From: **Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services**

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: **Cabinet - 30 November 2023**

Subject: **Decision 23/00101 - Kent Communities Programme**
Key decision

Classification: UNRESTRICTED

Future Pathway of Report: Cabinet

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

The Council is facing very significant financial pressures, for a number of reasons as set out in the report considered at Cabinet 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy and Financial Reporting' (August 2023 and October 2023). That document sets out the urgent steps needed to return the Council to financial sustainability, by reducing overspend in budgets to avoid further need to use limited reserves to fund revenue overspends. Further use of these reserves would weaken the financial resilience of the authority and limit the scope for the use of reserves to invest in the transformation necessary to address the structural deficit.

The financial challenges faced by the Council cannot be ignored. Two particularly significant factors, as set out below, are the Council's statutory 'best value' duty to deliver a balanced budget, provide statutory services, including adult social care and children's services, and secure value for money in all spending decisions, and the Council's other statutory duties.

The Kent Communities programme seeks to rationalise Kent County Council's (KCC's) physical estate and propose a greater mix of alternative methods of service delivery across the county, informed by a clear and data-driven understanding of service need. Delivery of this programme has become more important in the light of the increased financial pressures faced by the Council. The programme does include elements of improvement to service delivery: for example, benefits offered by co-location of services, enhanced digital provision and outreach.

However, the Council must acknowledge that the impact of closures and reductions in services on residents can be significant. The approach set out in these proposals is therefore based on a relative needs assessment. Mitigating measures are set out, which are intended to minimise, as far as possible, the impact of the proposals on Kent residents.

A detailed and extensive public consultation allowed consultees the opportunity to give their views on the proposals. These responses have been analysed and carefully considered. A range of options are presented for consideration, informed by the consultation responses.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is asked to agree to:

a) Consider and note the feedback from the Kent Communities Consultation on the proposals, as well as responses to the Family Hub Consultation, insofar as they are relevant to the Kent Communities proposals, alongside the amended policy and financial position set out in the report 'Securing Kent's Future;'

b) Consider the options as set out in the decision report and confirm an option to be implemented including agreement of:

i. The network of buildings to be utilised to support the delivery of following services:
- Open access youth and children services – including Public Health
- Adults with Learning Disabilities
- CLS – Adult Education
- Gateways

ii. The decommissioning of services at those buildings which are no longer to be utilised to support the delivery of the services outlined above.

iii. The co-design of outreach services with partners.

c) Approve expenditure from capital budget to enable adaptations to the agreed network of buildings in order to facilitate the co-location of multiple services;

d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Directors of Children Young People & Education (CYPE), Growth Environment & Transport (GET), Deputy Chief Executives Department (DCED) and Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH) to design the staffing model to support the changes as agreed in part b of the decision above, undertake the necessary staff consultation and implement any changes as a result; and

e) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to enter into the necessary contracts and legal agreements to facilitate the implementation of the decisions.

1. INTRODUCTION

Scope of the review

1.1 The Kent Communities programme (KCP) has reviewed the balance of methods for delivering our community services, the relative need for the physical buildings, outreach provision and a universal digital offer. The services included within the review are our Open Access Services and our commissioned Public Health offer (subject to a concurrent report on the Family Hub model), our Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities, our Adult Education (CLS) service, and our network of Gateways. The Council's network of library buildings is not part of this decision (other than with respect

to co-location) and is subject to a separate review which responds to additional statutory considerations. Any requirement for a separate decision resulting from that review will be taken regarding the library network in the future, in line with our standard governance arrangements.

1.2 Of the services set out above neither the Gateway service, nor the Adult Education services within scope are statutory. The Community Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities Service is not a statutory service in its own right but does constitute one of the ways in which we meet statutory requirements under the Care Act 2014, to promote individual well-being; to provide services to prevent, delay and reduce need; and to meet assessed needs for individuals and carers.

1.3 The Open Access/Family Hub service (subject to a concurrent decision) is not in its own right a statutory provision; however, it does include aspects that contribute towards our statutory provision to deliver universal Health Visiting services, youth services and Best Start for Life provision under the Children Act 1989 and the Childcare Act 2006.

