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Date: 19.11.25

Dear Member

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE - TUESDAY, 25 NOVEMBER 2025

The Chair has agreed the inclusion of this urgent item on the agenda for the Scrutiny Committee next Tuesday 25 November, which was not available when the agenda was published. I enclose the relevant reports for consideration at that meeting.

Agenda Item No

B1 **Call-in of 25/00057 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters (SHQ) (Pages 1 - 210)**

Yours sincerely

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive

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By: Anna Taylor, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny)

To: Scrutiny Committee, 25 November 2025

Subject: **Call-in of 25/00057 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters (SHQ)**

Summary: This decision, taken on 3 November 2025, has been called-in to the Scrutiny Committee by Mr Antony Hook, Mr Alister Brady and Mr Stuart Jeffery.

Background

1. Decision 25/00057 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters (SHQ) was considered by the [Agenda for Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on Wednesday, 10th September, 2025, 10.00 am](#) prior to the decision being taken by the Deputy Leader on 3 November 2025.
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Mr Hook (Lib Dem Group), Mr Brady (Labour Group) and Mr Jeffery (Green Group), thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political groups.
3. Call-in powers are held by the Scrutiny Committee in accordance with the Local Government Act 2000. These are intended, under the legislation, to provide an opportunity for non-Executive Members to scrutinise significant decisions, where the call-in criteria are met, before they are implemented and to recommend reconsideration if deemed appropriate by the Committee.
4. The call-in was duly assessed by Democratic Services, including a review of the reasons given by those Members calling in the decision and an investigation into whether any issues raised in the call-in were adequately addressed by the decision paperwork, committee reports, responses to written questions or committee debate. The results of this review were considered by the Democratic Services Manager and the call-in was determined to be valid under the call-in arrangements set out in the Constitution. Call-in reasons must be clear, correct and align to one or more of the following criteria under s17.67 of the Constitution:

Members can call-in a decision for one or more of the following reasons:

- (a) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework,
- (b) The decision is not in accordance with the Council's Budget,
- (c) The decision was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision making set out in 8.5, and/or
- (d) The decision was not taken in accordance with the arrangements set out in Section 12.

5. The full call-in request is set out in Appendix A, submitted by Mr Hook, Mr Brady and Mr Jeffery. Various elements of the call-in did not meet the criteria – this recognises that the decision documentation is extensive and to a significant degree, effectively outlines the risks and key considerations, thus evidence proper consideration by the decision-maker. In addition, discussion of the proposals at Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 10 September 2025 allowed for the exploration of many of the points raised in the call-in. However, while not all aspects of the call-in were considered valid, particular points or themes set out within the call-in did meet the criteria. These are summarised below:
 - (a) The management of the in-year budget pressure arising from abortive costs and related implications of ceasing the Invicta move and Sessions sale.
 - (b) The arguably limited articulation of how the decision meets KCC's Best Value duty, recognising that while reasons for the decision are given, these involve the selection of a lower scoring option (based on the detailed assessments and option ranking) which involves increased long term expenditure (albeit mitigated to a degree) and carries with it a range of risks which are flagged as involving the potential for significant future capital requirements.
6. The above points relate to Reason 1 – Budget Compliance and Decision-making principles (due consultation and taking officer advice) as set out in Appendix A.

Process

7. In determining the validity of any call-in, no judgement is made by Democratic Services as to whether the decision itself is flawed, inappropriate or invalid. Similarly, where some individual reasons submitted for an overall valid call-in are not assessed as valid, this does not mean they merit no consideration as part of any subsequent call-in meeting. Paragraph 5 of this report does not indicate endorsement of or agreement with the challenges made in the call-in – this report only confirms that the points set out in the call-in are relevant and valid and that there remain elements that merit further consideration or clarification. In accordance with the call-in arrangements, it is therefore for Members, via the Scrutiny Committee, to determine whether any reconsideration of the decision is necessary and appropriate.
8. The Cabinet Member, or nominated representative, and relevant Officers will attend the Scrutiny Committee to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
9. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation available and the response from the Executive given at the meeting, giving due regard to the information made available during questioning and discussion on this item. For reference, the decision under consideration has been duly taken – call-in prevents implementation but does not reset or cancel the taking of the original decision.
10. The Scrutiny Committee has a range of options in terms of responding to the call-in. The specific options are set out in the Recommendation section of this report.

It will be for members of the Committee, having debated and reviewed the decision, to propose and second an appropriate resolution from that list of options.

11. It is important to confirm that the Scrutiny Committee has no power to override or prevent the decision being progressed – it may formally resolve comments which about the decision or the manner in which it was taken. These provide a public record of suggestions for improvement or criticisms of an approach to support learning and avoiding of prior mistakes in the future. If significant concerns about the decision-making remain after consideration by the Committee, it may refer the decision for reconsideration by the Decision-maker. This continues the delay of implementation until after the decision-maker has reconsidered – the decision-maker may choose to confirm their decision and move to implementation if they so wish.
12. The Committee also has the option to refer the decision to Full Council, however, this is designed for responding to only the most extreme cases where there is a significant risk of improper decision-making, financial non-compliance or departure from the Strategic Statement without reasonable justification. It should also be highlighted that Full Council does not have authority to override or take Executive decisions – the County Council will have only the same power as the Scrutiny Committee; to refer the decision back to the decision-maker for reconsideration.
13. The decision papers remain available online here: [Decision - 25/00057 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters \(SHQ\)](#) but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Recommendation – Options for the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee may:

- a) make no comments
 - b) express comments but not require reconsideration of the decision
 - c) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending reconsideration of the matter by the decision-maker in light of the Committee's comments; or
 - d) require implementation of the decision to be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.
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Appendices

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Mr Antony Hook, Mr Alister Brady and Mr Stuart Jeffery.

- b) 25-00057 - Record of Decision
- c) 25-00057 - Decision Report
- d) 25-00057 - Appendix A - Mini Business Case (redacted version)
- e) Exempt annexes and appendices
- f) 25-00057 - Appendix E – EqIA

Background documents

- a) [Agenda for Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on Wednesday, 10th September, 2025, 10.00 am](#)

Contact Details

Anna Taylor, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Scrutiny)
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Call-in Request for Executive Decision 25/00057 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters (SHQ)

Call-in request submitted by: Mr Antony Hook, Mr Alister Brady and Mr Stuart Jeffery.

Reasons for calling in the decision:

Reason one: The decision is not in line with the Council's Budget and was not taken in accordance with the principles of decision-making set out in 8.5 - Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers.

Although this decision would reduce the capital investment budget by removing the refurbishment works planned at Invicta House which are valued at £14.3m, this decision would not deliver a long-term saving and arguably would not meet the Council's Best Value obligations. Instead, this decision would contradict previous Officer advice and place additional strain on the county's budget which already has to make difficult decisions to support the statutory services the Council provides.

The 2025-2026 agreed budget highlights within its risk register that a 'sub optimal solution for the Council's strategic headquarters would have the following consequences: *inability to address all backlog issues increases, the risk of cost overruns and potential need for higher future maintenance, running and holding costs*. This risk register was informed by the advice of KCC Officers and featured in a budget approved by KCC's Section 151 Officer. It is highly unlikely that this advice is no longer relevant and that these risks to the Council's budget are no longer present. Delaying the decision that was made in December 2024 to sell Sessions House and consolidate into Invicta House, would only escalate and materialise these Officer highlighted risks and the associated consequences.

Within the exempt papers presented at Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee in September 2025, it is noted that to complete the red and amber works previously identified for Blocks A, C & D of Sessions House, the cost would total £20m. This figure not only discounts any additional works required to make Block B within Sessions House safe and usable for staff but assumes that the previously identified red and amber works have not worsened since the evaluation. However, even with the investment of c.£20m, Sessions House will still not necessarily be fit to serve as a functioning modern office environment. This same paper, written by KCC Officers, states as a further challenge that the full scheme refurbishment of Sessions House has previously been evaluated at £67m.

