

Review of the Implementation of the Working Differently Programme and the Efficient and Effective Use of Accommodation



Technical, Economic and
Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel

Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council
TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
SCRUTINY PANEL

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programme and the efficient and effective use of
accommodation**

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Tameside Metropolitan Borough Council

TECHNICAL, ECONOMIC AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

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1. Introduction by the Chair

I am pleased to deliver this report at this moment in time, particularly with all of the current changes taking place both economical and structural.

The Working Differently programme should be welcomed as it will not only give our employees more flexibility, but could make the Council, and the council tax payer further efficiencies and much needed savings.

What pleased the Scrutiny Panel and myself most was the appointment of Ms Megan Nurse, bringing strong leadership skills to lead the project. Now that the Executive officers and Cabinet Deputies are in place we should see much greater progress on the first stages of this project, which will include the possible release of valuable office space, and a workforce more at ease with their lifestyle .

I would like to congratulate the Scrutiny Support team once again for the diligent way they perform their duties. Without them, Tameside Scrutiny would not be where it is today.



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P J Robinson'. The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor P J Robinson
Chair

2. Summary

- 2.1 Local authorities are significant property owners and in the current tight fiscal climate, effective and efficient asset management, together with the ability to deliver quality services in a manner that best suits customer needs are key elements in the drive to improve service delivery and achieve efficiency gains. Local authorities have a number of different property acquisitions within their portfolios which include for example, schools, elderly person's homes, parks, administrative property etc.
- 2.2 Particularly during the current economic downturn, this Council is keen to maintain its own costs at a minimum, and therefore intends to look to its Working Differently programme as a vehicle for delivering improved outcomes to its customers which are as cost effective as possible. The main drivers for the Working Differently programme are local requirements which are detailed in the Council's Corporate Plan, national requirements which have recently included the Comprehensive Area Assessment and financial requirements which are necessary due to budget pressures.
- 2.3 Office accommodation is a costly overhead and a space utilisation project carried out for the Audit Commission a number of years ago highlighted a range of savings that could be made through savings on space per person; space capacity; building planning efficiency and storage space.
- 2.4 Furthermore, technology which allows office-based staff to work from different locations is now widely available, and enables councils to exploit opportunities to make savings through flexible working arrangements.
- 2.5 The Scrutiny Panel understands the current pressures faced by the Council which includes having to make significant efficiency savings over the next few years despite the expectation to deliver its services at consistently high levels. The Panel considers therefore, that the Working Differently programme, is an essential ingredient to the Council's success in making these savings especially as the evolving information and computer technology environment means that customers now require access to services via different modes of delivery.
- 2.6 The purpose of this review is to examine new ways in which the Council may wish to deliver its services by introducing new working practices within the Council's administrative buildings, which could lead to rationalized office requirements and significant office savings.
- 2.7 The review highlights how the best use of modern flexible working policies together with evolving ICT facilities can complement the Council's policies for its rationalisation of office accommodation, whilst still enabling the Council to provide timely, high quality and cost effective services to all its customers.

3. Membership of the Scrutiny Panel

2008/2009 Municipal Year

Councillor P Robinson (Chair), Councillor Kelly (Deputy Chair),
Councillors Brazil, Cartwright, M Downs, A Holland, D Lane, Roberts and S Smith

4. Terms of Reference

The following Terms of Reference and objectives for the Review were approved by the Panel at its meeting held on 19 January 2009:-

Aim of the Scrutiny Review Exercise

“To review the Council’s current and proposed policies for working differently, specifically accommodation, technology and working practices and to examine the requirements to bring this into effect.”

Objectives

1. To consider the existing provision of accommodation.
2. To consider the Council’s medium and long term accommodation strategies and policies.
3. To examine the Council’s proposals to implement Working Differently policies and the progress made in their implementation.
4. To seek any good practice available in the public or private sector in respect of the flexible use of accommodation and working practices.
5. To consider practical experiences of the implementation of different ways of working and the use of accommodation.

See Appendix 2 of this report for details of the project plan.

5. Methodology

- 5.1 The review commenced on the 15 December 2008, with an interview with Mr Alan Stopher, Assistant Executive Director (Property Services). Mr Stopher presented information on the Council’s Working Differently Programme, which aimed to change the way that staff worked in delivering improved value for money services to all customers, by the best use of facilities management, computer technology and flexible working.
- 5.2 An e-mail was distributed to the North West Scrutiny Support Officers Network asking for any practical experiences that might have been experienced by other local authorities who might have introduced similar projects that could be passed to the Scrutiny Panel for consideration during the course of the review.

