

Audit and Risk Committee – for assurance

Meeting agenda title: Update on Estates, Climate and Environment

Meeting date: 19 June 2023

Time required: 15 minutes

Presenter: Angela Donaldson

Approved by: Angela Donaldson

1. Objective and recommendation

- 1.1. To provide the ARC with assurance regarding the ICO's approach to managing our estates and environmental considerations.
- 1.2. To enable the Chair of the ARC to sign off assurance for the annual report to confirm that adequate monitoring of the condition of the ICO's estate is in place, and that challenges posted by the Global Climate and Ecological Emergency are being considered and managed appropriately.
- 1.3. The ARC is asked to note the actions taken to manage and monitor our estates and our response to tackling environmental issues.

2. Estates Management

2.1 The ICO's estate consists of four properties at our Head Office in Wilmslow along with four regional office locations across the UK. These are:

- Wycliffe House (Wilmslow) – whole building
- Sandfield House (Wilmslow) – three wings
- Kings Court (Wilmslow) – two wings
- Venture House (Wilmslow) – two floors
- Regional Office (Belfast) – 8 workstations (private lease)
- Regional Office (Cardiff) – 10 workstations (private lease)
- Regional Office (Edinburgh) – 10 workstations (Civil Service Hub)
- Regional Office (London) – 24 workstations (Regus serviced accommodation). NB. We are relocating to Riverside House, Southwark Rd, in June 2023.

- 2.2 Following the pandemic, all of our estate is open and functioning and we are currently witnessing a footfall of circa 460 colleagues per week across the Wilmslow campus. Generally, across the whole estate Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays are the busiest days.
- 2.3 Venture House remains unoccupied, and we have provided notice to break the lease at the first available break date which will see us exit this property at the end of 2023/24. This building lease was taken on just prior to the pandemic due to space restrictions, however is surplus to our needs post pandemic due to the increase in hybrid working. Over the course of financial year 2022/2023 we have used the building for conferencing and will continue to promote its use for collaborative working especially where large teams need to get together, whilst we still have this available space.
- 2.4 Our estate across the UK is managed and maintained by the Facilities team both directly and indirectly through a range of service providers. Throughout 2022/23 we have reviewed and benchmarked our estates processes against the UK Government functional standards: Gov Standard 004 Property, and the relevant part of Gov Standard 007 Security (the physical security element) in conjunction with Corporate Assurance colleagues and IT colleagues. The functional standard sets expectations for the management of all government property and is mandatory for government organisations with property responsibilities. The Estates processes have achieved a best rating (72%) as a minimum with most areas achieving a good rating (28%).
- 2.5 The Facilities team experienced two issues of significance throughout 2022/23, both of which related to water damage, with the first issue occurring during the Christmas 2022 closure. During a routine check of the office within the office closure period, a significant water leak was found to have occurred in Wycliffe House. This was caused by a failure of a water connection at the rear of a water boiler and a subsequent failure of a leak detection sensor which should have shut the water off however it failed to do so. The business continuity process was engaged, however there was minimal interruption, in the main due to the time of the year, and prompt actions taken by our internal Facilities team with support from security. Wycliffe House was fully operational and repaired within a week of the incident. Whilst repairs were

progressed, staff were still able to access our office space within our other Wilmslow buildings across this period.

- 2.6 The second incident of flooding has taken place in our Belfast office where we experienced a failure of the under-counter boiler. This was due to the age of the boiler and has since been replaced. Belfast colleagues suffered no business loss due a mix of homeworking and a fast response from service providers both in cleaning and maintenance to isolate the water and replace the faulty unit. There was also no damage to any neighbouring property.
- 2.7 The Wycliffe House water incident in particular reaffirmed that whilst the ICO has a supply chain in place, it could be improved to provide better service resilience and performance. Estates and Procurement colleagues are currently working together to implement a Total Facilities Management (TFM) contract that will see one service provider support the ICO across all elements of Facilities Management delivery (Cleaning, Security and Mechanical and Electrical) enabling the Facilities team to provide a seamless service to all of our colleagues across the UK.
- 2.8 We have undertaken a number of tasks throughout 2022/23 regarding the safety of our day-to-day environment, the air we breathe, the water we drink, the cleanliness of our offices:
- We introduced across the whole estate air purifiers to filter the air in our general office space to improve air quality and help reduce the opportunity for an air borne virus to spread.
 - We also undertook initial environmental checks by an independent organisation in our Wilmslow campus and will roll these out to the other offices in the UK throughout 2023. We undertake six monthly water quality checks and for the first time in 2022/23 we undertook checks on air quality. The water is checked for harmful bacteria and our water management regime is also reviewed. The air quality is checking for indoor air quality against the outside air quality as well as CO2 levels and humidity levels. All of these checks produced positive results. There were some facilities related administration improvement actions arising such as the recording of water temperatures and documenting a communication pathway for all individuals with roles within

the legionella control process, so that it is clearer how the chain of responsibility is structured.

