

SMOKING ROOM AT CIVIC SUITE, RAYLEIGH

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 This report recommends a change of use for the Smoking Room at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh.

2 INTRODUCTION

- 2.1 Traditionally, the room located on the first floor landing at the top of the stairs at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh has been reserved as a smoking room for Members.
- 2.2 Over recent years, the room has seen minimal usage as a smoking facility and two factors have led to thought being given to other usage possibilities:-
- From a health perspective – the government proposes to require the majority of enclosed or substantially enclosed public places and workplaces to be smoke free by the summer of 2007. All central government departments and the NHS will be smoke free by the end of 2006.
 - From a business perspective – alternative usage could add significant value to the work of Members and, potentially, address an accommodation requirement relating to the Rochford offices.

3 DISCUSSION

- 3.1 Whilst the Civic Suite contains a Members' Lounge and Members' Library facility, there is currently no bespoke facility for situations where Members may wish to have private discussions with their constituents or have access to an office desk (with phone/IT facilities) where interruptions can be avoided. The Smoking Room at the Civic Suite could be converted for the introduction of such a facility.
- 3.2 Notwithstanding that some work to the décor would be appropriate, the room is of a size to contain two office desks and a separate informal seating area. One possibility could be to introduce an arrangement so that any Councillor could access a desk at times when the Civic Suite is open. A booking arrangement providing for, say, one hourly booking periods (with perhaps three hours maximum) for each desk could be appropriate. An arrangement could include provision for the whole room to be reserved for occasions when a Member wishes to hold a private meeting with a constituent, or the Leader of the Council has a requirement to reserve a room. Alternatively, the room could be made available without a formal booking arrangement.

- 3.3 Members may also consider that there could be merit in introducing lockable cabinets at the Civic Suite for use by Groups. These could also be fitted into the room.
- 3.4 As Members are aware, office accommodation at the Council's Rochford offices has been at a premium to the extent that, in recent times, the Members' Room at Rochford has been made available to officers located in the Old House (and officer usage has been significant). A combination of increased demand for office space for officers allied to minimal Member usage of the Rochford room and the potential for a Member office facility at Rayleigh points to the possibility that the Rochford room could be fully utilised as an office.

4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 Elements of furniture, communication and IT facilities can be achieved via inter-office exchange of equipment. Any additional costs can be met from existing budgets.

5 RECOMMENDATION

- 5.1 It is proposed that the Committee **RESOLVES**

That, subject to Member views on whether there should be a booking facility and any other final detail, arrangements be made for the Members' Smoking Room at the Civic Suite, Rayleigh to be converted to a Members' office facility (to include lockable cabinets for use by Groups) and for the Members' Room at Rochford to be re-designated as office accommodation.

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Background Papers:-

None

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