available online . CROSC Report: Office Rationalisation Programme and County Hall Campus

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Steven Goodrum, Democratic Services Manager Telephone: 01352 702320 E-mail: Steven.Goodrum@flintshire.gov.uk

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Asset Management Plan - A plan maintained by an authority of the condition and suitability of its assets, updated regularly and utilised to assess future capital needs.</p> <p>Hybrid Meeting – A meeting where some attendees access the meeting remotely from a different location whilst others attend the physical location in person.</p>