In addition to the refurbishment costs, the administration must also consider the annual running costs of the buildings which are estimated to be between £2.3-2.6m for Sessions House and £1.0-1.1m for Invicta House, both of which will continue, but with Invicta House's running costs representing a budget saving in the long-term. The building of

Sessions House is also not currently fully accessible for staff or visitors, and whilst a detailed scope has not yet been defined, it is anticipated that the additional costs to make Session's House accessible would exceed £2.5m. Not only do the administration not fully demonstrate that they have considered these additional costs and their impact, the abortive costs of this plan are stated in the decision report as being estimated at £956k which the current 2025-26 budget will have to fund but does not currently account for. Furthermore, the wasted costs such as those associated with the temporary repairs and the decanting of Invicta House need to be detailed to and clarified for Members as these represent additional financial strains to KCC's budget.

In comparison to this, in November 2024 the estimated total project cost to retain and consolidate into Invicta House was £18.27m (including the previously referenced £14.3m), with an additional annual revenue saving of £1.67m at the point of completion of all works and consolidation into Invicta House. It is evident based on these figures alone, that it is not financially prudent for KCC to agree to withdraw from the plan to sell Sessions House. It appears to Members that the administration is currently disregarding the advice and financial figures provided by KCC Finance and Infrastructure Officers over multiple years which support the initial proposal to sell Sessions House, in favour of a decision that has been pre-emptively made at a long-term cost to KCC's budget.

Reason two: Respect for human rights in all its forms.

KCC has a statutory obligation to provide working conditions that are adequate for KCC Officers and meet the accessibility needs of those for whom mobility is an issue. The EQIA for this decision clearly highlights the negative impact this decision will have on KCC staff members that have a disability and/or accessibility requirements as the building is currently unfit to meet these needs. This decision highlights the historic nature of the building as being a strength, when in reality it is a hindrance to the usability of the building by staff with a mobility issue. One example of the challenges for mobility presented by Sessions House, focuses on the lifts. The existing lifts are non-compliant with wheelchair sizes and the existing lift shafts cannot accommodate an increase in lift cart sizes to align with current standards. In addition to this, the lifts are temperamental, and staff often experience periods of the lifts being out of action. The current mitigations outlined of increased signs and capacity of other office buildings do nothing to address this or any of the other fundamental accessibility issues Sessions House presents to staff and visitors.

Furthermore, not only has the lack of accessibility of Sessions House been identified by this decision's own EQIA, but KCC's disability staff group Level Playing Field have raised a number of concerns regarding the same issue. These concerns have been raised based on the lived experience of Kent County Council's own staff, and by continuing to retain

Sessions House the administration is clearly disregarding these concerns and not adequately respecting or addressing the needs of all KCC staff and visitors.

Desired outcome of this call-in:

We request that the Scrutiny Committee recommends that the implementation of the decision be postponed pending review or scrutiny of the matter by the full Council.

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00057

For publication *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000).*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision:

Property Accommodation Strategy – Strategic Headquarters (SHQ)

Decision:

The Deputy Leader to agree to:

1. **AGREE** to discontinue with the Preferred Option as set out decision 24/00100;
2. Given the proposed Local Government Reorganisation timetable indicated by Government **CONFIRM** Sessions House will continue to be the strategic headquarters for KCC for the remaining life of the Authority;
3. **ALLOCATE** £4m from the 2025-34 approved capital budget to enable the essential and urgent backlog maintenance works at Sessions House to be completed;
4. **WITHDRAW** from the sale of Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park with immediate effect;
5. **DISPOSE** of Invicta House and the associated car park as soon as practical to reduce holding costs and liabilities for the Council;
6. **REALIGN** the capital and revenue budget as required to enable the above to be implemented; and
7. **DELEGATE** authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader to authorise the execution of necessary contractual and land agreements required to implement the above.

Reason(s) for decision:

Following a change in administration and confirmation of the indicative Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) timetable, the Administration has reconsidered the current property strategy relating to KCC Strategic Headquarters (SHQ).

The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill sets out the Government's intention in more detail which will see the abolition of two-tier government by April 2028. Whilst no directions have specifically been made in respect of Kent, based on the current timeline. KCC would be replaced by its successor organisation in April 2028.

The revised strategic drivers of LGR time frames were identified by the new administration in July 2025:

1. Reduce capital borrowing requirements in the short term
2. Keep Sessions House heritage legacy for a future administration
3. Ensure future flexibility to increase office estate capacity
4. Meet minimum legal obligations for warm, safe & dry and heritage conservation

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Reports on the extant Key Decision (24/00100) were taken to the following Committees:

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 11th September 2020
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 6th November 2020
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 13th July 2021
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 24th March 2022
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 23rd November 2022
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 26th July 2023
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 27th November 2024

The Proposed Key Decision 25/00057 was discussed by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 10 September 2025, where the proposed decision was ENDORSED.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

A number of alternatives were considered which are set out in the Policy Resources committee reports from July 2023 and November 2024 that included consideration of a number of options.

The following options were considered and rejected:

1. **Option 1 - Current Option (2024 Key Decision)** – Progress as planned with the current 2024 Key Decision option to enhance the utilisation of Invicta House and Dispose of Sessions House and the Albert Street Car Park.
2. **Option 2a - Retain some presence in Sessions with all Red and Amber backlog works undertaken** – Retain Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park with limited compliance & condition works (Red & Amber Only) and dispose of Invicta House + Car Park
3. **Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House** and Albert Street Car Park (with deferred completion arrangement up to April 2028 as per terms agreed) and **disposal of Invicta House and car park** (with short term leaseback of parking only until 2028)
4. **Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House** with limited compliance & condition works (Red & Amber Only)

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer: None



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signed

3 November 2025

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date

From: Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Subject: Property Accommodation Strategy – Strategic Headquarters (SHQ)

Decision no: 25/00057

Key decision Yes - The delivery of the strategy is likely to involve expenditure / savings in excess of £1m.

Classification: Unrestricted Report with Exempt Appendix A, B, D – *not for publication. Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972, as amended, refers.*

Past Pathway of report:

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 11 September 2020
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 6 November 2020
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 13 July 2021
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 24 March 2022
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 23 November 2022
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 26 July 2023
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 27 November 2024
Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 10 September 2025

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member decision.

Electoral Division: All

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

In light of the further detail now known about the potential for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and a desire to find savings in the immediate term, the new administration wish to reconsider the previous decision taken on 27th November 2024 (24/00100).

Following that instruction, this paper provides an update on the work carried out following the previous decision and considers other options that would see the retention of Sessions House rather than Invicta House. The reports set out the assessment of each and the proposed decision of the Deputy Leader.

Recommendations:

The Deputy Leader is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations on the proposed decision to:

1. **AGREE** to discontinue with the Preferred Option as set out decision 24/00100;

2. Given the proposed Local Government Reorganisation timetable indicated by Government, **CONFIRM** Sessions House will continue to be the strategic headquarters for KCC for the remaining life of the Authority;
 3. **ALLOCATE** £4m from the 2025-34 approved capital budget to enable the essential and urgent backlog maintenance works at Sessions House to be completed
 4. **WITHDRAW** from the sale of Sessions House and Albert Street car park with immediate effect;
 5. **DISPOSE** of Invicta House and the associated car park as soon as practical to reduce holding costs and liabilities for the Council;
 6. **REALIGN** the capital and revenue budget as required to enable the above to be implemented; and
 7. **DELEGATE** authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to authorise the execution of necessary contractual and land agreements required to implement the above.
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee since 2020 have considered a number of options and business cases that have set out a range of factors that have evolved and changed over time including the financial position and accommodation requirements.
- 1.2 The previous reports to the Policy and Resources Committee as referenced above set out the historical considerations and the last decision that was taken on the 27 November 2024 to progress with the disposal of Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park and to invest in Invicta House and relocate/consolidate all activity into Invicta House which would become KCC's SHQ accommodation. The decision made provision for future arrangements to secure Council Chamber facilities, subject to additional capital funding being made available at the relevant time.
- 1.3 Following the decision, WW Martin were appointed to develop design proposals for Invicta House. This work has since been concluded, with the next step to enter into a works contract for implementation of the works (intended for September 2025).
- 1.4 The disposal activities associated with Sessions House have since continued in line and subsequent draft Heads of Terms agreed in early 2025 with the preferred bidder. The preferred bidder is an established and award-winning family run developer specialising in listed building conversions are seeking to develop Block A for residential, parts of C for residential, D for event space and B for residential or co-working. The offer was conditional on title, MOJ consents and planning considerations being satisfied. This included a deferred completion to 2028 enabling Sessions House to be retained for temporary decant use until Invicta House works were complete. Further detail on the disposal of Sessions House can be found in the Exempt Appendix A and in Appendix B.

- 1.5 The decant of staff and services into Sessions House (A Block) from Invicta House on a like for like basis for this period is complete. It should be noted that further works would be required to Sessions House for an extended period of occupation.
- 1.6 During this period, the timetable for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) has been developing. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill sets out the Government's intention in more detail and will see the abolition of two-tier government by April 2028. Whilst no directions have specifically been made in respect of Kent, based on the current timeline, KCC would be replaced by its successor organisation in April 2028.

2. Mini Business Case Update (August 2025)

- 2.1 A review and update of the mini business case prepared in August 2025.
- 2.2 The revised strategic drivers of LGR and its time frames identified by the new administration in July 2025 are as follows:
 - A. Reduce capital borrowing requirements in the short term
 - B. Keep Sessions House legacy for future administration
 - C. Ensure future flexibility to increase office estate capacity
 - D. Meet minimum legal obligations for warm, safe & dry and heritage conservation
- 2.3 As a result of the revised strategic drivers, the following four options were identified:

Option 1 - Current Option (Previous administration preferred option) – Progress as planned with the current 2024 Key Decision option to enhance the utilisation of Invicta House and Disposal of Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park.

Option 2 - Retain some presence in Sessions – Retain Sessions House with limited compliance & condition works which have been assessed in the Bidwell's building condition survey as those that are urgent or likely to become urgent in the next few years (Red & Amber Only) and dispose of Invicta House and its associated Car Park. Within this option it should be noted that two level of expenditure have been modelled. 2a relates to all the Red and Amber items being completed and option 2b based on the red items only.

Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House (with deferred completion arrangement up to April 2028 as per terms agreed) and **disposal of Invicta House and Car Park** (with short term leaseback of parking only, not accommodation)

Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House with limited compliance & condition works (Red & Amber Only)

- 2.4 Refer to Exempt Appendix A for the mini business case update paper which sets out in more detail the considerations surrounding the above options.

3 Qualitative/ Financial Assessment Criteria for Business Case

- 3.1 As part of the main business case developed in 2023, a series of qualitative scoring criteria was identified, to rank the impact and delivery risk of each option.
- 3.2 Whilst the key project drivers have changed since the 2023 business case, several of the key criteria remain relevant.
- 3.3 The evaluation criteria have been reviewed and updated to reflect the options being considered within this mini business case along with the financial assessment of each option. Further detail is set out in the Exempt Appendix A.
- 3.4 All options passed the pass/ fail criteria with no options being discounted at that stage. The qualitative assessments rank the options as follows:

	Option 1 - Current Option (Previous administration preferred option)	Option 2 - Retain Sessions & Dispose of Invicta	Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House and disposal of Invicta House and car park	Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House
Score	65%	62%	40%	39%
Rank	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	4 th

- 3.5 The financial scoring sets out the revenue and capital assessment of each option as follows:

3.5.1 Revenue position against MTFP assumption once Invicta House is sold.

	Option 1 - Current Option (Previous administration preferred option)	Option 2a - Retain Sessions & Dispose of Invicta (All Red and Amber backlog items completed)	Option 2b - Retain Sessions & Dispose of Invicta (Min capital investment)	Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House and disposal of Invicta House and car park	Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House
Revenue Variance against the current scheme after the sale of Invicta	0	£1,526,548	£295,510	£295,510	£1,341,668
Rank based on lowest	1 st	5 th	Joint 2 nd	Joint 2 nd	4 th

revenue costs					
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3.5.2 Short Term Capital position against MTFP assumptions.

	Option 1 - Current Option (Previous administration preferred option)	Option 2a - Retain Sessions & Dispose of Invicta (All Red and Amber backlog items completed)	Option 2b - Retain Sessions & Dispose of Invicta (Min capital investment)	Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House and disposal of Invicta House and car park	Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House
Net Capital Expenditure	£16,160,000	£20,402,586	£3,946,605	£5,636,000	£25,340,000 - £5,636,000
Rank based on lowest short-term capital expenditure	3 rd	4 th	1 st	2 nd	5 th

4 The Selected Option

- 4.1 After reviewing the options provided in Exempt Appendix A, considering the government's LGR timetable, evaluating the risks detailed in the exempt appendix B, and the importance of reducing capital expenditure, it is considered that the best option for KCC, is to discontinue the current option and proceed with an alternative that requires minimal capital investment. Sessions House would remain as the strategic headquarters for KCC until LGR occurs in Kent in 2028.
- 4.2 This option offers the lowest capital cost, saving the Council up to £12m in capital expenditure. While it introduces a revenue pressure, it allows future authorities flexibility to decide on Sessions House and any related capital spending.
- 4.3 The qualitative appraisal and business case identified several limitations associated with Sessions House. Previously, it was intended that Sessions House would serve as temporary accommodation until Invicta House was completed. These relocations are now complete, along with statutory compliance and case conferencing works.
- 4.4 The selected option permits minimal further capital expenditure; however, there remains a risk of building failure, which could, depending on the circumstances, exceed available budgets and result in operational disruption. In such an event, the situation would need to be reviewed at the time, with either additional capital allocated, or use alternative accommodation within the estate along with increased home working.
- 4.5 Under the chosen option, some accessibility limitations will persist, although these have been mitigated as much as possible given current financial and building

constraints. Further management actions will be required where physical constraints cannot be overcome.

- 4.6 The option of the sale of both Invicta and Sessions is financially attractive in the short term. given the challenging LGR timetable, there is a significant risk should LGR not happen in Kent, or it is delayed. Under the chosen option, Invicta House could be sold quickly to reduce costs and liabilities for KCC and any successor authority. Retaining both Sessions House and Invicta House may offer additional flexibility but results in unsustainable revenue demands for the Council. Sessions House Block A provides the same number of desks as Invicta House, with parts of Sessions House remaining unoccupied.
- 4.7 While the Sessions House disposal presented several complex encumbrances, Invicta House is a modern building with no listing issues, simpler planning consent, and clear title. Switching the disposal focus to Invicta House would likely result in a quicker, less complicated sale, eliminating holding costs and necessary capital works, while providing a capital receipt that could partially offset ongoing essential work at Sessions House during KCC's occupation.
- 4.8 As a result of the proposed changes there will be some abortive costs, the extent of which will depend on how much of the current Invicta House material can be reused as part of any sale. Estimated abortive costs are £946k which will need to be funded as part of the 2025-26 revenue budget.

5 Risks

5.1 Key risks in relation to the selected option are set out below:

Risk Type	Impact	Mitigation Options	Assessment
Bidder appetite with the sale of Invicta House	Reduced capital receipt	Marketing information has been sought with a high degree of confidence that Invicta House is an attractive disposal	Low
Risk of critical building failure	Costs exceed those allowed for in the budget.	Consideration will need to be given at the time as to whether additional capital funding should be allocated or whether a building closure is necessary. In the event of a building closure alternative accommodation with KCC estate would need to be utilised with additional working from home. Alternative hiring arrangements would be needed for the provision of formal County Council meetings, in particular Full Council.	High
Building limitations	Accessibility constraints	All staff are able to utilise offices across the estate with accessibility guides published to help staff and visitors.	Medium

		Spares and common parts kept on site for lifts at sessions house to enable a swift repair. Improvements are being made to sessions house where possible within financial and building constraints.	
Revenue and capital assumptions not met	Increased budget pressure	Financial assessment has been updated using the data available Regular monitoring	Low

6 Financial Implications

6.1 As set out above the proposed decision will have implications on both the capital and revenue assumptions that are presenting associated to the accommodation at SHQ. This will include:

- 6.1.1 Generating a capital receipt associated with the sale of Invicta House which will be reinvested back into the Councils Programme and the removal of holding costs (£607,000 per annum) associated with the site. The Exempt Appendix A sets out the assumptions regarding the sale of Invicta House. Any delay in the disposal of Invicta House will create a pressure in the Councils revenue budget or delay any capital receipt.
- 6.1.2 The reprofiling of the envisaged capital expenditure associated with the delivery of the accommodation levels with £4million allocated from the existing budget to support the minimum levels of works identified by the condition surveys and a reduction of £12 million of capital borrowing and associated borrowing costs.
- 6.1.3 Realignment of the revenue budget to support the running costs associated with Sessions House, the reduction in borrowing costs and operating costs associated with Invicta House and any abortive costs. As set out in section 3.4 this is estimated to create a revenue pressure of £0.3m which will be considered as part of the budget setting process for future years. The exempt business case sets out the forecast spend. The abortive costs will be an in-year pressure in the current financial year.

