

## **WILTSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **WILTSHIRE PENSION FUND COMMITTEE**

14 September 2023

---

## **PENSION FUND OFFICE SPACE**

### **Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to inform members of a proposed new way of working for the Pension Fund team, and to seek approval for the additional spend.

### **Key Considerations for Committee**

#### *Pension Fund ways of working*

2. Prior to the pandemic, the Pension Fund team worked a hybrid model, with several days per week in the office and some time working from home. Obviously, over the pandemic this moved to entirely home working. Since the pandemic, staff have preferred to work from home. Additionally, the Council reduced the number of desk spaces available, with staff needing to book desks if they wanted to come into the office. Although there is in reality plenty of desk space, this may have created a perceived barrier to office working. Furthermore when working in the council office pension team members would often be sat apart with different council teams, which would be a barrier to pension team building.
3. The team have recently provided feedback that there are issues with morale and inadequate training. Management have also observed cultural issues, including poor relationships between the teams. Council wide staff surveys have also shown higher levels of morale and wellbeing are correlated with higher levels of in office attendance.
4. The Head of Wiltshire Pension Fund and the Pension Administration Lead have decided, following consultation with the Treasurer to the Fund (s151 officer) and the Chair of the Committee, that a return to the office would be very beneficial for the team, and is in fact essential to progress with the turnaround which is currently needed. Many employers are requiring their employees to work in the office as they find the right balance of home working and in office post the pandemic.
5. Staff will be asked to return to the office 2-3 days per week, with the rest of the time being remote working. In order to facilitate this, a suitable space has been found within County Hall, which will be able to accommodate the team as well as provide more informal areas for work such as breakout spaces, a project table, and a small meeting room. This will mean that any staff who wish to come into the office more will be able to do so. This dedicated space will ensure that when pension fund team members are in the office they will be sat with and interact with other members of their service, fostering relationships and the exchange of ideas and expertise.
6. In the spirit of keeping momentum for change going forward, a decision has been made to proceed with this office space. Committee members are encouraged to gain more information at this meeting and if there is not support for the changes, then the decision can be reversed.

#### *Cost implications*

7. The cost of the new office space will be £84,506 p.a., which will be invoiced to the Pension Fund from the Council, with the arrangement set out in a memorandum of understanding. The arrangement can be terminated with 3 months' notice.
8. This spend is not included in the current budget for 2023/24. It is hoped that with time, once the team culture has been improved and new ways of working are embedded, there will be efficiency savings, but at the current time this cannot be quantified and this change is purely an additional cost at this stage. It is firmly believed by senior officers that this change is necessary in order to make the improvements to the service which are needed.

### **Environmental Impacts of the Proposals**

9. There are no known implications at this time.

### **Safeguarding Considerations/Public Health Implications/Equalities Impact**

10. There are no known implications at this time.

### **Proposals**

11. The Committee is asked to
  - Approve the new ways of working and associated spend of £84,605 per annum.

Report Author: Jennifer Devine (Head of Wiltshire Pension Fund)

---

Unpublished documents relied upon in the production of this report: NONE