

From: Eric Hotson, Cabinet Member for Strategic and Corporate Services  
Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee – 20<sup>th</sup> November 2018

Subject: Asset Management - Sessions House

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of Paper: this is the first committee to consider this report

Future Pathway of Paper: N/A

**Summary:**

Kent County Council, through its New Ways of Working strategy, has already reduced its office portfolio from 27 office buildings in 2012 to 14 office buildings in 2017. As a result, the Council has saved £4.5 million annual revenue savings and realised £20.4 million benefits (NPV terms). This programme has now come to an end.

Work has started to review the current office portfolio with a view to ensuring that this remains aligned with the Council's ongoing requirements, and in particular as staff embrace and utilise new technology, mobility is increasing and the way we work is changing across the Council's staff base.

This paper considers Sessions House within the context of the current office review.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

1. Note the current position and achievements following the implementation of the New Ways of Working Programme.
2. Note the next steps as we revisit the office portfolio.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 The New Ways of Working Programme (2012-2017) delivered the following:

- Reduction in office estate
- Reduction in workstations
- Increased utilisation
- Significant capital property investment
- Capital receipts delivered
- Annual revenue savings
- Benefits in NPV terms
- Implemented a new technology strategy increasing mobile capacity and new capabilities through Microsoft enterprise suite and office tools such as Skype for business

1.2 Invicta House formed part of the New Ways of Working Programme but Sessions House was omitted, in order that the funds could be redirected to improving the district offices.

1.3 The next phase of New Ways of Working is to review our office strategy, including the Head Office estate.

1.4 To develop our property strategy to the next stage there are a number of key steps we need to take to ensure that supply and demand are aligned:

1.4.1 Engage via the business change group on the future shape of the organisation in 5, 10 and 15 years and what are the key drivers for change and what our future organisational shape will be.

1.4.2 Overlay the demand profile against the office supply with a view to optimising space and releasing surplus space to generate income or a capital receipt

1.4.3 Commence review of the optimisation options for SHQ and establish the project objectives and key success criteria

1.4.4 Establish a Member working group to consider the Member accommodation requirements in the future

1.5 Sessions House is the County Council's main Headquarters building, which together with Invicta House and Cantium House, located on 'Sessions Square' form the corporate centre of Kent County Council and the 'SHQ campus'. Sessions House is the highest costing building in the portfolio.

1.6 Sessions House is a Grade II Listed Building of brick and stone construction and is connected to the prison wall. The building is built in a traditional manner with many internal structural walls and largely cellular in nature

## **2. History & Context**

2.1 Sessions House is dominated by the neo-Baroque facade built 1910-1913, with further wings added in the 1930's. Behind the front façade facing onto an internal courtyard is the original Sessions House, designed by Sir Robert Smirke (architect of the British Museum) and dating from 1824-7.

- 2.2 The building is named because it was the original ‘Sessions House’, where the courts were located, and prisoners were ‘sent down’ the underground passage to Maidstone Prison, located immediately behind the building. The original prison building was based on a typical symmetrical prison design of the time, built a decade earlier.
- 2.3 Sessions House is a Grade II Listed Building, specifically The Old Sessions House façade and internally the stone staircase and balustrade. The building is of brick and stone construction and is connected to the prison wall at the end of the east wing, and in three locations along the rear elevation.
- 2.4 Sessions House provides the office accommodation for c.1100 staff working in the building, and the political centre for the County Council with Member accommodation, Council Chamber and ancillary accommodation. There is an access road and small car parking areas to the rear. The building is zoned into a number of different areas.
- 2.5 The building is managed under the TFM contract, by Amey who manage reception, facilities, room bookings, post etc.

**3. Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- 1. Note the current position and achievements following the implementation of the New Ways of Working Programme.
- 2. Note the next steps as we revisit the office portfolio.

**4. Background Documents**

4.1 None.

**5. Contact details**

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