7 Equalities and Data Protection Implications

- 7.1 An Equalities Impact assessment (EQIA) has been completed and submitted in support of the report.
- 7.2 A Data Protection impact assessment (DPIA) has also been completed and submitted in support of the report.

8 Other corporate implications

- 8.1 SHQ and its future direction is a key strand of the office strategy as part of the SRP and the delivery of the MTFP savings.

9 Governance and Corporate Assurance

- 9.1 The proposal represents a substantive shift in policy from the existing Key Decision taken by the previous Administration. A Key Decision is therefore being proposed in line with the constitution and the Council's governance processes.
- 9.2 The Proposed Decision 25/00057 was discussed at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 10 September 2025, where the proposed decision was ENDORSED, following a vote. Committee Members were given the opportunity to make comments or recommendations on the key strategic proposals set out in the report.
- 9.3 As a County-wide decision, the proposals affect all divisions of the Council. Previous consultation and discussions have taken place at multiple meetings of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.
- 9.4 Delegated authority is to be given to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise any works over £1m that are required and the terms of any disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement a decision to affect a disposal.
- 9.5 The Government has announced plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), aiming to abolish two-tier government by 2028. At present, KCC has not received specific guidance from Central Government about how LGR will be implemented in Kent and Medway; further details are expected between May and August 2026. Until directed otherwise, KCC remains responsible for making decisions in the best interests of Kent taxpayers and disposing of assets it no longer requires.
- 9.6 When the exchange of contracts is approaching, the Director of Infrastructure will consider all relevant factors, including financial considerations, any pending LGR decisions, and applicable legislation before finalising any contract agreements.

10 Staff and stakeholder communications

- 10.1 Many staff retain an interest in the futures of both Sessions House and Invicta House from a historic and a work-related/employment-based point of view. The need for ongoing engagement with staff and stakeholders remains to keep them informed of future decision-making processes and changes.
- 10.2 The decant into Block A at Sessions House has now completed. There have been regular communications with staff and new building pages have been published to staff along with familiarisation tours.

11 Conclusion

- 11.1 The capital budget for the project was reduced to £20m in October 2022 and agreed by full Council in February 2023. Following the key decision in September 2023 a further marketing exercise for the sale of Sessions House was undertaken which is set out in the Exempt Appendix A.
- 11.2 Following this marketing exercise, bids were only received for the disposal of the whole of Sessions House. A preferred bidder was appointed, and this engagement continues. Disposal risk as set out in Exempt Appendix B remains, particularly as KCC works through the encumbrance matters with the prospective purchaser and stakeholders.
- 11.3 The decant and transfer of desks from Invicta House to Sessions House is complete, in accordance with KCC's HQ Strategy to refurbish Invicta House and eventually dispose of Sessions House.
- 11.4 Due to ongoing sale issues with Sessions, future local government changes with LGR and the need to reduce capital costs and reduce borrowing, the HQ Strategy has been reviewed.
- 11.5 While acknowledging the risks, it is proposed to realign KCC's HQ accommodation strategy by designating Sessions House as KCC's headquarters for KCC's remaining lifespan. This approach could save £12m in capital and facilitate the disposal of another property which will secure a more reliable receipt, allowing KCC's successor to decide on the future of Sessions.
- 11.6 The new proposal is therefore that KCC will keep Sessions House as its headquarters for its remaining lifespan and cancel plans to sell it. All spending on Invicta House should stop immediately; only essential repairs will be made to Sessions House to keep it functional for up to four years. Invicta House will be put on the market to minimise ongoing costs and generate a capital receipt at the soonest opportunity.

Recommendations:

The Deputy Leader is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations on the proposed decision to:

1. **AGREE** to discontinue with the Preferred Option as set out decision 24/00100;
2. Given the proposed Local Government Reorganisation timetable indicated by Government, **CONFIRM** Sessions House will continue to be the strategic headquarters for KCC for the remaining life of the Authority;
3. **ALLOCATE** £4m from the 2025-34 approved capital budget to enable the essential and urgent backlog maintenance works at Sessions House to be completed;
4. **WITHDRAW** from the sale of Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park with immediate effect;

5. **DISPOSE** of Invicta House and the associated car park as soon as practical to reduce holding costs and liabilities for the Council;
 6. **REALIGN** the capital and revenue budget as required to enable the above to be implemented; and
 7. **DELEGATE** authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader to authorise the execution of necessary contractual and land agreements required to implement the above.
-

12 Background Documents

- 12.1 Exempt Appendix A – Mini Business Case and redacted version
- 12.2 Exempt Appendix B – Supporting Information
- 12.3 Appendix C – Proposed Record of Decision
- 12.4 Exempt Appendix D – Bidder Credentials and proposal pack (appended to the Business Case)
- 12.5 Appendix E – Equalities Impact Assessment
- 12.6 Exempt Appendix F – July 2023 Business Case – available on request

13 Contact details

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STRATEGIC HEADQUARTERS

Kent County Council



REDACTED VERSION

2025 Mini Business Case Update

August 2025

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1.0. Background

- 1.1 This mini-Business Case update has been prepared following the 2024 Business Case addendum (dated 12th November 2024), presented at Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 27th November 2024. It has been prepared for Kent County Council (KCC) Strategic Headquarters Project. In May 2025 following County Council Elections the administration requested that the current option is reviewed against a new option that would support a continued presence in Sessions House as its Strategic Headquarters rather than Invicta House.
- 1.2 The main Business Case prepared in July 2023 considered and evaluated a range of options. Two options were viable in the business case against the assessment criteria at that time. These were the Enhanced Utilisation of Invicta House (Formerly Option 5) and retain Invicta House and part of Sessions House (Formerly Option 3). The business case identified the Enhanced Utilisation of Invicta House as the preferred option based on the agreed scoring criteria.
- 1.3 Whilst this option was affordable within the approved capital budget of £20m and led to an estimated revenue saving in the longer term above the £1m target, the risks as part of the decision taken in relation to this option [REDACTED]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [RISKS].
- 1.4 In November 2024 a Key Decision (24/00100) was implemented to progress with the disposal of Sessions House and works to enable the enhanced utilisation of Invicta House as the SHQ building for the Council.
- 1.5 Subsequently WW Martin] were appointed via the Kent Contractor Partnership Framework under a Pre-Construction Services Agreement (PSCA) to develop design proposals and costings for Invicta House. These activities are currently at an advanced stage, are mostly completed. The next step is for these to be presented back to KCC prior to the award of a New Engineering Construction (NEC) Engineering and Construction Contract (ECC) (Anticipated in September) for refurbishment works to commence.
- 1.6 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [NARRATIVE REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH Ministry of Justice AND APPLICANT PURCHASER].

1.7

[REDACTED]

[NARRATIVE REGARDING NEGOTIATIONS WITH Ministry of Justice AND APPLICANT PURCHASER] Subject to KCC's confirmation of the Heads of Terms, legal contracts are ready to be drawn up in respect of the disposal. Once the legal contracts are in place KCC would be legally bound to complete the disposal if the conditions were met. This is anticipated to be 8-12 weeks following confirmation by KCC.