Rationale for the review: financial issues

1.4 The rationale for the KCP is clear. The programme contributes to meeting the revenue savings as set out in the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP). To reduce risks across our corporate estate and capital programme, the KCP reduces the Council's capital liability to the maintenance costs of such a large physical estate. Further details are given below in respect of the Council's financial position and strategy, and the Best Value statutory duty. Whilst delivering savings in line with the MTFP has been a key driver, the KCP has taken into account the usage of our current buildings within the Needs Framework (detailed at 1.6 and 3.1 – 3.8 below). By reviewing usage within the Needs Framework, it is possible to understand both demand and need for services. As set out within this paper the KCP promotes and supports the delivery of valued services through a range of methods, depending on the scale and nature of community need. The KCP achieves savings for the Council while providing the right services, in the right way for our communities.

Rationale for the review: environmental issues

1.5 The Council has adopted a Net Zero 2030 approach, and the KCP delivers a reduction in our physical footprint, thus reducing the KCC's carbon footprint. The changes proposed under the Kent Communities programme would need to be considered given the financial situation, regardless of the Net Zero commitment. Whilst it is true that the primary driving factor is the requirement to achieve MTFP savings given the overarching financial context, the reduction in carbon emissions is a secondary factor.

Methodology

1.6 To analyse the changes which might be made to deliver the financial savings required by the Council, the reduction in carbon emissions, and their potential

impact, the KCP developed a Needs Framework, which identified the differing levels of need for our services across every ward in the county. The analysis of need for our services underpins the KCP and allows for co-location of services in areas of high need and the retention of buildings to protect service delivery where most needed across the county. A full explanation of the Needs Framework is included in section 3.1 and at Appendix A.

1.7 There are four Critical Success Factors for the programme that have been agreed by the Strategic Reset Programme Board. These relate firstly to the financial challenges faced by the Council (which have grown since the rationale was agreed) and secondly to the Net Zero commitment. The four critical success factors are:

- Less costly estate leading to reduction in revenue costs (responds to financial challenge).
- Reduction in pressure on the backlog maintenance budget (responds to financial challenge).
- Reduction in carbon emissions linked to the physical estate (responds to Net Zero commitment).
- Increased co-location sites (responds to financial challenge).

Interaction with the Family Hub Transformation

1.8 This report details the proposed physical locations of the Council's Open Access Children's Centres and Youth Hub (subject to a concurrent report on the Family Hub model). A separate decision proposes what the specific services delivered under a Family Hub model would be, following public consultation on the potential model. It is important to acknowledge that the Family Hub Model is being progressed at broadly the same time as the Kent Communities programme, and there is therefore some inevitable overlap between each set of decisions and each consultation. It is not possible to fully separate these, and hence Members are asked to consider and note the feedback from the Family Hub Model consultation on the proposals, insofar as they are relevant to the Kent Communities programme proposals. For the reasons set out below, it is considered that we would still be looking to rationalise our estate around our understanding of need, including for the current Open Access Service, because of the significant financial considerations faced by KCC. Insofar as is possible, these proposals have been drafted with the current state of the Family Hub Model in mind. As set out below, the proposals do not imply that later changes cannot be made to the corporate estate or to the location of services. Due to the inevitable overlap between these two programmes (KCP and the Family Hub Model), it will be important for the Council to undertake a post-implementation review to ensure that the proposals implemented under each programme are working as intended.

Consultation and consideration of responses

1.9 The proposed KCP model was subject to a public consultation between January and March 2023. A consultation report has been included at Appendix B and the response received has been taken into account when developing the

options set out in this Key Decision report. The response to the Family Hub service model consultation, held between July and September 2023, has also been carefully considered when developing the options for decision. A draft response to the Consultation for publication is included at Appendix C.

1.10 A breakdown of consultation responses by building is provided at Appendix G to assist decision makers. The consultation response needs to be considered alongside the renewed policy and financial context (outlined in section 2) the Needs Framework (outlined in section 3) and impact on residents.

