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Title:	Use of Council Office Space Post COVID-19
Report of:	Gerald Almeroth, Executive Director of Finance and Resources
Cabinet Member Portfolio	Cabinet Member for Finance, Property and Regeneration
Wards Involved:	All
Policy Context:	City for All
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1. Executive Summary

Corporate property responded in a number of key areas to address the immediate impact of the pandemic and the resulting lockdown. This included the following:

- provision of support to services to ensure that their buildings were safely closed down and that security arrangements were in place
- ensuring that public conveniences remained open, free to use and kept safe for users
- implementing new arrangements to support the directive for staff to work from home – delivery of office chairs to staff; scanning of incoming post and forwarding to departmental representatives
- converting the 18th floor of City Hall as an operational centre for the BECC, the production and distribution of hot meals to those sleeping rough, and the sourcing, storage and distribution of PPE to staff and care homes

The council's offices have been adapted where necessary and set up to comply with government guidelines for Covid-19 secure buildings. This has reduced capacity at both Lisson Grove and City Hall. Going forward, one of the commitments of our City for All Renewal programme is for residents to have coordinated access to a range of services using shared spaces and maximizing the use of our public buildings. A property review programme is consequently underway that will include a review of our current accommodation at Lisson Gove and City Hall and the proposal for a new Health and Well Being Hub at Lilestone Street.

The People Services team worked with IT and other functions to ensure agile working was effective from the outset of lockdown. We ensured that staff have the resources and equipment to be able to work from home for a sustained period, we have enabled staff to sustain agile working with the support and equipment that has been supplied. This means that the Council can continue to operate at full capacity whist offices have restricted space. To ensure this was successful it included a focus on:

- Staff redeployment and Training
- Keeping staff informed and engaged through internal communications
- Recruitment – We streamlined the process
- Collaborative working with Unions.
- Agile working- IT, corporate property and HR

2. Key Matters for the Committee's Consideration

The Commission is asked to

- Note and comment on the actions taken by the corporate property and peoples services teams to support the response to COVID-19.

3. Background

Closing of buildings

City Hall and Lisson Grove remained in operation on a 24-hour a day basis throughout the lockdown.

To meet insurance and statutory compliance, weekly unoccupied building checks were put in place for the 13 Libraries within the facilities management (FM) portfolio.

Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPMs) and cleaning were carried out as business as usual (BAU).

The table below shows the buildings which were closed as a result of the government lockdown and which had to be re-opened. These are buildings where WCC has responsibility all repairs, maintenance and cleaning.

48 of these sites were in scope of a full Covid 19 re-occupancy programme, as detailed below

Building Category	No	Building Category	No
Offices	16	Libraries	13
Registrars	2	WAES	3
Coroners Court & Mortuary	3	Children Centres	13
Day Centres	6	Youth Facilities	2

The table below shows buildings that are leased for the provision of commissioned services which were supported with advice for re-opening

Sites supported with Covid 19 re-occupancy advice

Building Category	No	Building Category	No
Depot	14	Hostels/ Supported Housing	8
Care Homes	2	Public Conveniences	25
Sports Centres	9	Re-gen offices	4
Community Halls	13		

A number of actions were taken by corporate property to support the operation of our buildings during lockdown. These included the following:

- Implemented full time cleaning and security teams at Libraries and Registrars to manage the social distancing and enhanced cleaning requirements. Enhanced cleaning specification on remaining 22 sites.
- Installation of hand sanitiser units across the estate
- Provision of hand gels and pedal bins
- Supported Community Halls and regeneration offices with the installation of Covid 19 signage
- Assisted with the mobilisation of the "Internet services for Residents" at Church St Library and Victoria Library
- Weekly meetings with Corporate H&S to review Covid 19 Re-occupancy Programme
- Weekly meetings with our FM provider Bouygues to review Covid 19 Re-occupancy Programme

Public conveniences

At the time of writing Public Conveniences are still free to use across all of the 23 operational sites. The decision to make all sites free during COVID-19 would enable all vulnerable members of society access to facilities. Signage and systems have been put in place to allow the public to observe social distancing guidance.

Supporting staff working from home

Actions taken to support staff working from home include:

- Mail scanning service implemented for multiple departments to enable Westminster to communicate access post whilst working from home
- The supply of keyboards and monitors where needed and we have shipped 760 office chairs to peoples' homes to support home working

Supporting the BECC and coordinating PPE and Food Distribution

To date, we have delivered 970,250 items of PPE to front line services. The maximum quantity per week was the first week in May, when 85,000 items went out. But a close second was just two weeks ago, when 64,000 items were delivered. The numbers have generally trended downwards, but the service remains fully active, making deliveries five days per week.

During the first months of the crisis, deliveries were made seven days per week and included food (later hot food) packages to rough sleeping and then ASC locations. Total food deliveries were circa 69,000, average at 860 per day.

Two vans (and their drivers) each made three delivery runs per day during the worst weeks of the crisis. Routes and timings were carefully laid out as hot food must be delivered at prescribed temperatures

Currently one van and its drivers make a single run per day which continues to deliver PPE.

The 18th floor was commandeered to provide a distribution hub for all of this. It has now largely been returned to its pre-crisis arrangements, but during the crisis the floor was home to the PPE storage and distribution centre, BECC and tactical silver control rooms, public health hub, strategic supply of cleaning and other essential supplies. The floor is now almost back to normal (albeit with reduced meeting room capacity for social distancing purposes), except for one room which will continue to hold ballot papers for a few more weeks, when they will be returned to a secure room in Lisson Grove

The 19th floor canteen was converted into a food preparation and distribution centre from late March and was returned to use as (limited) canteen in late July

Future Plans

The re-opening of our buildings following lockdown has required adaptations to some buildings to provide physical screens, install sanitising stations and put up all necessary signage to make them Covid-19 secure.

The number workstation available for use at City Hall while maintaining the 2-metre safe distancing guidance is 330 and at 80 at Lisson Grove.

A property review programme is underway in response to the City for All Renewal commitment for residents to have coordinated access to a range of services using shared spaces and maximizing the use of our public buildings. This will cover all the council's operational buildings, including City Hall and Lisson Grove Offices.

The Church Street Programme includes the relocation of existing services at Lisson Grove into a new Health & Well Being Hub on Lilestone Street.

Staff redeployment

At the beginning of the pandemic, it was clear that there may have been a need to redeploy people into front line roles where Covid-19 absence impacted on services ability to maintain activity (Adult Social Care and Health being of particular concern).

Staff absence due to Covid-19 was such that redeployment into Adult Social Care and other core front line services was not required. However, Westminster Connects was set up to coordinate contact with shielding individuals in the community and the Emergency Response Team and other corporate activities required to manage the Council's response to the pandemic all needed large numbers of staff to be redeployed from other areas.

In total:

Team	Number
Emergency Response team	17
Westminster Connects	91
Response Team	9
Economy Team	15
Rough Sleeping Team	2
Total	134

Office reopening

People Services and the Property team worked together to ensure appropriate social distancing and a safe working environment in our offices, informed by

detailed risk assessments. This is now being updated following the recent Government Announcements.

Following changes to government guidance, we have now updated the advice and information has gone out on all our internal comms channels from the Loop Live through to Yammer, our staff newsletter and The Wire.

If you have any queries about this Report or wish to inspect any of the Background Papers, please contact Adeoye Adebayo, Interim Director of Corporate Property aadebayo@westminster.gov.uk

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 – Office Occupancy Rates

BACKGROUND PAPERS

None