

**Committee:** Cabinet

**Agenda Item**

**Date:** 3 August 2012

**11**

**Title:** Co-Location with Essex County Council

**Portfolio Holder:** Councillor Chambers

Key decision: **Yes**

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## Summary

1. In the summer of 2011 officers were approached about the possibility of Essex County Council (ECC) staff located at the ECC offices in Fairycroft Road being relocated to the Uttlesford District Council's London Road office.
2. Members have been kept informed of progress through a workshop in March 2012 and reports as part of the 2012/13 Capital Programme. This report brings Members up to date with progress and seeks authority to progress with the co-location.

## Recommendations

3. The Cabinet is recommended, subject to approval of the financial elements in the next report (item 20) on the agenda this evening, to:
  - a) Approve the principle of co-location with ECC staff at the earliest available date and delegate responsibility to officers to conclude negotiations and manage the building work and move.
  - b) Approve the refurbishment of the second floor office space, the first floor toilets and main reception area which is funded by an existing approved capital budget and a financial contribution (deferred rent) from ECC.
  - c) Approve the changes to the layout of the car park.

## Financial Implications

4. Financial details are reported in the subsequent report.

## Background Papers

5. None

## Impact

Communication/Consultation	Staff have been kept informed as plans have developed. Consultation has taken place with the Uttlesford Access Group.
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Community Safety	No specific implications.
Equalities	A joint Equalities Impact Assessment, prepared with ECC, is attached.
Health and Safety	All Health and Safety requirements are being complied with and any specific requirements will be set out in the tender
Human Rights/Legal Implications	A Listed Building consent application is currently progressing for the changes in reception.
Sustainability	No specific implications.
Ward-specific impacts	No specific implications.
Workforce/Workplace	This is a major change to the building and as such will cause disruption. Staff have been informed of progress at all stages. Various room moves have already taken place to empty the relevant area in preparation for the building works. Disruption to the reception area and first floor toilets will be kept to a minimum, however some impact is inevitable.

## Background

6. The council was approached by ECC in the summer of 2011 about the possibility of co-locating at the London Road offices. This fitted with the Corporate Plan and Medium Term Financial Strategy which spoke about additional income from renting out parts of the London Road office. It also fits with previously expressed wishes from Members to locate different public sector services in a single location, benefitting the public through ease of access.
7. Over the course of the last 12 months many discussions have taken place between UDC officers and their county colleagues. There have also been a number of office moves to enable more effective working and freeing up of space for the co-location to happen.

## Scheme

8. It is proposed that the ECC staff (who number just under 60) are located on the second floor of the building in the areas previously occupied by the Housing Service. ECC currently allows the HomeStart charity use of a small amount of office space at Faircroft Road and would continue this arrangement at London Road. ECC would have dedicated use of one large interview room in reception and would share a second with UDC. As part of the proposal ECC would be allocated 20 car park spaces for their sole use.

9. It is also proposed that the current car park is re-modelled to make better use of the available space. It is anticipated that this will increase the number of parking space by 20.
10. The lease would be for an initial 15 year period to enable both parties to obtain best value from their investment. There are rent reviews every 5 years and the option for either party to terminate the agreement by giving 12 months prior written notice.
11. If approved it is likely that co-location would occur in early spring 2013.

### **Reception**

12. At present there are three interview rooms, one of which is permanently allocated to the Benefits service.
13. The nature of the reception area is such that visitor confidentiality is hard to achieve given the close proximity of the reception desks to the waiting area. Due to space restrictions it is not possible to separate the waiting area from the front counter. However, an alternative solution is to create more private interview rooms. Until now, the cost has been prohibitive but this project gives the council the chance to address this issue.
14. The proposed changes will see an additional five interview rooms created, all with induction loops. There will also be improvements to the front desks which will be replaced with a single counter that will include lowered areas for wheelchair users. A plan of the proposed changes is attached as Appendix One.