Feasibility studies

1.11 Feasibility studies have been undertaken by an external design and construction consultant on buildings where co-location of services is proposed. The feasibility studies were undertaken during summer 2023 and assessed whether the basic m2 floor space was available to accommodate the proposed co-location services within the identified buildings. The feasibility studies identified what facilities (baby change, confidential spaces etc.) would be required to enable the appropriate co-location of services. The financial detail within this report has been informed by those studies and the high-level cost analysis provided by the consultant. An estimated total maximum figure of £5.6m of capital investment is required to deliver the changes across the twelve proposed new co-location sites within the Kent Communities proposal.

1.12 The feasibility studies have been reviewed by the relevant service representatives from across the Council and the proposed co-locations are all accepted as deliverable in a way that does not undermine the delivery of any of the proposed services to be co-located. Subject to decision, further design work will be undertaken ahead of any construction activity. This work will continue to be informed by the relevant service representatives, so that the ongoing development of the co-location sites following decision protects the viability of the individual service delivery.

Production of this report and developments post-consultation

1.13 This report sets out the steps taken to develop the KCP options presented for decision and recommends a revised estate model informed by the Needs Framework, the response to both the public consultations and the feasibility of the proposed retained buildings. Risks to the implementation of the proposed model have been included for consideration. The report also includes where greater reliance on outreach and digital services is proposed, based on the need analysis.

1.14 Since the consultation was launched, the Council's budgeting process has identified significant projected overspend in the 2023/2024 budget, which would have a serious impact on the financial sustainability of the Council, and its ability to deliver both statutory services and discretionary services. Section 2.1 below sets out the context provided by Securing Kent's Future, which has been developed since the consultation closed.

2. FINANCIAL AND STATUTORY BACKGROUND

Securing Kent's Future

2.1 On 17 August 2023, Cabinet agreed the provisions set out in the report 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy and Financial Reporting'. This report explained that there has been '*significant deterioration in the financial and operating landscape facing the Council since Framing Kent's Future was adopted.'* It goes on to explain that there needs to be *'a strong focus from elected Members, the Corporate Management Team, Directors, Heads of Service and all our staff to recognise that this spending challenge is now the fundamental policy priority of the council and to respond accordingly.'* On 5 October 2023, Cabinet considered 'Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy'. This report set out the Council's strategy for achieving both in-year and future year savings to assure a more sustainable financial position for the Authority and set out new strategic objectives focused on putting the Council on a financially sustainable footing. Securing Kent's Future represents a fundamental shift in the strategic priorities of the Council since the inception of the Kent Communities programme and the agreement of the methodology (Needs Framework), the Rationale and Critical Success Factors.

2.1 As set out in the Budget Recovery Plan (Cabinet – 5 October 2023) the financial challenge cannot be understated. Urgent management action is required across the short term to balance the budget in-year and significant action is required in the medium term to provide the stable financial foundation required to be confident in the sustainable delivery of our services. Every decision the Council takes needs to be considered in terms of this fundamental policy priority. Failure to do so risks the need for more drastic action to balance the Council's budget.

2.2 The Securing Kent's Future Report and the Financial Recovery Plan from October 2023 include details that are relevant to the Kent Communities programme. The reports outline that a key part of the Recovery Plan is to make *'Further savings and income plans for MTFP.'* With this in mind, any decision by members on the options set out within in this report needs to give due consideration to the revised policy framework and the financial challenge facing the Council, balancing this consideration against the impact of changes on residents, and the consultation response.

Best Value Duty

2.3 Section 3 of the Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Plan sets out why the Council must prioritise our Best Value duty under s. 3(2) of the Local Government 1999 and associated statutory guidance. The best value duty requires us to "*make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which [our] functions are exercised, having regard to a combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness*." The Securing Kent's Future report states that our Best Value duty must frame all financial, policy and service

decisions in the future and that best value considerations must be explicitly demonstrated within decision making. Further details of how the Best Value duty operates in relation to the KCP are set out in the following paragraphs.

2.4 In summary, whilst financial factors such as revenue savings and reduction of backlog maintenance liability are clearly captured within the Critical Success Factors, Best Value has not been a driving force in its own right. However, it is considered that the Kent Communities programme *does* achieve a consideration of Best Value in the way the programme balances economy, efficiency, and effectiveness, and the Needs Framework itself considers the usage of each building to deliver best value outcomes.