Responses were received from:-

Mr S Callendar – Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council
Ms K Dainty – Salford Metropolitan Borough Council
Ms A Grant – Wirral Metropolitan Borough Council
Ms V Hindle – North West Employers
Ms J Murray – Allerdale Borough Council
Mr J Taylor – Wigan Metropolitan Borough Council
Ms S Wakeford – former Vale Royal Borough Council (now Chester and Cheshire West)

- 5.3 On the 19 January 2009, Mr Norman Crawford, Head of Information, and Communication Technology (ICT), reported on the ways in which information technology could contribute to the Council's Working Differently Programme, and to the efficient and effective use of accommodation throughout the Council.
- 5.4 The Panel visited Wigan MBC on the 16 February 2009, who are taking forward a project to implement 'new ways of working'. The Members spoke in depth to Mr Jim Taylor, Human Resources Policy Development Manager, Mr Mike Purcell Senior Assistant Engineer and Mr Paul Wadsworth Revenue and Benefits Manager about the practicalities of implementing the New Ways of Working Project. This project encompassed looking at people issues, IT solutions and a property perspective and aims with an intention of looking at two major accommodation projects. The Council aims to rationalise its accommodation requirements by looking at more innovative ways of delivering services by looking at human resource arrangements, IT provision and facilities management.
- 5.5 On the 13 March 2009, the Panel met with Ms Megan Nurse Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change) and Ms Alison Lloyd-Walsh Business Manager. Ms Nurse had recently acquired responsibility for the Transformation/Change Agenda throughout the authority which included the Working Differently programme and its subsidiary responsibilities such as the rationalisation of unused office accommodation.
- Ms Lloyd-Walsh is also working on the implementation of the Working Differently programme, albeit on a part-time basis.
- 5.6 The content of this report has been checked for factual accuracy by Ms Megan Nurse, Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change).

6. Background to the Review

- 6.1 At a meeting of the Senior Management Team held on 27 June 2007, consideration was given to a report on an initiative called the Working Differently programme.
- 6.2 This programme aimed to use the Council's fixed assets, staff and funds more effectively and would make the best use of modern flexible working practices, new and emerging ICT functionality and improved office environments to deliver financial savings. This programme was a key element in Tameside's response to Transformational Government and would result in:-
- Disposal of buildings made surplus to requirements
 - Increased occupancy levels resulting in lower energy costs per employee
 - Reduced travel by staff and customers
 - Reduced congestion at peak hours.
- 6.3 Bearing in mind the significant savings required of the local authority within the next three years, the members of the Scrutiny Panel were particularly interested in the

opportunities that this programme would present in relation to rationalising office accommodation and thus providing a valuable income, either from the sale or let of buildings or the rental of offices and buildings.

7. Review Findings

7.1 Drivers for Change

7.1.1 For a number of years, the Council has given consideration to the implementation of the Working Differently programme. Although progress to date has been very slow, in the current financial climate, Tameside MBC, along with other local authorities is required to make significant financial savings over the next few years. Consequently, the Working Differently programme now presents an opportunity to contribute to the necessary savings for the local authority and greater credence is being placed on its implementation.

7.1.2 Thus, the main drivers for the implementation of the Working Differently programme and the efficient and effective use of accommodation within the Council's buildings are:

- the ability to better deliver customer services;
- to maximise staff potential by the better use of staff time;
- to generate organisational efficiency savings.

7.2 What is Working Differently?

7.2.1 "Working Differently" is a Tameside programme which is aimed at changing the way that staff work in delivering services to all customers and providing improved value for money for Council Tax payers by embracing best practice in facilities management, use of technology and flexible working.¹

7.2.2 It is anticipated that by "Working Differently" a number of improvements will be noted, eg:-

- Improvements to the quality and accuracy of service delivery;
- Better response times from mobilised officers;
- Better staff retention/recruitment;
- Paving the way for service delivery out of core hours;
- Improved work life balance for staff and the wider organisational benefits of a modern approach to employment;
- Revenue savings;
- Reduction in the Council's carbon footprint.

7.2.3 The Panel feels that the Working Differently programme, could be utilised in conjunction with the Council's Flexible Working policy, in order to provide new opportunities to management and staff to ensure the efficient delivery of Council services, within an increasingly difficult budget settlement.

¹ http://www.tameside.gov.uk/directionoftravel/docs/16_transformation.pdf

7.3 Flexible Working

- 7.3.1 Some years ago, the Council introduced a policy to support work styles to enable flexible working and home-life balance.
- 7.3.2 A number of new work styles are documented in the Council's Flexible Working Policy and could mean that an employee works different hours or at a different time or at a different location, without being tied to one particular building.
- 7.3.3 The scheme is intended to help employees achieve a better work/life balance and also help managers and the Council achieve more flexibility in the services provided.
- 7.3.4 The Panel feels that there may be significant benefits for the Flexible Working Policy to work in conjunction with the Working Differently programme. Ultimately however, a successful integration of these concepts would be dependent upon the support of both managers and staff.

7.4 Tameside's Vision for its property portfolio²

- 7.4.1 Tameside MBC's vision for its property portfolio is that in the next 5-10 years there will be a reduction in the number of buildings owned by the Council. This is likely to involve the disposal of buildings which cannot be cost effectively adapted or refurbished.
- 7.4.2 There will be a much improved quality of environment for customers and staff, a reduced carbon footprint, more equitable distribution of space, much improved accessibility for disabled people, co-location of appropriate services whether Council-run or not, facilities provided in locations which enable services to get closer to customers, and "touch down" facilities for staff operating in the field using mobile technologies.
- 7.4.3 The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan (Land and Buildings) 2006-2009 and 2008-2011 both confirm that the Council is in the early stages of developing a Working Differently programme, which aspires to major transformational change over the next few years in the way that the Council goes about its business. The aim is to combine emerging mobile telephony technologies, flexible working in all its forms, a major shift in culture away from presenteeism towards performance measurement by outputs, with a step-change in provision of office environments and locations. According to the Plans, the drivers are:
- Financial – meeting the challenge of a predicted £17m shortfall in revenue funding in 2009/10 whilst maintaining a 3% limit on the annual rise of Council Tax.
 - Technological – taking the opportunity to modernise systems with portable profiles, mobile technology and effective knowledge management across the whole borough.
 - Human Resources – to counter retention and recruitment challenges by become the employer of choice in the North West through offering the best of working environments and work patterns.
 - Customer aspirations – to be able to obtain a service in the most convenient way and at the time it is needed.