- 1.8 The current option is at a critical stage, where KCC is about to commit to contractual commitments both in respect of the contracts for the works at Invicta and the disposal of Sessions House.
- 1.9 The decant from Invicta to Sessions is underway as planned and at the time of writing this report is due to be completed by the end of August 2025. As Sessions House has not been occupied by staff since early 2020, it has been necessary to undertake limited compliance works and those required to enable case conferencing to relocate from Invicta House to Sessions House until 2027/2028.

2.0. Strategic Context

- 2.1 Following the May 2025 Local elections, a change of administration occurred.
- 2.2 At the request of the new Leadership, further options have been considered as set out within this paper with a focus on the current option and an option that would see the retention of Sessions House rather than Invicta as its SHQ.
- 2.3 The new leadership have identified that options should be considered on a 3-5 year timeframe on the basis of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) occurring in Kent and Medway and the timetable that has now been confirmed by central government. The English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill will set out the legislative framework for LGR in Kent. Under the current timetable the government have confirmed that two tier government will be replaced by Unitary Councils by 2028.
- 2.4 The following revised strategic drivers were identified in July 2025 by the new administration:
- A. Reduce capital borrowing requirements in the next 3-5 years
 - B. Keep Sessions House legacy for future administration
 - C. Increase office estate capacity (Return to the office)
 - D. Meet minimum legal obligations for warm, safe & dry + heritage conservation
- 2.5 The options identified within section 5.0 are all predicated on a short-term solution (3-5 years) to align with the LGR timeframes.

3.0 Sessions House Disposal & MOJ Update

3.1 Sessions House (also known as County Hall) is a large, complex, heritage asset synonymous to Kent County Council. KCC have explored various disposal and repurposing options engaging with key stakeholder including those occupiers that may exist with the public sector applying One Public Estate principles [REDACTED]

[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS] but unfortunately there was no meaningful interest identified from other public sector bodies.

3.2 Following a competitive marketing process in relation to the whole of Sessions House (including Albert Street Car Park - c.96 spaces located c.10 minutes' walk to the north) in response to the previous administration's Key Decision taken in August 2023, [NAME OF APPLICANT PURCHASER] [REDACTED] were selected as the Preferred Bidder.

3.3 [REDACTED] [NAME OF APPLICANT PURCHASER] [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [NAME OF APPLICANT PURCHASER]
[REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [DESCRIPTION OF SCHEME].

3.4 [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [VALUATION ADVICE].

3.5 Sessions House has a series of restrictive covenants in the favour of the MOJ and adjacent HMP Maidstone Prison which are designed to protect and maintain security. [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [ASSESSMENT OF COVENANTS]

3.6 [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

[CURRENT POSITION ASSESSMENT OF NEGOTIATIONS]

3.7

[REDACTED]

[DETAILS OF DUE DILIGENCE]

3.8

[REDACTED] [NAME OF APPLICANT PURCHASER] are the best party offering the best terms currently available in the marketplace following the S.123 compliant marketing exercise, if the Council are still minded to proceed to dispose of the whole of Sessions House. However, as

[REDACTED]

[ADVICE RELATING TO CURRENT PROPOSED DEAL]

3.9

[REDACTED]

[DETAILS OF PROPOSAL]

3.10

[REDACTED]

[DETAILS OF PROPOSAL]

3.11

[REDACTED]

[ALTERNATIVE MARKETING OPTION]

4.0 Invicta House Disposal

- 4.1 KCC also own the unencumbered freehold interest of Invicta House, a c.65,200sqft NIA, 6-storey, purpose-built office building (including its adjacent c.250 space multistorey car park) constructed in c.1983 located adjacent to Sessions House

(together forming what is known by the Council as its “Strategic Headquarters” - SHQ).

4.2 Under the previous August 2021 and August 2023 key decisions, Invicta House was proposed for refurbishment, modernisation and operational retention by the Council for ongoing staff and Member use. To inform the revised options which now include the potential disposal of Invicta House officers have consulted with reputable office agents, who are of the view it has a market value of [REDACTED]. [ESTIMATED VALUE] This is on the basis the parking provision is included and offered with an unencumbered freehold with full vacant possession (expected by mid-August 2025 with staff relocating back into Sessions House).

4.3 A formal valuation has been undertaken valuing the property at [REDACTED]

[REDACTED]
[ASSUMPTIONS ADVICE]

4.4 The property is considered to be in a fair condition, [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [KCC's VIEW ON REFURBISHMENT]

4.5

[REDACTED]
[MARKET COMMENTARY FOR INVICTA HOUSE]

4.6

[REDACTED]
[FURTHER MARKET COMMENTARY]

4.7

5.0 2025 Options Summary

5.1 The following Options have been identified as part of the Reform UK review in 2025 to address the strategic drivers set out prior in this paper:

1. **Option 1 - Current Option (2024 Key Decision)** – Progress as planned with the current 2024 Key Decision option to enhance the utilisation of Invicta House and Dispose of Sessions House and the Albert Street Car Park.
2. **Option 2 - Retain some presence in Sessions** – Retain Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park with limited compliance & condition works (Red & Amber Only) and dispose of Invicta House + Car Park
3. **Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House** and Albert Street Car Park (with deferred completion arrangement up to April 2028 as per terms agreed) and **disposal of Invicta House and car park** (with short term leaseback of parking only until 2028)
4. **Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House** with limited compliance & condition works (Red & Amber Only)

6.0 Considerations

6.1 **Option 1 - Current Option – Progress as planned with the current Nov 2024 Key Decision option to enhance the utilisation of Invicta House and Dispose of Sessions House.**

6.1.1 Accommodation Considerations:

Opportunities

- Creates a fit for purpose office accommodation with a total of 496 bookable desk spaces
- Modern office environment created
- Office fully accessible for all staff users, including fire evacuation lifts for disabled access on all floors
- Helps towards KCC carbon reduction of the estate by removing fossil fuel reliance from the estate
- Addresses all outstanding / backlog compliance works for the foreseeable future to reduce pressure on revenue budget
- Generates a capital receipt through the planned disposal of Sessions House and Albert Street Car Park [REDACTED] [VALUE ESTIMATION] and as a result reduces the Council liability in relation to a listed building and current operational cost of c.£2m pa
- Retains current Invicta House multi storey car park

- Negates the need to undertake costly compliance/refurbishment works to Sessions House for prolonged occupation
- Fixed price contract passing financial risk to contractor for work implementation
- Reduces risk of operational disruption to KCC for any unexpected building closure due to the space being occupied would be newly refurbished.

Challenges

- Option does not provide a dedicated Council Chamber (requiring external facilities to be used, or increase in capital budget to include a new Council Chamber as part of the refurbishment works)
- Significant capital investment required to facilitate programme of works at Invicta House - c£14.3m.

- [REDACTED]
[RISKS EXPLAINED]

6.1.2 Car Parking Considerations:

- Existing Invicta House car park (253 spaces) retained for use by KCC staff, providing local parking arrangements for staff.
- Existing Sessions House Parking = Total 231 Spaces (Upper/Lower Sessions House car Park - 112 spaces) plus (Albert Street - 96 spaces) plus (Rear of Sessions House – 23 Spaces)
- Option results in a reduction in parking capacity through disposal of Sessions House – 365 spaces retained in this option at Invicta House + leasehold of Upper/Lower car park 112 spaces + 6 garages)
- Current market rent for parking in Maidstone town centre is estimated at [REDACTED] [OPINION OF VALUE]

6.1.3 Disposal & Deliverability Considerations:

- S.123 compliant marketing exercise has taken place resulting in a selected preferred bidder [REDACTED] NAME OF APPLICANT PURCHASER]

- [REDACTED]
[CAPITAL RECEIPT ESTIMATE AND DETAILS OF PROPOSAL]

- [REDACTED]
[RISKS CONSIDERED]

- [REDACTED]
[RISK CONSIDERATIONS]

6.2 Option 2 – Retain Sessions House and Albert Street Car *Park* with limited compliance & condition works and dispose of Invicta House + Car Park

6.2.1 Accommodation Considerations:

Opportunities

- Reduces capital investment budget in the short term by removing the refurbishment works planned at Invicta House (£14.3m)
- Retains Sessions House as the historic home of KCC until LGR in 2028 - Blocks A, C & D of sessions House operational (Block B & E remain closed at present without further investment)
- Retains the provision of a dedicated Council Chamber space for use by KCC and any successor authority.
- Generates a capital receipt through the disposal of Invicta House (Estimated at [REDACTED] [ESTIMATED RECEIPT])
- Provides desk capacity of 533 (Bookable/Teams/Fixed desks)
- Provides opportunity for further bookable desk provision through the re-opening of B Block (although note capital investment required for compliance/condition work in B Block anticipated in the region of £1.5m – currently excluded from financial appraisal)

Challenges

- Sessions House accommodation currently in dated/poor condition with significant capital investment required to address backlog condition and maintenance works.
- 2023 Bidwell's condition survey identifies a minimum investment of c£4m to address RED condition which were identified for 2022/23 for blocks A, C & D which reflects a do minimum approach.
- In addition to the RED work, AMBER works were identified for 2024-2027 for blocks A, C & D in the region of £16m
- The indicative associated cost is subject to the level of works undertaken, with the minimum of Red only works £4m.
- Even with investment of c.£20m (Red + Amber) to address backlog condition/compliance works the accommodation will not necessarily be fit for purpose of modern office environment – previously estimated at £67m for a full scheme of refurbishment.
- Undertaking limited condition/compliance works, there remains a risk of building failure resulting in additional capital works and increased disruption for building occupants.
- Sessions House annual running costs is estimated at £2.3-2.6m which will continue if not disposed of.
- Office is not accessible for all KCC Staff, with limited opportunity for improvement without significant modernisation/accessibility works being undertaken (Anticipated [REDACTED] [COST ESTIMATE] excluded from the above).
- No improvement towards KCC carbon reduction of the estate by removing fossil fuel from the estate.

6.2.2 Car Parking Considerations:

- Existing Invicta House car park (253 spaces) retained for use by KCC staff, providing local parking arrangements for staff.
- Existing Sessions House Parking = Total 231 Spaces (Upper/Lower Sessions House car Park - 112 spaces) plus (Albert Street - 96 spaces) plus (Rear of Sessions House – 23 Spaces)
- Option results in a reduction in parking capacity through disposal of Invicta House – 231 spaces retained in this option

[COMMERCIAL POSITION]

[OPINION OF VALUE]

6.2.3 Disposal & Deliverability considerations

- Invicta House includes a c.250 multi storey car park with an estimated market value of [REDACTED] [MARKET VALUE ESTIMATE]

[MARKET NARRATIVE, ADVICE AND ASSUMPTIONS]

6.3 Option 3 – Disposal of Sessions House (with deferred completion arrangement up to April 2028 as per terms agreed) **and disposal of Invicta House and car park** (with short term leaseback of parking only, not accommodation)

6.3.1 Accommodation Considerations:

Opportunities

- Reduces capital investment budget by removing the refurbishment works planned at Invicta House (£14.3m)
- Retains Sessions House as the historic home of KCC - Blocks A, C & D of sessions House operational. **Short term only**
- Retains the provision of a dedicated Council Chamber space. **Short term only**
- Generates a capital receipt through the disposal of Invicta House (Estimated at [REDACTED] [VALUATION OPINION]) plus receipt for Sessions House [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [VALUE AND RISK FACTORS]

- Provides desk capacity of 533 (Bookable/Teams/Fixed desks) Short Term only.

Challenges

- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [ADVICE SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO KCC INVESTMENT REQUIREMENT]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [ADVICE SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO KCC INVESTMENT REQUIREMENT]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [ADVICE SPECIFICALLY RELATING TO KCC INVESTMENT REQUIREMENT]
- Sessions House annual running costs is estimated between £2.3-2.6m which will continue short term
- Sessions House is not accessible for all KCC Staff. Accessibility works not practical for short term 2-year occupation period.

6.3.2 Car Parking Considerations:

- Existing Invicta House car park (253 spaces) retained for use by KCC staff, providing local parking arrangements for staff.
- Existing Sessions House Parking = Total 231 Spaces (Upper/Lower Sessions House car Park - 112 spaces) plus (Albert Street - 96 spaces) plus (Rear of Sessions House – 23 Spaces)
- Option results in a reduction in parking capacity through disposal of Invicta House – 231 spaces retained in this option
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [COMMERCIAL POSITION]
- [REDACTED]
[REDACTED] [OPINION OF VALUE]
- [REDACTED]

6.3.3 Disposal & Deliverability considerations:

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED]

- [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] [DISPOSAL CONSIDERATIONS]
- [REDACTED] capital receipt of [REDACTED] [ESTIMATE OF VALUE] from sale of both properties [REDACTED]
- [REDACTED] [CONDITIONALITY OF TERMS]
- This option leaves no Strategic Headquarters Estate in Maidstone town centre for the future Council post LGR.
- [REDACTED] [COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATION]

6.4 Option 4 – Retain Sessions House & Retain Invicta House

6.4.1 Accommodation Considerations:

Opportunities

- Retains Sessions House as the historic home of KCC
- Retains the provision of a dedicated Council Chamber space
- Provides bookable desk capacity of up to 1029 desks if both buildings are open / utilised (Invicta 496 + Sessions 533)
- Provides possible opportunity for creating co-working spaces/flexible lease arrangements for un-used office accommodation (Note investment likely to be required to refurbish office accommodation to market standards and undertake condition/compliance works)
- Maximum parking facilities retained as per current day arrangement
- Strategic futureproofing/resilience for the unknown/uncertain office and civic space requirements post LGR.

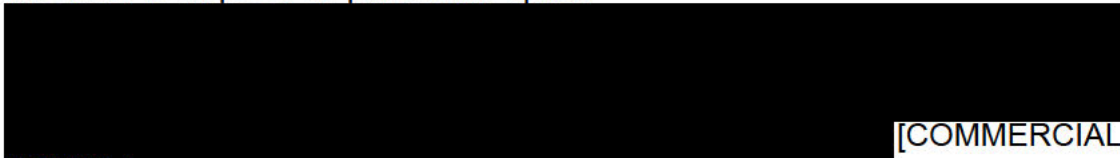
Challenges

- Sessions House and Invicta House accommodation currently in poor condition with significant capital investment required as per option 1 / 2 / 3.
- Full scheme of works would need to be developed however minimum scope of work at Sessions House (£4m) + minimum scope of work at Invicta House (£6.1m) = circa £10m capital investment to address RED only items.
- Works value up to £51m to address Red and Amber condition works
- No disposal receipt for either Sessions House or Invicta House as both buildings are retained with ongoing running costs.
- Sessions House will not be fully accessible.
- No improvement towards KCC carbon reduction of the estate by removing fossil fuel from the estate
- Sessions House annual running costs is estimated between £2.3-2.6m which will continue.
- Invicta House annual running costs is estimated between £1.0-1.1m which will continue.

6.4.2 Car Parking Considerations:

- Existing Invicta House car park (253 spaces) retained for use by KCC staff, providing local parking arrangements for staff.
- Existing Sessions House Parking = Total 231 Spaces (Upper/Lower Sessions House car Park - 112 spaces) plus (Albert Street - 96 spaces) plus (Rear of Sessions House – 23 Spaces)
- Option retains existing parking provision – 484 Total spaces

6.4.3 Disposal & Deliverability consideration

- No asset to disposal as part of this option
-  [COMMERCIAL ADVICE]
- Future disposal of either building could be reconsidered post LGR once the public sector space requirements are better understood.

7.0 Sessions House Limitations

- 7.1 As part of the options being considered, it is important that the limitations of Sessions House are understood, and the impact on deliverability and accommodation provision acknowledged. This section of the report therefore seeks to set out these limitations.
- 7.2 Sessions House is a Grade 2 listed building, with strict limitations and restrictions on any works or changes that can occur without consent. It should therefore be noted that listed building consent is likely required for some condition / compliance related works.