2.5 The Council does not consider that a further consultation is required in light of Securing Kent's Future and the Financial Recovery Plan. The same questions would be asked, and the responses which have already been obtained are as relevant now as when the consultation was launched. The Council therefore emphatically does not consider that the consultation responses are overridden or made irrelevant in any way by this updated financial context. In light of the difficult decisions required in order to return the Council to financial sustainability, the Kent Communities programme is even more crucial, to both the Council's financial future and to ensuring the ability of the Council to deliver services including those within the scope of this review, and the data and feedback obtained via consultation is therefore even more crucial. It informs both the choices to be made, and an understanding of the impact of the choices and the ways in which they may be mitigated.

3. KENT COMMUNITIES PROGRAMME PROPOSAL

Needs Framework

3.1 In order to develop the proposals for consultation in the most appropriate way, we looked at the needs for our services across the county by considering a range of data which we called the Needs Framework. The framework looked at service needs in the 271 wards across Kent, and this structure was then used to map the likelihood of need for our services and to determine which areas of focus are required within each of our districts.

3.2 The data which we used for the Framework focussed on indicators that were most relevant to the services within the scope of the consultation and these included:

- Deprivation
- % of the population aged 0-15
- Deprivation Affecting Children
- % of reception age children who are overweight or obese
- % of deliveries to teenage mothers
- % of low-birth-weight live babies
- % of people over 65 living alone

- Deprivation Affecting Older People
- Long term unemployment
- Ethnic diversity
- % of pupils achieving a pass in English and Maths at GCSE
- % of people who report a long-term illness or disability
- Population growth
- Population density
- Digital exclusion
- Transport connectivity
- Broadband speed

3.3 Data was gathered for these indicators for each ward across the 12 districts and applied a score of 1 for the lowest 20% and 5 for the top 20% to those adversely impacted by each of the listed indicators. This gave us a total score for each ward, allowing us to categorise wards from greatest to lowest overall need. Specific combinations of indicators for each service were considered to understand the profile of need in different areas. This approach gave a view of likely need across the whole county, from which we created a first draft of buildings we would propose retaining and those we would propose to vacate.

3.4 The Needs Framework was the starting point and guiding principle for the draft proposals, but the final consultation proposals were the result of many months of refinement following collaborative workshops and meetings between service teams, the KCC property team and a dedicated project team. The information gathered using the Framework was used as the basis for conversations with service teams about how our existing buildings could meet the identified needs.

3.5 Service teams contributed their working knowledge of localities across the county and its residents by contributing additional data sets, including service usage figures, where available. This allowed the Programme Team to refine the first draft of proposals, ensuring that what was put forward reflected service specific, service user and other practical considerations.

3.6 Additional specific data provided by the service team for Adults with Learning Disabilities was only available at District level, so the ward-level framework was not as applicable to Community Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities as other services. This was because it was more difficult to combine the initial indicator data with the service specific data for this service. However, this service places a greater emphasis on being in community settings where clients can experience proximity to the wider community. That meant expanding the opportunity to co-locate and/or using other buildings for outreach.

3.7 Through ongoing conversations with both service teams and the KCC Property team, further consideration was given to whether the proposed network of permanent buildings would meet the identified need by the Framework. A further key step in the development of our proposals was to look at practical considerations relating to our estate, including building condition, accessibility, and any lease arrangements in place.

3.8 The Needs Framework resulting from the process outlined above is a complex tool that considers general deprivation and demographic data, service specific data, expert opinion from service delivery teams and the property specific perspective. This tool informed the model put forward for consultation.

The revised proposals in light of the consultation

3.9 It is important to note that the KCP models detailed in this decision rely on the KCC estate to respond to the need identified within the Needs Framework as it currently stands. Decisions made about the estate now do not rule out future decisions and enable locality-based decisions to continue. The estate, its footprint, and its use will be reviewed in light of need and any other relevant considerations. As the Family Hub Transformation progresses, some review will be required to ensure that the KCP models are still appropriate. As detailed in later sections the Needs Framework will be regularly reviewed with partner agencies to inform combined decision making about future service provision across the full range of delivery methods, including from our own physical estate. Further, the proposed models do not preclude KCC from considering changes within our estate management in the future – for example, additions or removals of parts of the physical estate, changing which services are delivered from which locations, and co-locating with other partners.