² <http://www.tameside.gov.uk/assetmanagementplan/5>

- Asset Management – reduction in the buildings portfolio to create good quality multi-purpose facilities in the community.

7.4.4 It is clear that the drivers contained within the Corporate Asset Management Plans correlate with the drivers for the Working Differently programme, with which the Council's transformation/change agenda could be delivered with careful consideration.

7.5 Proposals for New Ways of Working at Tameside

7.5.1 The Council states in its document Transformation Tameside, Great Lives, Excellent Services, Part 2 Our Delivery Plan, that it aims change the way that staff work in delivering services to all customers and provide improved value for money for Council Tax payers by embracing best practice in facilities management, use of technology and flexible working.

7.5.2 The document says that the non cashable benefits include improvements to the quality and accuracy of service delivery, better response times from mobilised officers, better staff retention/recruitment and paving the way for service delivery out of core hours, as well as improved work life balance for staff and the wider organisational benefits of a modern approach to employment.

7.5.3 The main aims of the project are to ensure:-³

Customers – new experiences of accessing services of the Council and its partners: Customers will be able to access most services at their homes or nearest locality office at a time and through a delivery channel to suit them.

Staff – improved work/life balance and new terms and conditions: Staff will have a wide range of work patterns depending on the service which they are delivering and their personal circumstances. This will enable those who have the relevant skills to contribute to service objectives at different times of the day and for different durations.

Culture – new culture and management approach: Managers will be comfortable at managing on outputs and outcomes such as number of completed building surveys, throughput of benefits claim processed or number and percentage of satisfied customers.

Offices – new office environment: It is now recognised standard practice for all back-office space to be designed as open plan with partitions only used to create meeting rooms, one to one areas for privacy. This approach gives flexibility and obviates costly remodelling when changes in organisation occur. It also helps to break down the silo mentality prevalent in local authorities and promotes air circulation and more equitable sharing of natural light.

As referred to in Paragraph 7.3 of this report a significant number of staff will not have a fixed base but will operate according to the needs of their service either at a central back office, or a locality office or from home. Only a few back office staff will have fixed bases such as those providing concierge services.

System – process re-engineering: Whilst technology will be a key enabler, improving processes will still be an important way of providing different services in different ways delivering a choice of customer access.

³ http://www.tameside.gov.uk/directionoftravel/docs/16_transformation.pdf

Technology – ICT provision: New and improved ICT provision will provide more functionality across the board and will ensure that the optimum resources and technical requires to enable mobile working, flexible working and multifunctionality can be achieved.

Conclusion

- 1. Although members opinions are somewhat divided, the evidence received by the Scrutiny Panel indicates that there are significant savings and beneficial working arrangements available if Working Differently arrangements are implemented together with enhanced service provision.**

7.6 Integrating Tameside’s Vision for its Portfolio with the Working Differently programme

- 7.6.1 It is clear from reviewing existing Council reports that the concepts already exist in which Council has documented its plans to transform and change the ways in which services are delivered, and thus rationalise the amount of office accommodation.
- 7.6.2 Elements from Tameside’s vision for its property portfolio together with the proposed new ways of working can undoubtedly be integrated.
- 7.6.3 The Panel believes that what the plans lack are a clear direction, a concise action plan with key measures to be adopted.

7.7 How can the Council rationalise its office accommodation?

- 7.7.1 As mentioned previously, limited practical progress has taken place with the proposed scheme for the Council’s Working Differently programme. As a result of the current financial climate however, Tameside MBC, along with other local authorities will be required to make significant financial savings over the next few years.
- 7.7.2 Working differently and the efficient and effective use of accommodation concepts however can only release their maximum potential as long as both the employer and employee are committed and determined to make it work. If any existing cultural barriers can be overcome, the rewards for the Council and individuals could be substantial.
- 7.7.3 By modifying existing job roles, work expectations and boundaries which embrace more remote working, home working, desk sharing, deployment of touch facilities and more innovative workspace design far better utilisation of office accommodation can be achieved.
- 7.7.4 Within Tameside MBC, there are a number of jobs within the Council that would be receptive to remote working, hot desking and home working and which would not necessitate a permanently based work station, for example: highways inspectors, environment officers, social workers, planners. It was confirmed that Engineers Highways Inspectors currently used some remote working methods. In addition, it was intended that certain environmental services staff would be utilising some equipment to enable them to operate on a semi remote basis as a pilot scheme. It is noted however, that the Council’s current home working policy might not appear to be attractive to

employees, for example, they are required to meet the costs of additional heating and electricity charges. This is an area that the Panel feels would merit further consideration.