- A general overview of the environmental checks is shared at the Health and Safety Committee and actions are tracked both within Facilities and shared with the committee.
- We have also been continuing with our cleaning audits. In conjunction with our cleaning service provider in Wilmslow we assess the cleanliness of the office space and correct where we have failings and praise our successes. When the TFM service is in place we will undertake the same auditing processes across the UK. We also review the service we receive from HMRC in Edinburgh and are working with both HMRC Facilities team and colleagues based in Edinburgh to provide the best experience for colleagues as possible.

2.9 We have also continued to manage the Estate in compliance with our statutory obligations such as maintaining our emergency lighting and concluding a range of Portable Appliance Tests and ensuring that our lift is inspected and maintained. We have also introduced a permit to work regime that provides further Health and Safety compliance checks before allowing contractors to undertake works on our premises.

2.10 We ensure that our lease management processes adhere to our internal and external governance and approval processes when dealing with renewal, disposal, or new leases. This includes regular engagement with the Government Property Agency, and Cabinet office approvals where relevant, prior to commencement of the legal processes.

2.11 As our estate evolves post pandemic, we have adopted new design principles for the delivery of the new office in London as well as any future refurbishment projects. Our design approach to our office space within each new project will adopt the same principles, to provide an accessible, high quality, modern office that is suitable for external guests for both formal and informal meetings. Our high performance strategy commits us to enabling improvements in productivity and collaboration by having modern, flexible, and accessible office accommodation that includes a range of workspaces with compatible, accessible, and integrated technology. We will achieve this by providing a combination of workspaces for our new ways of working, providing an optimum

blend of traditional workspaces, as well as quiet focus spaces, and a variety of areas for informal touch down working and improved collaboration. New modern offices aim to bring some of the textures and “look and feel” of home working and furnishings into the office as well as having multi use spaces that can be flexed to suit different requirements.

3 Environmental Considerations and climate change

- 3.1. We have made progress in delivering against our sustainability obligations with measurable improvements since prior to the pandemic as set out in this section.
- 3.2. Our total Greenhouse Gas Emissions for 2022/23 are 74% less than they were in the year before the pandemic, with 123 tonnes of CO2 emissions, compared to 474 tonnes in 2019/20. This has been heavily influenced by our move to an electricity tariff which is entirely based on renewable energy sources, as well as less power being consumed in offices as more people work in a hybrid way than before. Additionally, the amount of CO2 created by business travel is much reduced from before the pandemic. New ways of working and greater connectivity have helped to produce a 71% reduction in CO2 emissions from business travel.
- 3.3. These reductions are even greater when considered on the basis of per FTE member of staff. The ICO has grown its staffing cohort in recent years whilst reducing our environmental impact, so on an FTE basis our emissions are 83% lower than in 2019/20.
- 3.4. The amount of water used at the ICO has reduced by 87% in 2022/23 compared to 2019/20. This is largely as a result of the move to greater hybrid working.
- 3.5. The ICO have zero single use plastics, and all of our paper and cardboard are recycled. For general waste, which accounts for 82% of our waste, we do not send any of this to landfill. This was transferred to energy recovery in previous years to lower our emissions. Energy recovery from waste is the conversion of non-recyclable waste materials into usable heat, electricity, for fuel.
- 3.6. Facilities are currently procuring a Total Facilities Management contract via the CCS framework and will onboard the successful bidder by August 2023. The winning bidder will be asked to work with ICO to further drive down our carbon footprint across all areas of energy, water, and waste.

- 3.7. ICO reported our sustainability stats to DSIT on a quarterly basis throughout 2022/23 and these are included in the UK Governments Greater Greening Government report. We will continue to engage with DSIT colleagues throughout 2023/24 and beyond to seek opportunities to benchmark the ICO to similar sized organisations.
- 3.8. The ICO has a Green Group which was reconvened in 2022/23 and comprises the Head of Facilities and Estates, the Facilities Manager, the Health and Safety Manager, Trade Union representatives, and colleagues who have an interest in environmental issues and helping to improve the ICO's environmental performance.
- 3.9. The group monitors key indicators of performance, such as CO2 emissions, water use and power uses, and suggests initiatives that benefit the ICO and the organisation, such as signing up to the Plastic Free Wilmslow initiative.
- 3.10. One of the main goals of the Green Group in 2023/24 is to support the establishment of the ICO's carbon management plan. The Carbon Management plan is a measurable and achievable strategy for reducing greenhouse gas emissions. This will help to focus the ICO's efforts in this area even further, working in partnership with our new TFM provider to obtain more in-depth data to help inform future performance. We will be able to report against this plan and further successes in future reports.

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List of Annexes: None.

Publication decision: This report can be published internally and externally without redaction.

Outcome reached: