

# ESSEX COUNTY COUNCIL

**E**ssex County Council (ECC) is the county council that governs the non-metropolitan county of Essex in England. At the time of the 2011 census it served a population of 1,393,600, which makes it one of the largest local County Council's in the country employing approximately 43,000 staff in a range of jobs.

Essex County Council's Property & Facilities Management services have been outsourced to Mitie Group. Mitie delivers the majority of these services directly, including cleaning, security, systems, catering and grounds maintenance. The contract commenced in October 2011 and became fully operational in April 2012.

Our ground breaking, integrated contract is amongst the largest of this kind in the UK public sector and places ECC in a leading position as an innovator amongst local authorities. Creating and delivering this centralised commissioning model for all aspects of property and facilities management was also an important step in the

wider ECC transformation programme.

Mobile and flexible working was adopted by Essex County Council supported by a Property Transformation programme launched in the summer of 2013.

As the programme rolled out across ECC the working environment changed from individual desks and offices to flexible workspaces, touchdown areas and hot desks.

To facilitate the new way of working traditional furniture needed to be replaced with different types - but this posed the problem of disposing of old furniture, while incurring the cost of procuring new.

## AN INNOVATIVE PARTNERSHIP

ECC was undertaking a property transformation program requiring MFW enablers. Lockers were identified as a key enabler however were an expensive commodity especially when the items they were replacing (pedestals) were attracting a cost for recycle/disposal. From the initial concept suggested by Mitie Collaboration between Mitie service lines (IFM and Waste & Environmental), the ECC property and facilities team worked alongside to develop

the first in class product advising on specification required, through sample prototypes, making suggestions of improvements and details until a final version was agreed. A specialist contractor was identified and also worked with us to develop this final version.

Mitie in partnership with ECC found the solution by embarking upon an innovative furniture re-cycling programme to transform old furniture into fit for purpose, high quality alternatives in a sustainable and



ecologically friendly way.

The sustainability programme promotes a zero to landfill policy, providing a cheaper, greener alternative to buying new furniture without compromising on quality, and eliminates £125 per tonne landfill/incineration charges. Many tables and chairs have been refurbished, re-padded or recovered under this programme.

## TURNING OLD PEDESTALS INTO NEW LOCKERS

Hundreds of surplus personal storage desk pedestals were phased out and replaced by free-standing personal storage lockers.

The unwanted pedestals were collected from offices and taken to a factory where they were stripped down to their individual components. 90% of these – nuts, bolts, draw runners etc. – were re-used in other pieces of furniture. One reformed pedestal is bolted on top of another with shelves inserted to make two individual boxes. Locker doors and digital locks are then fitted to the front to complete the transformation from pedestal to lockers. Banks of lockers are then joined in columns of three or more for an extremely cost effective and attractive re-engineered locker solution that will save approximately £400,000 on the cost of lockers for the whole ECC estate over 3 years.

Benefits of the sustainability programme include:

- 40% savings on purchase of new furniture
- 1100KGs CO<sub>2</sub>e approximate carbon savings by not procuring new furniture and not melting existing furniture
- What produces 1 tonne of CO<sub>2</sub>? (see fig.1)
- Waste is converted to asset and landfill is virtually eliminated
- Elimination of £125 per tonne landfill/incineration charges which would have amounted to £26.5k for the 1374 pedestals re-engineered to date



An example of these innovative and roomy lockers in County Hall



## EMPLOYEE ENGAGEMENT

Throughout the various phases of property transformation, employee engagement has been pivotal to embrace the workspace redesign and new way of working in a mobile and flexible environment. ECC employee channels such as the intranet and weekly e mail newsletters, with a question and answers type format as set out below, with a demonstration model office environment, ensured employees were engaged throughout the transition. The property and facilities office was an early adopter of the new furniture incorporating flexible and mobile working and hot-desking, offering drop in visits, fact sheets and a labelling system to allow employees to experience what their new environment would look and feel like.

## SAVING MONEY, SAVING CARBON

### Q. What are the financial savings?

A. 40% savings generally: approximate savings of £400,000 relating to the lockers for the whole ECC estate over 3 years.

### Q. What are the approximate savings with regard to tonnage and recycling rates?

A. Currently we estimate around 4.8 tonnes have been recycled and we are re-manufacturing for re-use around 1.5 tonnes of items. Without this opportunity unwanted furniture would have been donated to charity, or taken to landfill.

### Q. Do you have an estimate of the carbon saved?

A. We estimate we have saved around 1100KGs CO<sub>2</sub>e

## SUPPLY CHAIN

### Q. What manufacturers do we use - are we aiming to only use local manufacturing?

A. We are using existing ECC storage facilities as our main furniture warehouse, employing and utilising Essex porters, installers and haulage wherever possible.