7.8 How will the Working Differently Programme be implemented?

7.8.1 The Council's starting point for the Working Differently programme is intended to be the current predominantly traditional modes of operation with 9-5 service delivery and each member of staff having an office workstation of their own.⁴

7.8.2 At a meeting of the Energy Panel on the 14 February 2008, consideration was given to a report entitled "Working Differently – A Programme Focusing the Council's Resources more Effectively". This report explained that a location had been chosen for a 500 square meter open-plan exemplar office on level 1 of Tameside Administrative Centre, and that progress had been made on vacating the cellular offices by relocating staff within the complex. A visual inspection by the Scrutiny Support Unit on the 30 January 2009 identified a number of unused offices on Level 1 in TAC due to the relocation of staff in anticipation of this pilot project, however with this exception, no further developments on the programme were identified.

7.8.3 Also, a member of the Scrutiny Panel personally notes that "*although the Working Differently Programme has been in the 'pipeline' for some time very little resources have been dedicated to the process and this seems to be epitomised by no one person having the responsibility to carry the project forward. If no member of staff has responsibility for progressing this kind of initiative then it is likely to remain an objective.*"

7.8.4 The report to the Energy Panel indicated that the exemplar project would not proceed effectively without a dedicated project/programme manager with a clearly refined role (paragraph 4). The Scrutiny Panel notes that the role of dedicated Programme Manager for the 'working differently' project is also identified in the Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan (Land and Buildings) 2008-2011 (paragraph 5.4 page 30). More recently, the Assistant Chief Executive for Performance and Change, Ms M Nurse has taken leadership for implementing the Transformation/Change Agenda, and the Panel anticipates that progress to the Working Differently programme can now be made although there is still no dedicated programme manager in place.

Conclusions

- 2. The Working Differently Programme is unlikely to be efficiently implemented in the anticipated timescale unless additional resources are made available to support the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change).**
- 3. The Panel welcomes the clear links between the Improvement and Efficiency Programme and Working Differently Programme which will be given by the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change) supported by the Executive Director Economy and Environment.**

⁴ Transformation Tameside – Part 2 (page 24)

Recommendation

1. **That the Working Differently programme be supported and implemented as a matter of urgency and that sufficient resources are deployed to achieve more efficient working and significant savings (invest to save).**

- **Issues that are restricting the implementation of the programme**

- 7.8.5 Ms Nurse is currently assisted on the implementation of the programme by Ms Lloyd-Walsh, Business Manager (Economy and Environment), albeit on a part time basis. Ms Lloyd-Walsh confirms that only a very small proportion of her time is allocated to this work. The Invest to Save pump prime funding could support the Working Differently programme for staffing and costs in redesigning and relocating services.
- 7.8.6 The Panel believes that due to the sheer enormity of this project, progress will be restrictive unless additional staff resources are allocated to this work. The members feel that although the Assistant Chief Executive should have the overall role of coordinating the implementation of the scheme, responsibility should also be disseminated to service unit managers, who should each be responsible for gathering and collating information regarding their respective service units, and then forwarding the results to the programme manager, following which informed decisions can be made on how progress should proceed.
- 7.8.7 Consequently, the Panel believes this process reaffirms the need to ensure that all service unit managers are on board with the programme, and fully understand its principles and implications.

Conclusion

4. **Additional staffing resources must be allocated to the implementation of the Working Differently programme to be utilised at the discretion of the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change).**
5. **Until additional staffing resources are dedicated to the Working Differently programme, progress on the implementation of the project will be unacceptably slow.**
6. **The investment of additional resources (invest to save) to fund relocation and redesign of services and office space is essential in order to facilitate changes which will deliver savings and service improvement in the future.**

Recommendation

2. **That the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change) be allocated dedicated staffing resources to enable the Working Differently programme to be implemented as a matter of urgency.**

- **Culture Change**

7.8.8 The Panel believes changes to the routine work culture will most definitely affect both management and staff. Management will have to familiarise themselves with managing their staff in a completely different way, and staff will have to become accustomed to working differently.

7.8.9 The members feel that it is imperative therefore to ensure that the provision of training and support is available for the welfare and best interests of all employees.

Conclusion

7. For the Working Differently programme to succeed there will need to be changes to routine, work culture and management attitudes with Organisational Development having a key role in delivering these changes.

Recommendation

3. That a development programme be devised for managers involved in the Working Differently Programme to bring about the changes in working culture required to implement the programme.

- **Consultation**

7.8.10 The Panel agrees that staff consultation needs to be thorough, genuine and to occur before there is a fait accompli, to ensure that the staff not only feel involved in the programme of change, but also to make certain that the front line staff, who may have the best ideas, have an opportunity to contribute to future developments.

7.8.11 The Panel anticipates that trust will play a major part in the successful implementation of any project, and will be a vital factor for management and staff who will each be required to adapt to the new working methods. Success might be measured by productivity outputs, and presenteeism might not be considered as fundamental as in the past.

7.8.12 The Panel feels that a significant disruption to services could occur if appropriate consultation does not take place not only with managers and staff, but also with other organisations who might currently use the Council's premises.

Conclusion

8. For the Working Differently programme to be implemented successfully there will need to be open consultation and clear information for staff.