Condition & Compliance Limitations

- 7.3 KCC must as a minimum provide accommodation that is Warm, Safe and Dry in accordance with KCC Asset Management Strategy and legislation such as the Health and Safety at Work Act.
- 7.4 The completion of Red and Amber condition items identified within the Bidwell's Condition surveys related to a Warm, Safe and Dry is therefore critical.
- 7.5 In December 2022 Bidwell's were commissioned by KCC to carry out a condition survey across the SHQ Maidstone Estate, Session House blocks A-E and Invicta House.
- 7.6 The survey information is split into three areas: Roof Condition, Window Condition and General Building Condition. The necessary works have been identified as part of the survey and are fully detailed within with condition survey reports included at Appendix B. The works identified include the following:

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] [LIST OF ADVISABLE REPAIRS BASED ON KCC USE]

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED] (LIST OF ADVISABLE WORKS
BASED ON KCC'S USE]

Red – Immediate need (2022/2023)
Amber – Short term need (2024 – 2027)
Green - Medium/Long term need (2028 – 2032)

7.9 A summary below identifies the extent of work required across A, C & D block inclusive of allowances for fees' prelims, OH&P, and contingency. All figures exclude VAT. The associated costs for Red and Amber condition related works are:

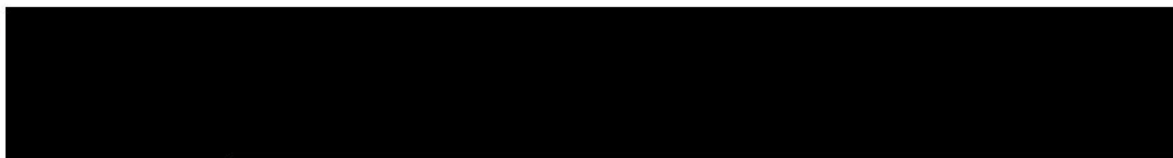
	Block A	Block C	Block D		Invicta
Red Works	£ 1,291,485	£ 1,500,720	£ 1,154,400		£ 1,689,398
Amber Works	£ 7,326,000	£ 4,287,930	£ 2,564,211		£ 2,702,295
Total	£ 8,617,485	£ 5,788,650	£ 3,718,611		£ 4,391,693

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occur as a result of the works, the primary purpose is to address condition and compliance works only.

- 7.11 A further roof condition survey has been carried out by Skanska (Appendix B) which identifies both immediate short-term solutions (which may extend the life of the roof by 3-5 years) which require a further capital investment of circa £250k.
- 7.12 The roof condition survey also identifies the likely scope of replacement of the existing roof's which would provide KCC with a 25-year guarantee and prevent further cost expenditure in the near future, however this option would require additional capital investment in excess of circa £1.6m. Detailed further surveys and a scope of work would need to be developed to fully define an accurate cost.
- 7.13 It is important to note that without significant investment and refurbishment / upgrade, a critical building failure could occur at any point in time. This could occur in the near-, short-, mid- or long-term future as cannot be ascertained accurately. However, what can be ascertained is that the Mechanical and Electrical systems, along with a significant proportion of the building fabric are beyond their intended lifespan.

7.14



[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS]

- 7.15 For example, should a critical failure of the boiler system may occur, (anticipated cost for replacement circa £900k+), KCC will need to consider whether to remain in occupation for a further period of time. The extent of works, and financial expenditure will therefore need to be carefully considered at the appropriate time, and an assessment made around the economical viability of implementing any such works.
- 7.16 Within the financial considerations, an increased Maintenance budget has been identified in order to minimise the potential risk of a critical building failure. This varies dependant on the option.

Accessibility Limitations

- 7.17 Given the historic nature of the building, this severely impacts the accessibility of Sessions House, which is not accessible throughout, nor provides easy access for those with accessibility or disability needs.
- 7.18 The existing lifts are non-compliant with wheelchair sizes, with only smaller wheelchairs being able to fit within the lifts. The existing lift shafts cannot accommodate an increase in lift cart sizes that aligns with current standards.
- 7.19 In the event of emergency evacuation, the current lifts cannot be used. Evacuation chairs are provided for means of escape and require manual handling of persons in need of assistance.

- 7.20 The existing lifts within Sessions House are dated, and temperamental. Spare parts for the existing lifts are now obsolete and not easily obtainable, therefore in the event of break down and the lift being out of action, spare parts may take a number of days / weeks to obtain. Whilst spare parts stock is being held for common faults, it should be acknowledged that there may be occasions where extended periods of lifts being out of action may occur. In this event, Sessions House remains inaccessible to those requiring lift access.
- 7.21 Whilst a detailed scope of accessibility work has not been fully defined, it is anticipated that the potential cost to make Sessions House fully accessible would exceed £2.5m. This cost is not currently reflected in any of the options.
- 7.22 The Level Playing Field staff group have raised a number of initial concerns with accessibility throughout Sessions House which will require management policies to be established.
- 7.23 However, notwithstanding the above, a number of measures have been implemented within A Block to aid accessibility for staff and to try and make practical improvements where possible. Primarily this includes the addition of door hold open devices for main circulation corridors and offices at 1st floor level, aiding those that may struggle with mobility whilst opening doors.
- 7.24 In addition, a dedicated “accessible” meeting room and workspace has been created at 1st floor level. This minimises the distance which staff need to travel from the main entrance and ensures all staff are incorporated within the Sessions House building.
- 7.25 It should also be noted that other buildings within the KCC estate do provide fully accessible accommodation (I.e. Worrel House) and a desk/meeting can be booked by any member of staff within KCC in the alternative office accommodation.
- 7.26 Other measures such as new and improved way finding signage has also been incorporated as part of the recent works to better improve the staff experience.
- 7.27 Consultation has been undertaken with those members of staff which require a “Fixed Desk” and all of these staff have been accommodated on the first floor of A Block with the necessary reasonable adjustments to their working environment.
- 7.28 Any staff that require reasonable adjustments to their working environment or provision of a fixed desk are required to discuss with their Line Manager, whom in turn would raise such matters with the Property Infrastructure team as per the current arrangements.

8.0 **Qualitative Scoring considerations**

- 8.1 As part of the main business case developed in 2023, a series of qualitative scoring criteria was identified, in order to rank the impact and delivery risk of each option.
- 8.2 Whilst the key project drivers have changed since the 2023 business case, a number of the key criteria remain relevant.

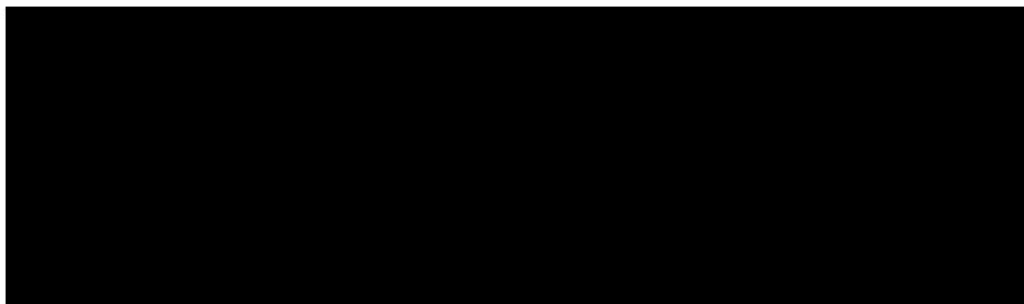
8.3 The evaluation criteria has been reviewed and updated to reflect the options being considered within this mini business case review, to enable comparison of the different options, with an extract of the qualitative evaluation contained below.

8.4 The qualitative marking was undertaken and moderated by the project team including KCC Infrastructure, Finance and Fusion Project Management Ltd.

8.5 [REDACTED] [COMMERCIAL
CONSIDERATIONS]

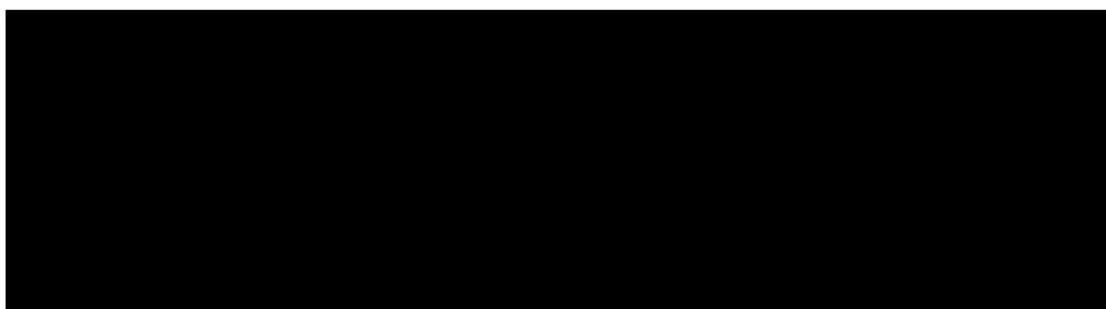
8.6 All options provide the minimum accommodation and pass the pass/ fail criteria. Therefore, no options are excluded on the basis of not meeting the minimum pass / fail criteria.

8.7 Option 1 Ranked in 1st Position with a weighted score of 65%:



[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS]

8.8 Option 2 Ranked in 2nd Position with a weighted score of 62%:



[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS]

8.9 Option 3 Ranked in 4th Position with a weighted score of 36%:



[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS]

8.10 Option 4 Ranked in 3rd Position with a weighted score of 39%:



[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS]

8.11 Based on the qualitative evaluation criteria, Option 1 ranks in the highest position with 65%, closely followed by Option 2 at 63%. Whilst the scores between the two options are close, each option is comprised of a differing score build up due to the opportunities and constraints associated with accommodation quality and deliverability.

- 9.6 Abortive costs are included under each option in the revenue table, and amount to an estimated £946k if we abort the current scheme at this time. In 2024/25 we incurred £920k abortive costs relating to previous schemes for Sessions House (included in the published accounts).
- 9.7 Under each option there will be a mix of capital and revenue expenditure, however, without a more detailed plan, it is impossible to say at this time what the exact split will be. Any increase in revenue expenditure will lead to a slight reduction in borrowing costs, but it shouldn't materially change the profile of the options laid out above.
- 9.8 In options where fewer capital works will be carried out, we anticipate additional revenue maintenance works will be required due to the greater risk of failure for assets not replaced under the capital programme. This equates to £250k p.a. between the Max/Min options for retaining Sessions House, however, this is a conservative estimate and could increase with each passing year.

10.0 Conclusion

- 10.1 Based on the financial analysis all options have higher revenue costs compared to the current option as per the Nov 2024 decision due to the higher running costs of Sessions House compared to Invicta House. Option 2b and 3 without the car parking assumption are the closest to the current option with an estimated additional cost of £295k per Annum once steady state has been reached.
- 10.2 Option 2b in the financial appraisal has the lowest net capital costs and therefore borrowing costs with the capital receipt associated with the sale of Invicta nearly completely offsetting minimum capital costs.
- 10.3 Based on the qualitative evaluation, the current approved option (Option 1 – Dispose of Sessions House and relocate to Invicta House) scores the highest with 65%, closely followed by Option 2 (Retain Sessions House and Dispose of Invicta House) which scored 62%.
- 10.4 There are a number of material considerations and limitations associated with retention and operation from Sessions House, not limited to the current compliance and condition status of the buildings. In addition, there are limitations on accessibility which cannot be easily overcome. Any alteration or improvement works would likely require listed building consent to be obtained.

10.5



[COMMERCIAL CONSIDERATIONS]

10.6 The disposal of Invicta House will result in the reduction of car parking provision for KCC Staff, with limited opportunity to lease back parking in the short or long term (This would also need to be rented at a commercial rate or reflected as a discount on the sale price – subject to commercial agreements). The financial analysis assumes that any space reduction is offset via renting alternative provision.

11.0 Appendices [COMMERCIAL INFORMATION AND CONSIDERATIONS]

- 11.1 [REDACTED]
- 11.2 [REDACTED]
- 11.3 [REDACTED]
- 11.4 [REDACTED]

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

SHQ Decant from Invicta House into Session House for foreseeable future.

Responsible Officer

Joanne Taylor - DCED INF

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqlA must be completed within the EqlA App)

Joanne Taylor - DCED INF

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Strategic and Corporate Services

Responsible Service

Infrastructure

Responsible Head of Service

Joanne Taylor - DCED INF

Responsible Director

Rebecca Spore - DCED INF

Aims and Objectives

Aim:

Due to a change in leadership, our aim is to decant all staff from Invicta House to Sessions House for a longer period of time, initially thought to be 2 years but will now ultimately be for a minimum of 3 to 4 years. The initial phase involved decanting into Sessions House A Block, successfully replicating the desk and meeting room provisions from Invicta House. This includes the case conferencing business unit retaining their own reception, office space and VC enabled meeting facilities.

Limited additional compliance works have been carried out across A block, however there may be additional compliance works required from an accessibility perspective, because the works conducted were on the basis of a semi-permanent 24-month relocation whereas the spaces may continue to be occupied beyond the initial intended period.

In addition to this, we may look to utilise additional space within Sessions House. Namely B block, currently vacant but could be an option when looking for additional desk capacity. Further accessibility works may also be required to this block to accommodate occupants.

Objective:

Provide a more permanent, accessible office space for KCC staff in Sessions House; using Blocks A, C and D initially – with potential to expand back into blocks B and E. in line with the 'Safe, Warm and Dry' guidelines.

Step: To give good communication to all staff and listen to staff requests for access, egress and working arrangements within Sessions House on a more permanent basis.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Members
Strategic Reset Programme Board
Corporate Management team
Officers across the Council
Stakeholder groups for SHQ

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

No

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

No. Note: If Question 17 is "No", Question 18 should state "none identified" when submission goes for approval

Details of Positive Impacts

Due to the age and lack of consistent improvement works to Sessions House, there are significant accessibility issues within the building with limited accessible pathways to A block and the restaurant area due to smaller lift spaces. There are other office spaces within the KCC estate that offer varying levels of accessibility with a mixture of building solutions and management arrangements.

Due to the change in circumstances, there could come a time where KCC will need to address the accessibility issues within Sessions House and explore options for a scope of works to aid accessibility.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
No. Note: If Question 19a is "No", Questions 19b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Completed
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Completed
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
Yes
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
There are accessibility restrictions as mentioned above, which over the mid-long term use of Sessions House will eventually require management to take action. While the current vision is to make minimal building fabric changes, there may be a requirement for a higher level of changes to be made to the building fabric for the retained use of Sessions House. This building is the most convenient for staff which do not drive.
Mitigating actions for Disability
<p>FM will be responsible for managing these enhanced requirements via a maintenance strategy, that identifies existing and potential maintenance issues – with the strategy designed to pipeline and prioritise each element, allowing for a fast turnaround in maintaining Sessions House.</p> <p>Increased signage around Sessions House should give people clear indications for accessible pathways, toilets and office spaces.</p> <p>Further information as to the accessibility features and limitations in respect of Sessions House to be made available on Knet</p> <p>Increased capacity at other offices such as Worrall house which is accessible for all, providing an alternative accessible working location for staff which drive and do not need public transport due to the location of our other buildings.</p> <p>Managers to work with FM as to what management actions can be put in place over the mid-long term period within Sessions House.</p>
Responsible Officer for Disability
Anthony Carty
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No. Note: If Question 21a is "No", Questions 21b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Completed
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No. Note: If Question 22a is "No", Questions 22b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval

approval
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No. Note: If Question 23a is "No", Questions 23b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Race
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No. Note: If Question 24a is "No", Questions 24b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Completed
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No. Note: If Question 25a is "No", Questions 25b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No. Note: If Question 26a is "No", Questions 26b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No. Note: If Question 27a is "No", Questions 27b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval

approval
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No. Note: If Question 28a is "No", Questions 28b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed

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