

**REPORT TO: WEST OF ENGLAND COMBINED AUTHORITY
COMMITTEE**

DATE: 8th APRIL 2022

**REPORT TITLE: URGENT ITEM – DELEGATION OF DECISION ON
FUTURE OFFICE ACCOMMODATION**

DIRECTOR: PATRICIA GREER, CHIEF EXECUTIVE

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1 To seek the Committee's approval that the decision on the Combined Authority's future accommodation is delegated to the Combined Authority Chief Executive, in consultation with the Local Authority Chief Executives.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 The decision on the Combined Authority's future accommodation is delegated to the Combined Authority Chief Executive in consultation with the Local Authority Chief Executives.
- 2.2 That if majority agreement of the Combined Authority Chief Executive and Local Authority Chief Executives cannot be reached, the decision is taken at a special meeting of the Combined Authority Committee, at an urgent date to be confirmed should the necessity arise.

3. Background / Issues for Consideration

- 3.1 The Combined Authority has occupied the ground floor of 3 Rivergate since 23rd June 2017. The lease expires on 23rd December 2022. The Combined Authority were in discussions on extending its existing lease term but the Landlord's position has recently hardened to an exit being required at the end of this calendar year in order to undertake significant refurbishment of the building without any tenant presence. This brings an increased urgency to matters, and it is therefore imperative that the Combined Authority find new accommodation imminently.
- 3.2 The Authority has worked with commercial property agents to source options which balance the need for suitable accommodation with economic and organisational benefits, alongside the need to be prudent with public money. As a result of this search, a number of options are now being considered. These

are commercial in confidence given ongoing negotiations so are not explicitly listed in this paper. The options are being considered according to the following criteria:

- Accessible location, ideally in a central Bristol location due to the majority of Combined Authority staff living in the Bristol area and travel to work using active travel or public transport
- Space to accommodate the Authority's current staffing numbers on a minimum 50% desk ratio
- Strong sustainability credentials, including cycle parking, electric vehicle charging points and efficient lighting and heating systems
- Good value for public money in the context of the current commercial property market in the region
- Ability to keep staff together in one building
- Ability to offer to others the utilisation of part of the space
- Ability to meet the tight timescales given the expiry of the Authority's existing lease

- 3.3 A provisional project plan, that supports the need for an urgent decision, has been devised for the required actions and works, including the necessary legalities for the move, procuring a fit-out contractor and coordinating the associated internal fit-out, ensuring ICT provision, and the movement of furniture and staff from 3 Rivergate.
- 3.4 The plan, taking all of the above into account, will result in best-case completion at the end of October 2022, and with project tolerance built in, takes the timeline to the end of November 2022, assuming a decision in April 2022. This would ensure the organisation enters the important final quarter of the financial year to focus on project delivery for the benefit of residents and business.
- 3.5 This timeline is clearly very close to the required exit date from 3 Rivergate, meaning that the Combined Authority needs to progress to a decision imminently.
- 3.6 Following a thorough financial analysis, the Combined Authority can meet any additional costs internally, so there is no financial ask from the Authority's constituent Councils. This can therefore be considered an operational matter that can be concluded at officer level.
- 3.7 It is therefore requested that the Combined Authority Chief Executive is delegated the authority to take the appropriate operational decision on the future office accommodation, in consultation with the Local Authority Chief Executives.
- 3.8 If majority agreement of the Combined Authority Chief Executive and Local Authority Chief Executives cannot be reached, the decision will need to be taken at a special meeting of the Combined Authority Committee, since the next Committee meeting in June 2022 will be too late to meet the required timescales.

4. Risk Management/Assessment

- 4.1 The endorsement of the recommendations outlined in this report will mitigate the risk of the Authority not having suitable accommodation at the expiry of its lease at the end of 2022.

5. Finance Implications, including economic impact assessment where appropriate:

- 5.1 The full financial implications including the net present value of the options that meet the strategic and operational needs of the Combined Authority will be considered by officers as appropriate in making their decision.

Advice given by: Richard Ennis, Interim Director of Investment and Corporate Services

6 Legal Implications:

- 6.1 All legal implications will be considered when the delegation is exercised.

Advice given by: Stephen Gerrard, Interim Director of Law and Governance

7 Human Resources Implications:

- 7.1 Any change in office accommodation will not affect the terms and conditions of Combined Authority staff. There are no other HR implications arising as a result of this paper.

Advice given by: Alex Holly, Head of People and Assets

West of England Combined Authority Contact:

Any person seeking background information relating to this item should seek the assistance of the contact officer for the meeting who is Ian Hird on 07436 600313; or by writing to West of England Combined Authority, 3 Rivergate, Temple Quay, Bristol BS1 6EW; email: democratic.services@westofengland-ca.gov.uk