Recommendation

4. **That a clear and open consultation programme with all staff affected by the Working Differently programme be implemented to ensure that there is a clear understanding and support for the scheme.**

7.9 Pilot Scheme

- 7.9.1 Ms Nurse informed the Scrutiny Panel that as part of the initial pilot scheme referred to in paragraph 7.8.2, office space on level 1 of the Council Offices had been cleared and could be used to accommodate “hot desking” for some of the staff relocated from the Resource Centre, Waterloo Road, Stalybridge.
- 7.9.2 The closure of the Resource Centre, Waterloo Road, Stalybridge had been proposed for several years and staff consulted on their relocation. The closure of the building had been a part of the Working Differently Programme for some time and it could now help with the delivery of the project. Currently work is proceeding to establish whether vacating the resource centre fitted with the aims of the Working Differently programme. If it was decided not to vacate the building, it would require further investment.
- 7.9.3 A member of the Panel stressed the importance of the new offices for the patrollers and the police which are currently located in Stalybridge Resource Centre, being retained within Stalybridge town centre, and accessible to the public.

Conclusion

9. **The implementation of the Working Differently programme and the rationalisation of Council buildings should not disrupt any services, especially community services such as the patrollers’ service or the police.**

7.10 Information and Computer Technology

- **The right technologies**

- 7.10.1 Mr Crawford the Head of Information and Communication Technology has advised the Panel that the technologies required for the implementation of the Working Differently programme, include:-

- Tools for the job;
- Savings and efficiencies;
- Green IT;
- Home working;
- Hot desking
- Mobile working;
- Thin client;
- Sharepoint.

- **Costs**

- 7.10.2 The Council's IT Service currently spends £1.3m per year on core IT services (ie. pc's and hardware) and any additional spending comes from service areas.
- 7.10.3 It is anticipated that the cost of a new managed service whereupon the whole computer system would be periodically replaced on a rolling programme, together with the additional spending from service areas will not cost more than the current expenditure. Ideally, the managed service will be introduced by summer 2010.
- 7.10.4 The majority of the Members of the Panel support most aspects of the use of information and communication technologies to support the Working Differently arrangements, although they also feel that there are implications for home working and remote working that will need to be dealt with, for example security, isolation, health and safety.

- **Internal IT Market**

- 7.10.5 IT services, equipment and software throughout the Council has, in the past, been acquired through an internal market which responded to customer needs. This has resulted in different computer systems being purchased by various service area, some of which are incompatible with computer systems owned by other service areas.
- 7.10.6 Some service areas do not consider updating their IT equipment as a priority, and approximately 50% of computers within the Council are over six years old. As a result the current IT infrastructure within the Council is outdated by approximately four years compared with some other local authorities.
- 7.10.7 The use of 'thin client', a technology which uses individual terminals rather than desk pc's with all processing taking place on a central server machine, would be far easier to maintain, than the Council's existing systems. The managed system could easily support the remote working, home working, hot desking etc working practices that are being considered for the Working Differently programme.
- 7.10.8 In readiness for switching to a managed service, an IT audit was scheduled to take place in February or March 2009, which aimed to ascertain each service areas IT requirements. The Panel believes that service areas should ensure that they take account of future changes to individual jobs and consequently changes to service delivery when considering options. Some Panel members considered that the full benefits of IT might not be fully understood or recognised by services, and that comprehensive guidance should be provided by IT services, which includes wide-ranging possibilities.

- **Data Protection**

- 7.10.9 The Panel has expressed concerns relating to national data security lapses that have been reported in the press and the implications for the Council regarding the protection of data from unscrupulous persons.
- 7.10.10 The Panel also feels that the emergence of computers has detracted from personal interaction with constituents, employees and councillors, which the members consider to be an important element of their role.

- 7.10.11 Mr Crawford has advised the Panel that there are measures that can be taken to minimise their concerns, and reminded the members that although there are many people who do not agree with the use of computers, technology was constantly evolving, and the opportunities presented by the use of this technology are being grasped by individuals and organisations, and their expansion and continued use is inevitable.
- 7.10.12 Ms Lloyd-Walsh confirmed that new ICT provision is a fundamental element of the Working Differently programme. It would not be possible however, to fully implement the new ICT systems for approximately 18 months.
- 7.10.13 Nevertheless, it would still be possible to make progress on the implementation of the Working Differently Programme and implement plans to rationalise office accommodation.

Conclusion

- 10. That although parts of the Working Differently programme can be implemented without the full introduction of the new information technology, very significant changes will require an extensive IT programme.**

7.11 Accommodation Protocol

- 7.11.1 Ms M Nurse indicated that it was likely that the Council's current office accommodation portfolio is over-resourced. It is intended to complete an accommodation protocol exceeded requirements as soon as possible, which will include a set of criteria for accommodation requirements. The accommodation protocol will be clearly documented and included within the corporate asset management plan.
- 7.11.2 The Panel is of the view that before decisions are made regarding the disposal of accommodation, comprehensive discussions should be held with all stakeholders.
- 7.11.3 During any consultations with service unit managers, a cost analysis should be undertaken of the potential income from the sale or rental of the unused buildings/offices which can then be used to substantiate any proposals to rationalise office accommodation.

7.12 Plans for unused accommodation

- 7.12.1 The Council's Corporate Asset Management Plan 2008-2011 (paragraph 9.2.9) refers to the transfer of community assets to the third sector, in line with government's best practice for dealing with community management and ownership of public assets, known as the Quirk Review.
- 7.12.2 The Quirk Review suggested that owning assets could give individuals greater confidence to plan for their future, and it was therefore considered that the same scenario could apply to communities and that community ownership could give local people a bigger stake in the future of their area.