### **First Floor Toilets**

15. The toilets that are located on the first floor near the Council Chamber are showing signs of wear and tear. Again this is an ideal opportunity to modernise facilities that are used by visitors as well as staff.
16. The majority of ECC and UDC staff that will use these toilets are female. At present the male toilet is by far the largest. It is proposed to swap the male and female toilets around. These changes will be done at times which will minimise disruption to staff and visitors.
17. In addition the current disabled toilets are poor in design and do not meet the needs of automated wheelchair users. As part of the changes a modern and accessible disabled toilet is being provided.
18. A plan of the proposed changes is attached as Appendix Two

## Second Floor

19. There are a number of the double glazed window units which require replacing and this work was in the process of being scheduled to be done. Given that all of the windows are of the same age it is prudent to take the opportunity of the area being empty to replace them all.
20. Also in the plan for 2012/13 was a complete ICT network replacement for this area and again this will be done at this time.
21. A plan of the area to be occupied by ECC is attached as Appendix Three.

## Car Park

22. The co-location project will put additional pressure on the council car park, particularly at the peak usage times of 9.30 – 11.00am. The council is seeking to address this challenge in three ways
- a. The active promotion of contracted home working. Already in excess of 30 staff have expressed an interest in alternative working which includes
    - i. Working from home at least 1 day per week
    - ii. Condensing 5 days work into 4 longer days
    - iii. Condensing 10 day work into 9 longer days
  - b. The introduction of a new travel plan which will promote bicycle and public transport use as well as car sharing.
  - c. Subject to planning consent for removal of two small trees, it is proposed to increase the number of car park spaces by 20. A plan of the proposed changes is attached as Appendix Four

## Risk Analysis

Risk	Likelihood	Impact	Mitigating actions
The project does not proceed	1 – both parties are committed to the co-location and both have senior member and officer support	2 – the council would need to find a new tenant to achieve the MTFS requirement	Both UDC and ECC are taking reports to their respective Cabinets to formally approve the partnership.
The tender cost exceeds available funds	2 – ECC external partner Atkins has undertaken the work of requirements and pricing. With their market knowledge the budget and expected	2 – If the final tender cost exceeds budget we will extend ECC rent-free period for additional capital contribution. If the final price is cheaper we will	Use of external partner experienced in estimating and costing such projects

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	cost should be reasonably accurate.	probably look to reduce the rent-free period	
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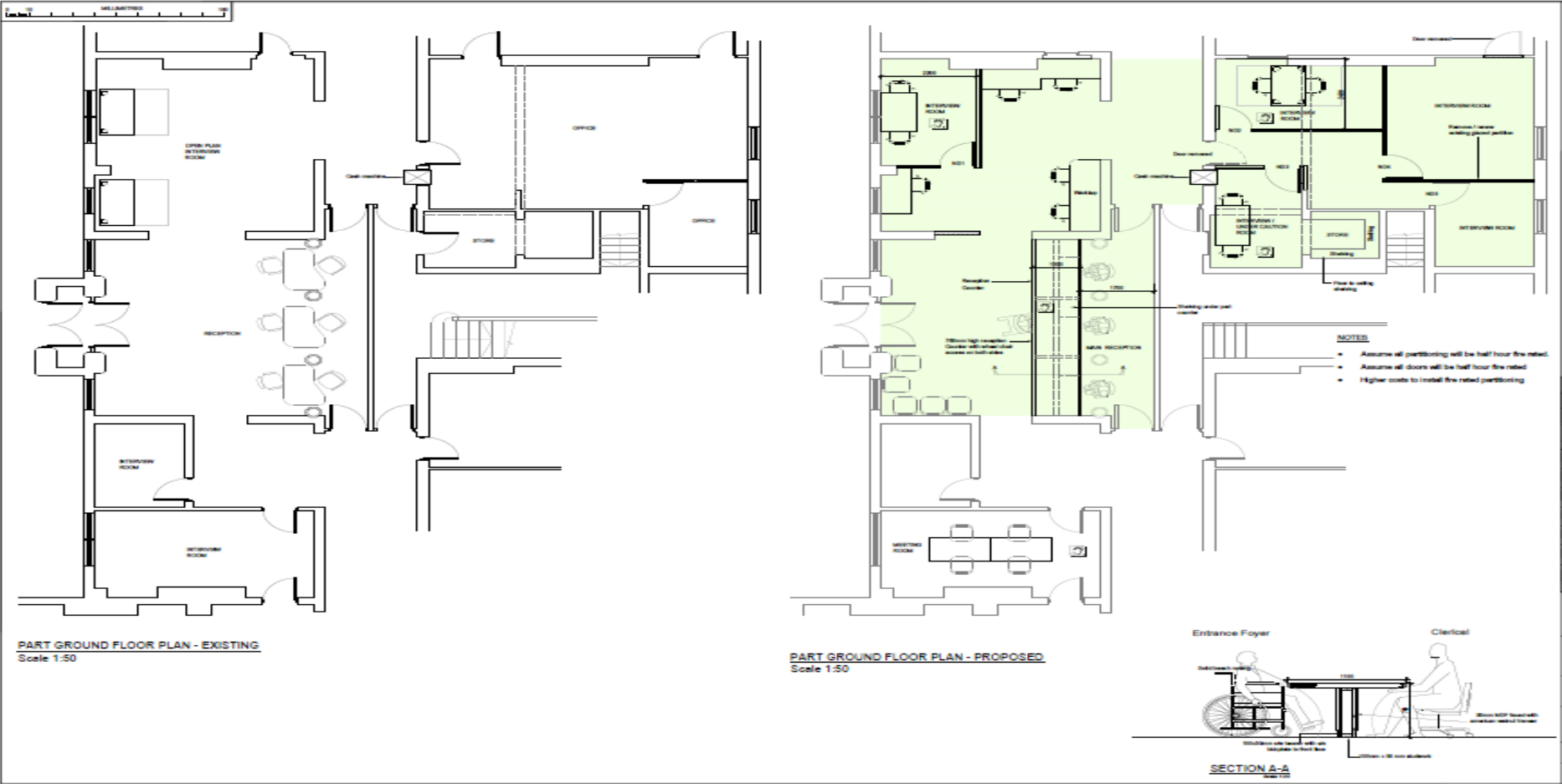
- 1 = Little or no risk or impact
- 2 = Some risk or impact – action may be necessary.
- 3 = Significant risk or impact – action required
- 4 = Near certainty of risk occurring, catastrophic effect or failure of project.

## Appendices

- One Proposed reception area
- Two Proposed first floor toilets
- Three Proposed second floor layout
- Four Proposed revised car par plan

APPENDIX ONE

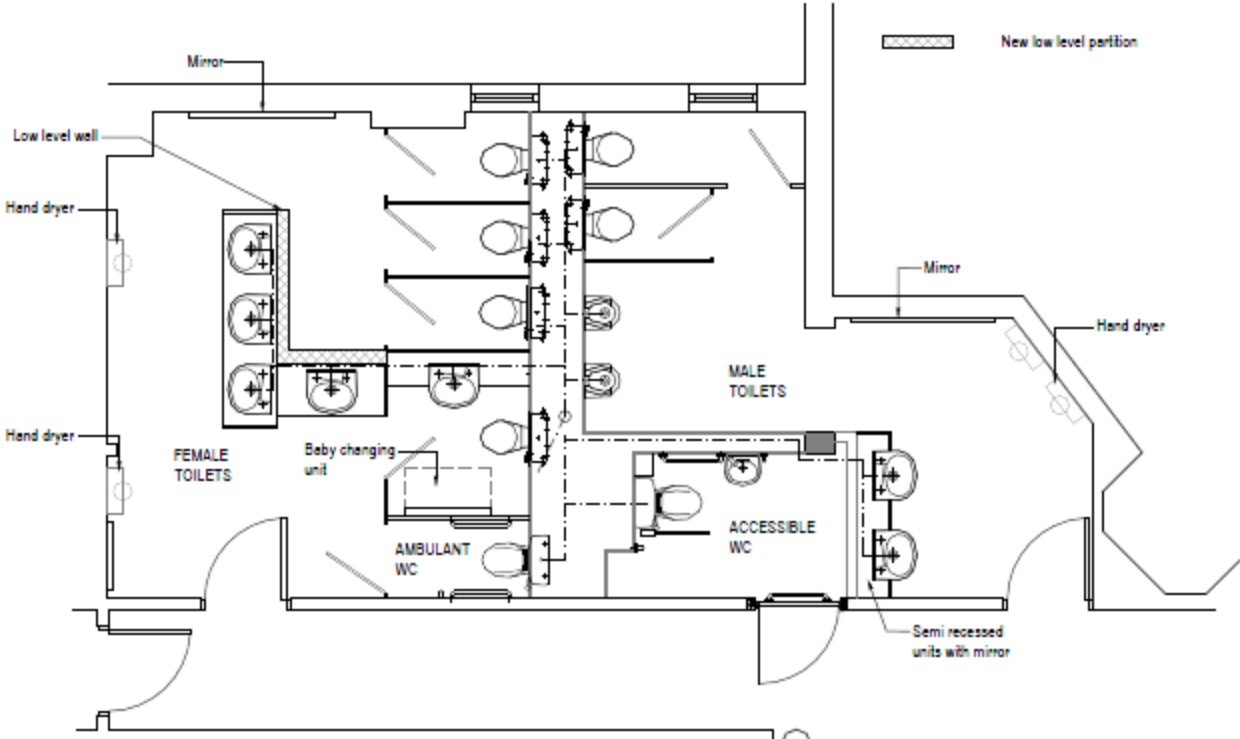
RECEPTION



**APPENDIX TWO**

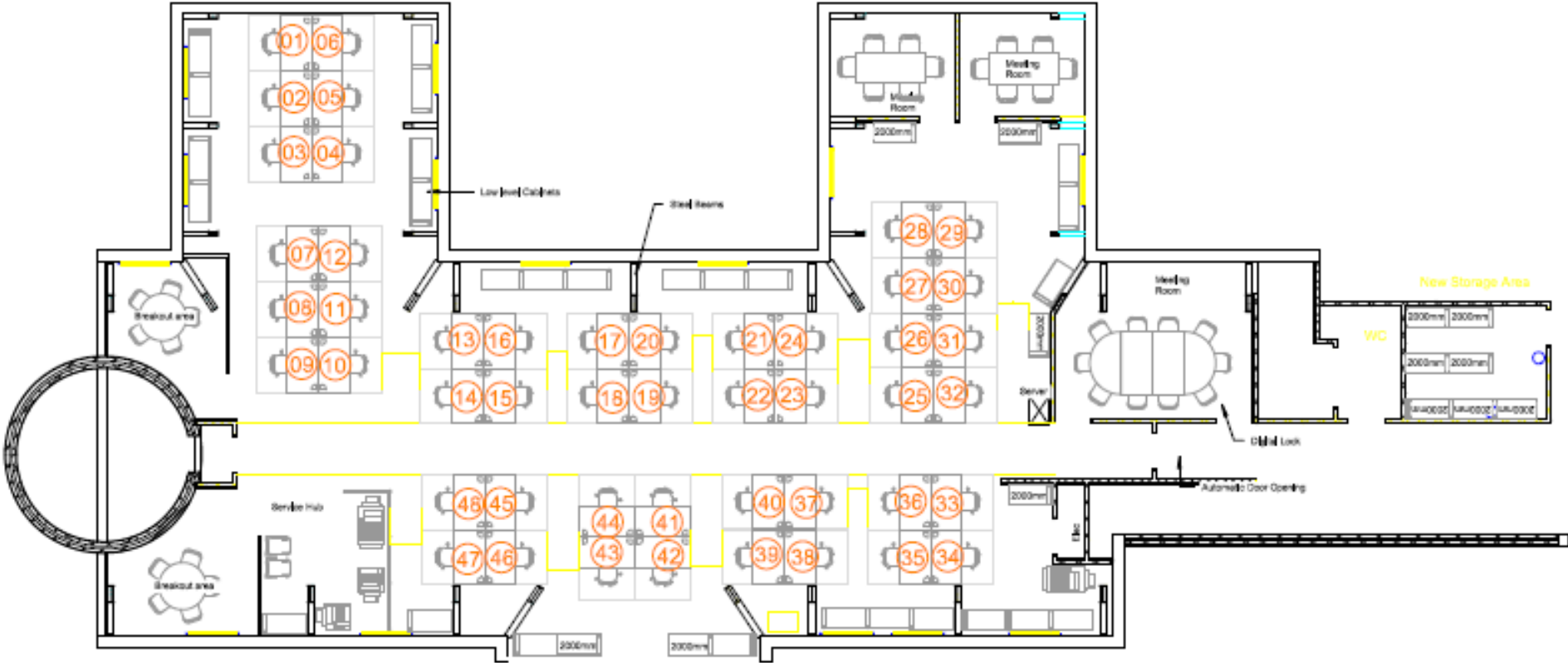
PROPOSED TOILETS

Female toilets 5no. (including 1no. ambulant toilet)  
Male toilets 2no. plus 2no. urinals  
DDA toilet 1no.



APPENDIX THREE

SECOND FLOOR



APPENDIX FOUR



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**CAR PARK LAYOUT**

