

## ERW JOINT COMMITTEE

### 16 JULY 2018

### REVIEWING THE CURRENT ERW ACCOMMODATION IN Y LLWYFAN, CARMARTHEN

#### Purpose:

To provide an update to the Joint Committee on the current ERW accommodation arrangements, note current Health and Safety issues, and seek authorisation regarding pursuing alternative accommodation.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS / KEY DECISIONS REQUIRED:

1. To note situation regarding current lease
2. To note current situation regarding Health and Safety report
3. To note the cost efficiencies and value for money of proposed relocation
4. To approve request regarding pursuing alternative accommodation

#### REASONS:

To provide information to the Joint Committee and request approval.

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

## ERW JOINT COMMITTEE 16 JULY 2018

### REVIEWING THE CURRENT ERW ACCOMMODATION IN Y LLWYFAN, CARMARTHEN

#### BRIEF SUMMARY OF PURPOSE OF REPORT

To provide the Joint Committee with an update on current accommodation and details on rationale for seeking future accommodation

- **Background**

This section outlines establishes the accommodation arrangements at present, and offer context for the remainder of the report.

- **Rationale**

This section outlines the underlying information that informs the report's Recommendation to the Joint Committee

- **Financial implications**

This section explains the potential financial efficiencies that the proposal can offer

- **Health and Safety Report**

**Annex 1 – The findings of a Health and Safety Report carried out by an officer from Pembrokeshire County Council on the 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2018**

DETAILED REPORT ATTACHED?	YES
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## IMPLICATIONS

Policy, Crime & Disorder and Equalities	Legal	Finance	Risk Management Issues	Staffing Implications
NONE	NONE	YES	YES	YES
<b>1. Finance</b> <b>The current arrangements do not provide an efficient use of public funds which is detailed within the report</b>				
<b>2. Risk Management</b> <b>It has been identified that the current accommodation does not comply with Health and Safety requirements as the facilities do not provide sufficient space for the numbers employed by ERW. This is detailed in item no 7.2 and captured within the risk register item no 6 - risk no.7</b>				
<b>3. Staffing Implications</b> <b>The accommodation has a real impact on the staff's ability to work effectively and is detailed within the report</b>				

## CONSULTATIONS

Details of any consultations undertaken are to be included here  
N/A

**Section 100D Local Government Act, 1972 – Access to Information**  
**List of Background Papers used in the preparation of this report:**  
**THERE ARE NONE**



# **Reviewing the Current ERW Accommodation in Y Llwyfan, Carmarthen**

## **Background**

ERW has occupied office space within Y Llwyfan since early 2011 when it was called SWAMWAC. It has subsequently extended the amount of space by sub-letting three offices from Theatr Genedlaethol in order to accommodate a larger workforce.

The total number of offices currently occupied within Y Llwyfan is six. Three of these are located on the ground floor and provide accommodation for Finance, HR and Administration together with a hot-desking room for seven agile workers. There is also a small meeting room and storeroom for sole use of ERW. The landlord for these spaces is the University of Wales, Trinity St David.

The other three offices are located on the second floor and provide accommodation for the Managing Director, Senior Leadership team and supporting staff. It is these offices that are currently sub-leased from Theatr Genedlaethol. This also provides an area that is used as a staff room where the coffee/tea-making facilities and refrigeration are housed.

There is a conference room located on the first floor for which ERW has 9 number of days per year.

There is a requirement by the Landlord for the Finance Office to move from the ground floor to the first floor in September 2018. The new office is located directly above the current Finance Office and is identical in all aspects which means the small meeting room will also have moved as the two rooms are linked. Having ERW staff spread across the three floors is likely to impact on the efficiency of working practice as the distances between offices will be greater.

Both leases have now expired, with the one for Trinity St David having expired in 2009 when all other tenants of Y Llwyfan experienced the same oversight by the landlord. The existing terms of this lease have remained the same throughout. The lease for the second floor accommodation expired at the end of March 2018 but again the terms remain the same.

A new licence with the landlord has been agreed for a three month period which will bridge the gap between now and 1 September 2018 when the new leases for the building will have to be negotiated. Theatr Genedlaethol will not be renewing its lease for the offices on the second floor which means that any future lease for this space will be with the University of Wales, Trinity St David.

It has been made clear that the terms of the lease will change and telephony/Broadband will no longer be supported. All tenants will be responsible for their own Business Rates. Currently, these are included in the rent/service charge. It is anticipated that any lease would be for a 5 year term with a 6 month notice period applied to both sides. The current rent is charged at £9 per sq ft and the service charge is £5.50 per sq ft which equates to £18,922 per annum. The amount paid to Theatr Genedlaethol each year is £12,655. This brings the current total payable for rent and service charge to £31,577 per annum.

Discussions have taken place in respect of extending the amount of accommodation provided by Y Llwyfan but the availability of additional accommodation is unlikely as it is anticipated that current tenants will renew their leases. An independent review was conducted of existing office space which was found to be unsuitable for the number of people using it. This was due, in part, to the size and layout of each room as the offices did not meet the required Health & Safety standards.