- 7.12.3 The Quirk Review also highlighted many examples of the successful transfer of public assets to community organisations, together with suggestions of ways in which to overcome barriers and problems.
- 7.12.4 In many circumstances, it makes sense for a local authority to develop a strategy for the use of their assets which is corporate across the local authority, and integrated with other public bodies locally, including particularly the National Health Service, the police and the third sector, as well as, where appropriate, central government departments and agencies.
- 7.12.5 Tameside Council's Asset Management Plan states that the Council has a good track record of dealing with the transfer of assets to community groups, and is currently reviewing its policy and process in terms of how it might deal with the transfer of assets to community groups. The Panel believes that this should be clearly documented.

8. Summary of Conclusions

- 1. Although members opinions are somewhat divided, the evidence received by the Scrutiny Panel indicates that there are significant savings and beneficial working arrangements available if Working Differently arrangements are implemented together with enhanced service provision.**
- 2. The Working Differently Programme is unlikely to be efficiently implemented in the anticipated timescale unless additional resources are made available to support the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change).**
- 3. The Panel welcomes the clear links between the Improvement and Efficiency Programme and Working Differently Programme which will be given by the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change) supported by the Executive Director Economy and Environment.**
- 4. Additional staffing resources must be allocated to the implementation of the Working Differently programme to be utilised at the discretion of the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change).**
- 5. Until additional staffing resources are dedicated to the Working Differently programme, progress on the implementation of the project will be unacceptably slow.**
- 6. The investment of additional resources (invest to save) to fund relocation and redesign of services and office space is essential in order to facilitate changes which will deliver savings and service improvement in the future.**
- 7. For the Differently programme to succeed there will need to be changes to routine, work culture and management attitudes with Organisational Development having a key role in delivering these changes.**
- 8. For the Working Differently programme to be implemented successfully there will need to be open consultation and clear information for staff.**
- 9. The implementation of the Working Differently programme and the rationalisation of Council buildings should not disrupt any services, especially community services such as the patrollers' service or the police.**

10. That although parts of the Working Differently programme can be implemented without the full introduction of the new information technology, very significant changes will require an extensive IT programme.

9. Summary of Recommendations

1. That the Working Differently programme be supported and implemented as a matter of urgency and that sufficient resources are deployed to achieve more efficient working and significant savings (invest to save).
2. That the Assistant Chief Executive (Performance and Change) be allocated dedicated staffing resources to enable the Working Differently programme to be implemented as a matter of urgency.
3. That a development programme be devised for managers involved in the Working Differently Programme to bring about the changes in working culture required to implement the programme.
4. That a clear and open consultation programme with all staff affected by the Working Differently programme be implemented to ensure that there is a clear understanding and support for the scheme.

10. Borough Treasurer's Comments

Budget provision of £70,000 per annum has been provided for this project, any additional requests for funding will need to be found either from;

- existing resources
- invest to save business case
- revenue bid application.

11. Borough Solicitor's Comments

The Council has a statutory duty to achieve value for money from the use of its resources, this includes, buildings and staffing. In light of the current savings target it is important that the Council uses its assets as effectively and efficiently as possible to deliver excellent services.

Other Local Authorities

1. Comparisons with other Local Authorities

1.1 Desktop research has identified the following Local Authorities who have been highlighted by the Department of Communities and Local Government as examples of good practice in asset management
(<http://www.local.communities.gov.uk/finance/capital/data/amgoodegs.pdf>):-

(a) Buckinghamshire County Council

1.2 **The Project:** The Buckinghamshire Knowledge Warehouse
The Practice Areas Involved: Co-location of Public Sector Service; Working with partners.

1.3 The Council wanted to have multi use facilities based on adult learning. The County Council's vacant former Magistrate Court building was identified as a suitable location.

1.4 To deliver this project the Council worked with various partners including Buckingham Town Council, Aylesbury Vale District Council, and the wider community.

1.5 Part funding was secured via the Learning and Skills Council and some capital funding from the County Council and Aylesbury Vale District Council. The project was started on June 2005 and completed in March 2006 at a cost of £1 million.

1.6 The new accommodation includes an adult learning centre with internet café and various meeting rooms; a one-stop shop with all County and District functions operating from this location; improved access to the existing library; full disabled person facilities.

(b) Ashford District Council

1.7 **Project:** Civic Centre project
The Practice Area Involved: Rationalisation of office space

1.8 By rationalising the building space, the Council released 15% of office floor space, which has been sublet to the County Council's Social Services Department generating an income of £200k per annum.

1.9 The newly refurbished building was also able to provide space for a Customer Contact Centre and Integrated Call Centre. The Customer Contact Centre is designed to answer 80% of queries at the first point of contact making it easier for people to get the information they need quickly.

(c) Cambridgeshire County Council

1.10 **The Project:** Sackville House, Cambourne
The Practice Area Involved: Co-location and working with partners

1.11 Sackville House is a partnership building containing a library, officers, accommodation for Police community beat and a medical centre. With an agreement with Primary Care Trust, the County Council accommodation large enough for a library, office for trading standards, and space to lease as medical centre. Funding for the building was provided

by developer contributions and the receipt from the sale of older trading standards premises with the majority coming from the capital programme.

- 1.12 The building also has the option of being split into two buildings.
- 1.13 Efficiency savings were secured by sharing reception space, meeting rooms and staff accommodation. A joint management structure was set up for the delivery of the building.
- 1.14 Flexibility of the building is achieved through the use of roller shutters that enable the library to be opened independently of the reception. The building was also used as a polling station at the May 2005 elections. Presence of the community beat office will reinforce security in the building and underline the commitment of all parties to partnership working.

