

## FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

### Using Buildings Better

October 2015

#### **Why are we starting this programme?**

We have a large number of premises across the city – not all of which are well-used or appropriate for modern services and the way the council works today. In the digital age, the way that people interact with the council is also changing, with more services available online 24 hours a day. We need to respond to these changes.

We have also experienced massive funding cuts. We need to save money while making sure that we continue to deliver high quality services to the people of Leicester. There is no fixed financial target but this work forms a vital part of the next round of savings the council needs to make from 2015/16 onwards.

#### **What benefits will it bring?**

Investing in fewer, better buildings will not just save money on running costs. It also allows us to deliver efficient, joined-up services which are easier for people to use. At the same time we will reduce our carbon emissions and support the economy by releasing sites for businesses, housing, additional school places or community management. It also allows us to explore opportunities to work more closely with partners in the public and voluntary sectors.

#### **How can you save money without cutting services?**

Under the Transforming Neighbourhoods programme (TNS), we have reorganised libraries, community centres, adult learning and customer services in some areas of the city. By using fewer buildings and bringing different services together under one roof, TNS has achieved savings and led to longer opening hours, greater use, investment in technology and modern facilities, better access for disabled people and an overall improved experience for customers.

After we moved Aylestone Library into the leisure centre, book loans more than doubled and the use of computers quadrupled. See the case studies page for more examples.

#### **Which buildings are involved?**

We will be reviewing approximately 250 operational buildings; council staff are based in about 220 of these. The programme includes depots, stores, community centres, libraries, customer service centres, children's and youth centres, housing offices, adult education centres, administrative buildings, training centres, sport and leisure centres, parks facilities, pre-school settings and buildings that we share with non-council partners.



### **What is not involved?**

This programme will not look at schools, housing stock, our commercial buildings, museums and heritage sites, De Montfort Hall, cemeteries, crematoria or land assets such as parks.

### **What else will the programme involve?**

The way people interact with the council is changing as more services are available online, by phone, through self-service payment machines and so on. Customers find this convenient: it cuts down waiting times as well as reducing costs for us.

To help us rationalise our buildings we will be looking at how people access services and continue to develop online and other options. We are aware that some people will need help to use new equipment and our staff will offer support. As more people take up these options we can devote our resources to deal face to face with those who need it most.

### **How will the programme work?**

To manage a programme of this size, we have broken it down into six separate workstreams: a rationalisation of stores and depots; customer facing buildings (this element is already operating as Transforming Neighbourhood Services); early help services (health and children's); office accommodation; improving customer access by developing more online and self-service options; a disposal programme for surplus buildings.

### **What is the timetable?**

The six workstreams will run at different times. The TNS programme will continue in the north west area in November 2015. Further details will be posted online. The entire programme is scheduled to complete in 2018.

### **How are you going to decide what to do with different buildings?**

Our priority will be to focus on service needs rather than the need to keep specific buildings. We will be investing in some premises and considering options to reuse or dispose of buildings at an early stage.

We are conducting a detailed audit of our estate and will engage in discussions with local communities, staff and partners before drawing up options.

### **How will the programme cut carbon emissions?**

Our carbon emissions will fall as we operate fewer buildings, reduce the number of car journeys and more people access our services online.

### **What does this mean for jobs?**

For our staff, this programme may result in a change of location or their job role. Ultimately it is also likely to lead to reductions in staffing. Alongside the main programme we need to consider the implications for facilities management – for example, security and cleaning.



### **How can I give my views?**

There will be plenty of opportunities to contribute to the process via consultations and local events. These will be publicised locally in our buildings, on our website and via social media. Since the programme has an obvious impact on our staff, we will also be talking to them throughout the process.

### **What about buildings that we share with partners – for example, the NHS?**

We will be looking for opportunities to share premises with partners in the public, voluntary and community sectors – in cases where the benefits are evident and we can achieve this within practical timescales.

You can keep up to date with the programme at [leicester.gov.uk/buildings](http://leicester.gov.uk/buildings)

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