

CASE STUDY – Nottingham City Council

The public sector is driving innovation in the design and management of large commercial estates. And one of the most progressive is Nottingham City Council which has just moved to a new groundbreaking headquarters building with the help of Condeco

Corridors of Power

There was a time, not so long ago, when few people worried too much about the rooms that led off the corridors of power. But the pressure on UK public finances and the subsequent 2010 Public Spending review have politicised the design of the office. The Government wants to save money, and its enormous property portfolio has become an obvious target for savings. In January, the Communities Secretary Eric Pickles announced the results of a long awaited report into the running of the UK's public sector estate. Although there has been an ongoing debate about the best ways to run government property for some time, the new report – 'Leaner and Greener: Delivering Effective Estate Management' - crystallises many of its features and makes fifteen recommendations based on its findings. The ultimate aim of the review is to make savings of around £7billion a year.

In some ways, the new approach will serve mainly to encourage the public sector to catch up with what has been happening in parts of the private sector for some time. The past few years have seen structural changes in the way firms design and manage their workplaces. Mobile technology and new working practices have meant that time is no longer the fixed element that determines the way we use space. It has become a variable and that has changed everything.

But it would be wrong to assume that the public sector is reacting to directives or playing catch up. Many Authorities have been proactive in developing better and more efficient ways of managing their property for some time. Their thinking is innovative by any standards. The results are equally impressive.

One of these organisations is Nottingham City Council which had identified a number of issues with six of its key buildings. With a total floor space of 25,600 m² and housing around 2,300 staff. These assets were core resources for the council and so it was essential that changes were made without disrupting any services.

An initial survey identified some key areas to address. The two most notable findings were that at any one time only half of workstations were occupied and that for 40 per cent of the day, formal meeting rooms remained empty. The ownership of desks had to stop being a matter of right and instead become dependent on need and job function. The number of workstations could then be reduced without any adverse impact on the business. An intensive survey revealed that it would be perfectly feasible to reduce the desk to occupant ratio from 100 per cent to 70 per cent. In other words, there could be 7 desks for every ten people.

Although perfectly feasible in cold mathematical terms, in order to work it required a culture change and the need for staff to embrace the new principles and understand their benefits. The catalyst for these changes was a move to a newly acquired property in the City Centre in 2010. Not only was the move an opportunity to introduce a new working culture in a contemporary work setting, it meant the council could accommodate everybody comfortably in 17,600 m² - a space saving of nearly a third.

Geoffrey Hibbert, Nottingham City Council's Director of Property and Workplace Strategy said that , "Political leadership and commitment were essential components of the project but acquiring a modern new headquarters proved to be the catalyst necessary to accelerate the introduction of a new operating model. There was a very strong business case but it's easy to forget, when looking back over the first year of operation, just how radical the pace and scale of the change has been. New systems, like the Condeco booking solution, increased confidence and helped to maintain business continuity. More than 2,000 colleagues moved to a flexible, adaptable and mobile working environment and in every single case each one of them was at a workstation, up and running by noon on the day of their move. Condeco has helped to prove the concept and manage the workspace in a way that has underpinned the business case and delivered all the planned savings"

The move was managed by the Workplace Strategy Team which carried out an extensive review of partner firms of workspace management solutions in the market and concluded that Condeco's room and desk booking system was the ideal solution to manage 100 meeting rooms, 1,930 workstations, 190 parking bays and all visitors to their new HQ.

Working closely with Nottingham City Council on the new strategy, Condeco supplied a range of products and services including:

- Graphical floor plans for desk booking which can be searched across a number of elements including physical location, workstation features and user needs
- A facility to allow groups of rooms to be managed by a dedicated Resource Booking Team
- A visitor management solution that means all guests and visitors are automatically logged in at reception and passes prepared
- A comprehensive reporting system that can be used to generate a range of management reports including space utilisation and resource costs

As a key element in the new strategy, Condeco will be helping to deliver a range of cost savings and other benefits. Not only will the move mean an overall space saving of 8,000m² and the consolidation of all of the Council's functions into one building, it will also save the Council an estimated £3.9 million a year for the long term based on a range of factors including the more efficient use of space and a reduction in accommodation costs, greater energy efficiency and sustainability, reuse of the divested space.

This is more than just a matter of cutting costs however. The move allowed the Council to develop a new working culture based on teamworking, higher productivity and improved work/life balance for employees. For the Council itself it helps to communicate its identity and confirm its progressive approach to the environment and the wellbeing of employees.

Lee Thomas, the WSP Programme Manager sums it up neatly. 'Within twelve months, we have achieved enormous success including a new corporate HQ building for NCC, new data centre, customer contact centre and new technology to support new ways of working,' he says. 'Before our move to Loxley House, we had a traditional working environment. Now, we have a dynamic and flexible workspace which is capable of meeting the ends of the business, at any given time. Condeco has been crucial in delivering the management information required to support Nottingham City Council's building rationalisation strategy. It has allowed us to determine, interactively, what space is available and to analyse historical data. The system has provided the evidence we needed to identify efficiency savings across the operational estate and to plan the next phase of the workplace strategy with complete confidence.'

- ends-

Notes to editors:

Condeco Limited is a specialist in workspace management and booking solutions. Its award-winning Condeco software is a centralised booking tool for managing meeting rooms, desks and multiple resources through one global, web-based platform. The Condeco solution uniquely combines a 'best in class' room booking system, including hospitality, video conferencing, visitor management and event management, as well as interactive digital room screens to complement the overall management of meetings.

For further information, please contact:

Condeco Limited

T: 020-7001 2055

E: enquiries@condecsoftware.com • URL: www.condecsoftware.com

Nottingham City Council

Geoffrey Hibbert, Director of Property and Workplace Strategy (WSP)

E: geoffrey.hibbert@nottinghamcity.gov.uk

Lee Thomas, WSP Programme Manager

Marshman Projects Ltd

W: 08453712977 • M: 07974769135

E: lee.thomas@marshmanprojects.com • URL: www.marshmanprojects.com