(c) Hertfordshire County Council

- 1.15 **Project:** Property Rationalisation Project
The Practice Area Involved: Property rationalisation, Corporate Change and Property
- 1.16 The County Council decided to rationalise its current 635,000ft² of office space on 51 sites, accommodating 4300 staff.
- 1.17 The original offices are spread across the County and in a diverse range of buildings from converted schools to the County Hall.
- 1.18 The rationalisation will provide an opportunity to:
- achieve greater efficiencies and assist with culture change, new ways of working, increasing morale, assisting in recruitment and retention;
 - release 50 sites with 27 being sold. The majority of the remainder are properties that are leased, and these will either be let or reallocated to service use; and
 - create a main training centre in the centre of the county.
- 1.19 By implementing ways of working not achievable in the existing portfolio the Council's office accommodation will be reduced by approximately 20% in space terms. This project is expected take three years to complete (2005-2008).

(d) Leeds City Council

- 1.20 **Project:** Disposal of under-utilized assets
- 1.21 In 2004/05 Leeds City Council sold 70 acre residential site worth a total of £62.5m and its receipts were used towards the regeneration of a deprived Council estate in South Leeds.

(e) Stockport Metropolitan Borough Council

- 1.22 **Project:** The centralisation of the ownership of Council land & property and the introduction of a corporate landlord
Key Practice areas: Financial Sustainability, Capital Release and Reinvestment
- 1.23 The Council decided on a more centralized form of property ownership whilst still retaining control of the day to day responsibility for property. The Council addressed the following issues:

- Balancing the need for central control with the "service first" culture;
- Continuing to support front line delivery services;
- Ensuring that property is treated as a strategic resource, actively used in pursuit of the Council's aims and objectives;
- Ensuring that property is actively managed, both service and corporate levels;
- Ensuring that financial and managerial responsibilities are clear; and
- Setting, monitoring and meeting corporate standard efficiency saving targets.

1.24 The Council employed a consultant to help with the changes process. The Council's staff drove the strategic and tactical changes with facilitated four workshops, awaydays, meetings and individual officers and group feedback sessions.

Output

- Facilities staff were transferred to the corporate property team, with facilities managers appointed for each building and facilities budget centralised;
- A new head of Facilities manager was appointed as well as a facilities manger and administrative staff;
- Development of a central support desk and IT system redesigned;
- The budget has been established on a "needs" basis at a building level and Facilities Managers have control all services costs;
- Repair and maintenance work is now a corporate priority;
- A new, simpler, customer focus comprehensive Service Level Agreement established; and
- Facilities management work is now being obtained from other organisations.

1.25 The Outcomes included the Council achieving a 20% reduction in the forecast annual management costs, and have improved service quality whist front line Service Streams are being focused on core businesses.

(f) Nottingham City Council

1.26 **Project:** Bestwood Estate - The Glade Business Centre in Bestwood Estate has 14 office units, each providing 870 sq ft of accommodation, and associated car parking on a one acre former landfill site.

1.27 The units have been developed by Nottingham City Council on Council-owned land as a joint venture with the Bestwood Partnership and the One City Partnership.

1.28 The two partnerships attracted funding for the project from the Single Regeneration Budget and the European Regional Development Fund.

1.29 The centre is managed by the Council, with net profits from the operation of the site going to the Bestwood Partnership for reinvestment in local community projects.

1.30 The project has brought a vacant and rather problematic brownfield site back into constructive use, it will provide local job opportunities and its operation will help to fund other social and economic regeneration activity in the local community.

(g) London Borough of Tower Hamlets

1.31 **Project:** Accommodation Strategy - The aim was to create a modern, effective, customer-focused workforce supported by appropriate accommodation and technology.

1.32 Key elements:

- Moving office based services to occupy 5 core sites;
- All managers promoting new style of working to their staff as part of the moves;
- Greater and better use of ICT to support efficiency and customer service;
- Improving customer access to services; and
- Disposing of obsolete buildings to reduce overall running costs and to free up resources.

1.33 Outcomes:

- Overall 27% reduction in workstations;
- 24-hour Contact Centre moved to new improved premises with no break in service;
- Approx 4,000 staff to be relocated to 5 core sites by completion;
- All obsolete and inefficient buildings being vacated and marketed to schedule;
- 3 of 11 buildings already in the process of being disposed of a scheduled and on budget; the rest on target to meet planned disposal deadlines by 2009;
- On target to achieve £2 million recurrent revenue savings by 2009, to be directly re-invested in front-line services;
- Achievement of Charter Mark for One Stop Shops;
- All public buildings fully Disability Discrimination Act –compliant;
- Prompt and effective responses to snagging immediately following moves meant high levels of staff satisfaction and immediate efficiency gains;
- Clear identification of specialised storage solutions, e.g. roller-racking, have dramatically improved space-efficiency;
- New telephony arrangements providing improved (VoIP) functionality and saving £110,000pa over previous arrangements. New VoIP handsets provided at no cost to the Council, an opportunity saving of around £450,000;
- Provision of high capacity, secure printers, replacing desktop printers making significant paper savings; and
- Responses to completed staff surveys overwhelmingly positive.

2. Site Visit to Wigan MBC

2.1 Wigan MBC is currently taking forward a project to implement 'new ways of working' – they have called it that just to get away from flexible working.

2.2 The project started as a home working pilot but has now grown into a fully fledged project. They have taken a holistic approach to this issue covering people issues, IT solutions and a property perspective. Evidence suggests that in order to get maximum benefit from these types of initiatives you need to take into account **people, technology and property**.

2.3 One of the key drivers for this project has been two major accommodation projects currently underway in Wigan. One involves the building of a new joint services centre with office accommodation for around 500 employees and at the same time a major review of their other office accommodation has indicated a desperate need to reduce their stock of unsuitable building (currently used for office accommodation).

2.4 Wigan believes that the adoption of new ways of working which embraces more remote and home working, desk sharing, deployment of touch facilities, more innovative workspace design (involving kitchen tables, bird table, flexible workstations) open plan offices, clear desk policies etc will give a win: win situation. For many of their employees who work out in the community the ability to work more flexibly with access to remote technology and touch down facilities around the borough will provide the

organisation with a win: win situation. Employees get more control of where, when and how they deliver their services (work life balance) and the Council win with improved and more streamlined services and far better utilisation of the office accommodation.

- 2.5 Wigan has a number of small pilots now working a variety of different ways - Housing Benefits staff work full time at home with significant increases in productivity being achieved. A group of Highway inspectors are currently working with hand held PDA's and are working remotely from home. These initiatives are also showing significant benefits to both parties.
- 2.6 Other pilots are at various stages of development. For example, they have recently undertaken a workspace audit in two of their departments to help the Council get a sense of how well utilised the offices are on a daily basis. The research from a number of different sources suggests average utilisation of a typical local authority office will usually be between 40-50%. The results of their work space audit have not yet been fully assessed but early indications do suggest between 40-50% utilisation, as expected.
- 2.7 In addition in the new year Wigan intended to launch a flexible working survey for many of their staff to help them to understand what people thought about the new ways of working - anecdotally Wigan believes that there is a great deal of support for this change.

Technical Economic and Environmental Services Scrutiny Panel
Working Differently and the Efficient and Effective Use of Accommodation
Project Plan – December 2008

Aim of the Scrutiny Review Exercise

To review the Council's current and proposed policies for working differently, specifically accommodation, technology and working practices and to examine the requirements to bring this into effect.

Objectives

1. To consider the existing provision of accommodation.
2. To consider the Council's medium and long term accommodation strategies and policies.
3. To examine the Council's proposals to implement Working Differently policies and the progress made in their implementation.
4. To seek any good practice available in the public or private sector in respect of the flexible use of accommodation and working practices.
5. To consider practical experiences of the implementation of different ways of working and the use of accommodation.

Value for Money / Use of Resources

The proposals relating to Working Differently are designed to promote the more effective use of both accommodation and staff whilst providing a more effective service to the public and more flexible working arrangements for staff.

Equalities Issues

The flexible working arrangements contained in Working Differently strategies are also designed to help people work around family and other commitments. The review will consider how effective this is in practice and whether it has an impact of equalities.

Links to Local Area Agreements

The Local Area Agreements are seen as the key driver for the improvement of services and the delivery of the priority services and the means of addressing inequalities and improving the quality of people's lives. Working differently is meant not only to make better use of accommodation it is intended to improve their working life experience. It is also intended to reduce the Council's carbon footprint by introducing more environmentally friendly working practices.

Timescale

Estimated date of completion June 2009

Detailed Action Plan (in broadly chronological order)

Action	Objective met	Timescale	Lead Scrutiny Panel member(s) and/or Scrutiny Support Officer(s)	Monthly update
1 To meet with the Assistant Executive Director (Property) and receive information regarding the provision of accommodation, and medium and long term strategies for Working Differently.	1, 2 and 5	December 2008	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer All Panel Members	✓ Completed
2 To meet with the Head of ICT and receive information on future computer technology initiatives that will support the Council's Working Differently programme, specifically in relation to accommodation requirements.	3	January 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer All Panel Members	✓ Completed
3 To undertake site visits to any local authorities or organisations who have adopted flexible accommodation and working practices for their staff, and to consider the positive and negative effects of these arrangements.	4	February 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer All Panel Members	✓ Completed
4 To meet with Ms Megan Nurse Assistant Chief Executive and Ms Alison Lloyd-Walsh Business Manager, Economy and Environment, to ascertain progress to date in implementing the Council's flexible working policy, and to examine ways in which flexible working can affect the Council's accommodation requirements. Also, to ascertain plans for the Council's medium and long term accommodation strategy, taking account of the flexible working policies and emerging new technologies.	3	March 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer All Panel Members	✓ Completed
5. To approve the draft report	1,2,3 and 5	April 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officers All Panel Members	✓ Completed

6. To meet with the Cabinet Deputy for Economic Services, to discuss the findings of the report.	1, 2, 3 and 5	May/June 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer Chair and Deputy Chair	✓ Completed
7. To receive comments from the Borough Treasurer in accordance with the agreed protocol	1,2,3,4 and 5	May 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer Borough Treasurer	✓ Completed
8. To receive comments from the Borough Solicitor in accordance with the agreed protocol	1,2,3,4 and 5	June 2009	Principal Scrutiny Support and Co-ordination Officer Borough Solicitor	✓ Completed