Whilst the manufacturing work is currently carried out by a company in Liverpool, this provides economies of scale; however we are looking to source work from local companies if the economies of scale are delivered

## FURNITURE RE-ENGINEERING

### Q. How do we reuse the components?

A. Elements of the old furniture are stripped down to assess what is reusable. For example, the leg frames of desks are retained but the work surface is cut down and re-engineered to form part of a rectangular bench system, ECC standard workstation or meeting table. Excess wood is sent off to turn into agricultural farm bedding then elements of it are ploughed back into the land after use or used in bio mass wood burners.

With a task chair we keep the axle, the frame and all mechanics and change the outer body shell and suspension. We remove the existing fabric and foam which is 100% recycled.

### Q. How long is the production cycle generally?

A. Lockers approximately five weeks from existing location to new set-up.

Chairs take around two to four weeks but we are looking to create a "Furniture Store" where we fill the store every four weeks so that ECC can remove stock the same day from stores to office if needed.

### Q. What is the warranty?

A. The warranty is exactly the same as buying new.

### Q. Do you have a list of available items?

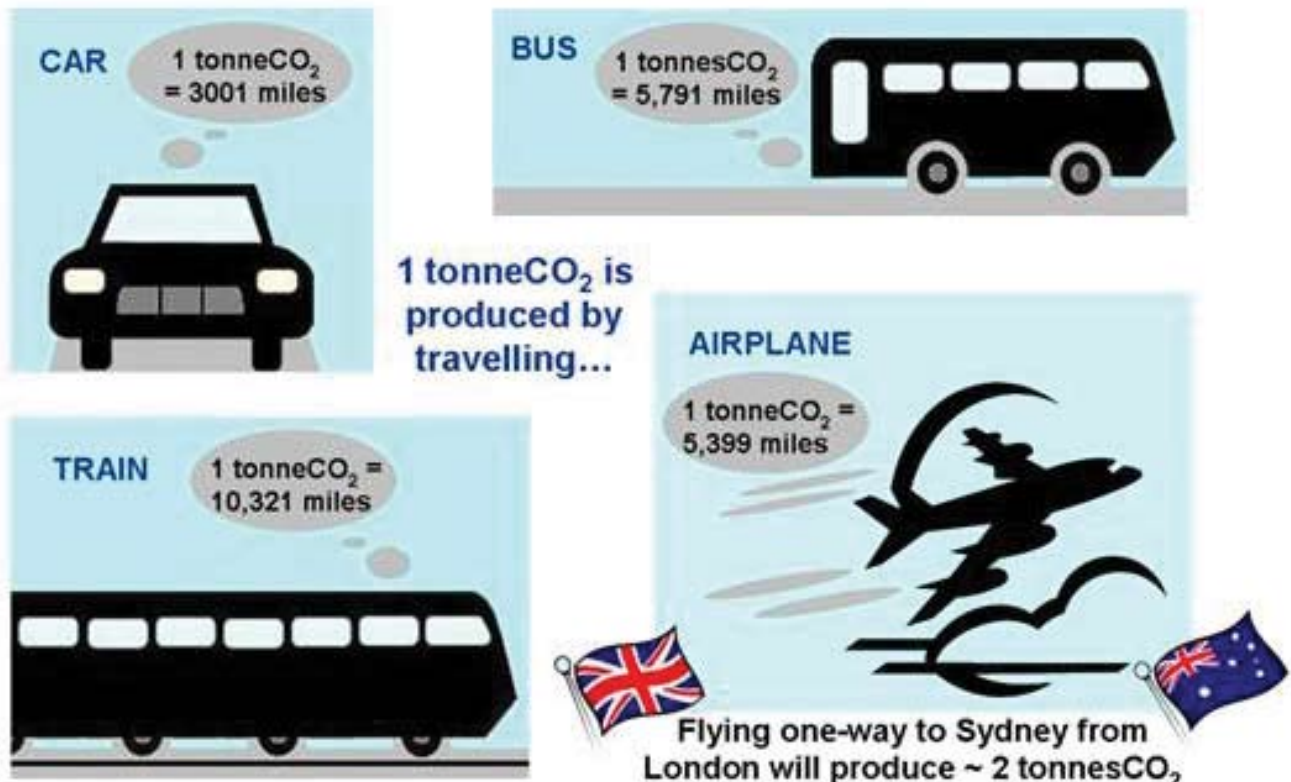
- Operating chairs without arms
- Meeting room chairs
- Meeting tables
- Coffee tables
- Media hub high level tables
- Personal storage lockers

### Q Do we aim to recycle anything else?

A. We aim to minimise the procurement of new furniture as much as possible and will continue to look for additional items that can be recycled rather than procured as new.

### Q. How many items of furniture have gone through this process across how many buildings?

A. We have processed over 400 items so far across two sites re-engineering over 1,200 pedestals



(Fig 1. Data from Defra NI 185 tool)