The hot-desking office was deemed to only service seven agile workers at any one time yet there is often the requirement to accommodate significantly more than this number, particularly on days where they are required to attend specific training/meetings.

Continuous access to the network is reliant on staff being able to port their IT equipment to the main network via the LAN. If this activity is not routinely undertaken then access to the network is no longer possible as the IT equipment is not recognised which not only causes disruption to work but also prevents necessary security patches being automatically loaded onto the device. On one particularly day, the Managing Director's office had to be used for this purpose as all of the other office accommodation was full. More and more training/meetings are held away from the main ERW offices due to the numbers now attending. This reduces the opportunities to connect to the network via the LAN which, in turn, increases inefficiencies as staff are forced to make deliberate journeys for this purpose, for which there is a financial cost to ERW.

## Rationale

ERW's office requirements have changed over the years, and all evidence, including an external report by PCC suggests that the current premises do not address ERW's current needs. The working space available at Y Llwyfan is too small to accommodate all members of staff centrally employed by ERW, and the nature and layout of the offices do not provide staff with suitable workspaces for the requirements of a professional organization and to meet health and safety requirements.

With the current lease due to be reviewed, it's timely to consider other options with the aim of ensuring that:

- (i) the central office is suitable to the size of the organization and the nature of its work:
- (ii) the running costs provide the best value for money.
- (iii) value for money for events / conference / meetings

The current situation and other available options have been carefully considered, and based on the evidence gathered there is a strong argument that moving to new premises would offer financial gains and increased efficiency.

The rationale for change can be summarized as follows:

- (i) In order to provide value for money and cost efficiency, ERW's office should be accommodated in a building where all its internal meetings, as well as its conferences and events can be held within the building thus significantly reducing costs, and reducing administrative work in liaising with external companies.
- (ii) Ensuring a suitable professional working environment where all members of staff have appropriate workspaces and the ability to carry out their day to day work in a professional manner where confidentiality is also of key importance is vital to ensure the effectiveness of ERW's work.
- (iii) There are urgent health and safety issues that have been highlighted in the HSE report (Annex 1) affecting staff currently working at Y Llwyfan. Not acting on such compelling evidence would be irresponsible.

## **Financial information**

### **(i) Cost of current accommodation**

The cost of the current accommodation for 2017/18 was £31,578 for the year, with the additional cost of in excess of £101,066 for the use of external meeting and training facilities. This is an increase from the previous year when the total cost of the external facilities used in 2016/17 amounted to £70,499 due to the increase in training offered across the region. Over the coming years, with the expectation to deliver The National Model for School Improvement and the National Mission for Wales, the cost of leasing external facilities for the purpose of regional events and meetings is likely to increase significantly.

To conclude, the total anticipated cost for current accommodation and the additional hiring of training facilities for 2017/18 is £132,644. If ERW renews the lease at Y Llwyfan, the estimated cost of continuing with the current arrangements is likely to reach in excess of £163,211 if the same increase in costs from 16/17 to 17/18 is applied to this year's costs. However, it should be noted that the new lease for Y Llwyfan would differ from the previous lease, and costs such as business rates, broadband, telephone, energy bills etc. would no longer be inclusive. The actual cost of remaining in the current premises would therefore be significantly higher than the figures quoted. The need to hold a higher number of events and training days throughout the year would also lead to significantly higher cost for renting external accommodation.

### **(iv) Cost of proposed accommodation**

In view of the growing concern regarding the suitability of the current premises, several accommodation options have been carefully considered. Securing a suitable building that provides sufficient office space, meeting rooms and training facilities will allow ERW to work in a more cohesive and consistent way. This will support ERW to provide a more efficient and effective school improvement service.

Having considered different premises such as offices in UWTSD, offices in Carmarthenshire Council and new builds in Carmarthen, one option is currently being favoured due the size and nature of the space available, the rental costs and the additional value for money offered by the proposed lease. Suitable open-plan offices have been located at the Welsh Government Office in Picton Terrace, Carmarthen. In addition to offering suitable office space, the proposal to lease part of the Welsh Governments' office in Carmarthen offers the additional advantages as it would offer meeting room facilities and the option to hold regional small and larger scale events on site. The proposed new accommodation will also allow ERW to maximise on the technical ability available through greater use of Video Conferencing and other visual means of communicating which would facilitate agile working and reduce travel time for staff and schools. The other WG offices across the region would also be available for use thus providing effective satellite basis to facilitate effective agile working which would reduce the amount of mileage and travel time for staff, achieving an efficiency saving.

The total anticipated costs for the proposed new office, including the meeting room facilities and space for larger events and meetings would be approximately £150,000 per annum suggesting an initial saving of at least £13,211. It should also be noted that a valuer's report (Carmarthenshire County Council) has been undertaken and recommends an efficiency saving on the advertised cost.

**Required actions**

1. ERW's Joint Committee are asked to consider the current situation and form opinion on the suitability of the current accommodation and the appropriateness and value of money in renewing the current lease in view of the other options available.
2. Based on the evidence presented and the rationale for the move to new premises, Erw's Joint Committee are asked to come to an urgent decision regarding the proposed new premises to ensure than the offices identified and the terms of the new lease offered remain available to ERW. A prompt decision would enable ERW to secure the contract and schedule the move to the new premises in a way than would ensure minimal impact to the day to day work of the establishment.

Draft Pending Joint Committee Approval

## Annex 1 HSE Report

### Office space inspection

ERW  
Y Llwyfan  
College Road  
Carmarthen  
SA31 3EQ  
20<sup>th</sup> March 2018

#### Ground floor

##### **Meeting room**

No issues

##### **Finance office Ground floor**

The finance office measured 3.7m x 5.35m x 2.5m high. Total cubic meterage of 50 cubic meters. This would allow 4 members of staff to work in this area (11 cubic meters per person) While there were only 4 staff in the room it was cramped due to the large furniture and did not provide staff with the minimum legal requirement of 750mm to egress the office in the event of an emergency. I would recommend to reduce the size of desk and reconfigure the desking arrangement in this room. Due to the size of the room you may end up with a desk arrangement that is not conducive to team working i.e desks facing the walls.

##### **HD room Ground floor**

The HD room measured 5m x 6.6m x 2.36m high. Total cubic meterage of 73 cubic meters. This would allow 7 members of staff to work in this area (11 cubic meters per person). The room was laid out with meeting room chairs and tables which are generally not acceptable for office working as there is no adjustment for different staff requirements. The lay out did not allow for any escape routes or minimum personal space. If the room was to be continued to be used as an agile area a permanent desk arrangement should be introduced to allow for free movement through the room and ample width on walkways to allow for egress in the event of an emergency. If there was a permanent agile desk arrangement laid out with no other furniture it could possibly increase the number of agile desks to 10 (smaller desks) while still retaining correct widths of walkways. This is because staff would relay in and out. A desk arrangement would have to be draw up to confirm this. These desks would also require fixed adjustable screens and office chairs not the meeting room chairs which are used at present.

##### **Admin office Ground Floor**

The Admin office measured 5m x 4.4m x 2.4m high. Total Cubic meterage of 53 cubic meters. This would allow a maximum of 5 staff to work in this area. The present desk arrangement did not allow for the minimum egress routes of 750mm in all cases and some walkways were blocked by staff seated at their desks. There were only 5 desks in this room but to comply with legal requirements a new desking arrangement should be looked into and possibly the reduction in the size of desks.

## **First Floor**

### **Senior Management team office**

The SMT office measured 7.2m x 4.2m x 2.7 High. Total cubic meterage of 81 cubic meters. This would allow for 7 staff to work in this area. Although there were only 7 desks in this office not all the walkways complied with legal requirements. A new desk layout should be looked into to provide sufficient walkways through the office.

### **MD Office**

Not Measured

### **Admin I.T**

The Admin, I.T office measured 6m x 4.3m x 2.7m high. Total Cubic meterage of 70 cubic meters. This would allow for 6 staff in this office. At present there are 4 desks and 5 staff but the configuration did not allow for the minimum legal requirement for safe access and egress of 750mm. a new desk configuration should be looked at to allow for correct access and egress.

## **Conclusion**

### **Facilities**

As seen on the plans between the lower ground floor and ground floor, there are toilet facilities enough for 175 ladies.

As seen on the plans between the lower ground and first floor there are toilet facilities enough for 200 men.

I am unable to make a judgment as to if this is enough or not as I am not familiar with the workings of the building and the total occupancy.

### **Offices**

The main areas of concern are that some of the offices are being over used and others have unsuitable desk arrangements. Issues like these could have an impact on staff with a result of welfare issues, Repetitive strain injuries (RSI) and Muscular skeletal disorders (MSD) due to cramped working conditions and slips, trips and falls due to narrow walkways. Even if new layouts were put in place to create the correct walkways it may not be possible to have the maximum number of desks using the present furniture. The office was almost fully occupied today on my visit but on talking to staff there are another 40 staff who hot desk weekly in the HD room and can turn up on mass and another 50 out in the schools that could attend. I feel this is unhealthy in a room which only has the capacity to hold 7 fixed desks. Also I saw no evidence of any air supply or extraction in the offices. This can have an impact on the maximum number of staff because of the lack of air flow which is also impacted by there only being one window in the rooms on the ground floor for ventilation.

## **2<sup>nd</sup> floor**

There only appears to be one escape route from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor offices and they have to walk through a lobby which is now a tea area. I am unable to make a judgment on this but I believe there should be no source of ignition in this area due to there only being one direction of travel. I view from the local fire officer should be ask for on this.

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#### Supporting / Additional information from ERW Executive Board

Executive Board supported the proposal to relocate the ERW Central Team to suitable, safe accommodation. One member suggested that Welsh Government may not be perceived as a suitable landlord.

#### Supporting / Additional Information from ERW Advisory Board

To merge two previous reports into this final format.