3.10 The draft model was subject to a public consultation between January 2023 and March 2023. The impact of the Kent Communities consultation feedback on the proposals, and feedback received during the Family Hub consultation, held between July and September this year, has been considered and is summarised in section 4 of this report.

3.11 Following the Kent Communities Consultation, the Programme Team have worked with the services and finance colleagues to determine five options for review.

3.12 The options set out consist of different levels of proposed retentions and closures of buildings, on a scale from additional closures above those consulted on, to closing between 45 buildings (as consulted on), to closing zero buildings, with intermediate steps (43 and 35 closures). The options have been assessed in terms of their cost, financial and non-financial benefits, cost-benefit, risks and the Critical Success Factors in Section 3 and the viable options have been identified.

3.13 The factors assessed within the options appraisal (cost, financial and non-financial benefits, cost-benefit, risks and Critical Success Factors) are all included in line with the KCC standard methodology for options appraisals which is adopted within our Project and Programme Management Toolkit.

3.14 The table below sets out the number of buildings proposed for retention and closure, by service across the options. Detailed lists of proposed building closures are included at Appendix D for all options. The Commissioned Public Health service will be delivered from the same buildings as set out for the Open

Access/Family Hub service, except for Spring House which will be retained for Public Health use only. Therefore, the Commissioned Public Health Service will be delivered from one more building in Options 2, 3 and 4 than the Open Access/Family Hub service (i.e., 55 in Option 2 as opposed to 54 for Open Access/Family Hub). Details of a building-by-building summary of consultation feedback and proposed responses is set out at Appendix G.

Service	**Proposed Buildings**					**Proposed Closures**				
Option	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**	**1**	**2**	**3**	**4**	**5**
Open Access Children's Centres/ Youth Hubs	<	54	56	64	86	>	38	36	28	0
Adults with Learning Disabilities	<	23*	23	23	21	>	3	3	3	0
Adult Education	<	16	16	16	16	>	1	1	1	0
Gateways	<	10*	10	10	9	>	3	3	3	0

* - denotes changes required to Option 2 post consultation but not as a response to consultation feedback – these points are explained in sections 3.15 to 3.18.

Changes which affect the proposals

3.15 The Gateway Management Team have confirmed their funding envelope and without additional financial resource, cannot support the inclusion of Gateway provision across all of the co-locations suggested in the consultation. As such the proposals no longer include a Gateway provision as part of a co-location of services at Stanhope Library, Temple Hill Library or Cliftonville Library. Importantly, there is no additional removal of Gateway locations than that outlined in the consultation model and there were no comments received specific to the proposed co-locations at Stanhope, Temple Hill or Cliftonville. On 30 March the Strategic Reset Programme Board agreed that all options presented must be financially viable. To retain the additional locations consulted on would result in pressure on the service funding envelope which, if met, would require corresponding cuts to other service areas, the impact of which has not been assessed.

3.16 Under Business as Usual (BAU) provision, a change detailed in the consultation model has already been enacted regarding the Community Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities. In the consultation we proposed moving the service out of the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre and into the Sevenoaks Library (across the car park). Shortly after the close of the consultation the management company of the Sevenoaks Leisure Centre went into administration and so to protect the service delivery, the service moved to the library. This is considered a BAU move. The consultation document explained that some changes may need to be made on a BAU basis, for example as a result of the expiry of a lease or a health and safety issue arising.

3.17 Within the consultation document it was proposed that the Community Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities service would vacate Northgate Hub and the Prince of Wales Centre in Canterbury and consolidate their offer at Thanington. However, the Landlord has been clear that they will not allow the additional space within the Thanington location that would be required to facilitate the consolidation. Therefore, the plans to come out of the Northgate Hub are not achievable from a practical perspective. As such the removal of the service from the Northgate Hub is not a part of any option.

3.18 Another proposal in the consultation was to remove the Community Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities service from the Folkestone Sports Centre and use alternative provision at the Phase 2 Centre (14 miles away). Since the consultation, the service has been offered space in another location (Broadmeadow) which is an Adult Short Stay centre within the Adults Service. This centre is 1 mile away from the Folkestone Sports Centre and so represents a far better alternative option for service users. They will still have the option to utilise space at Phase 2, however they will have increased choice by also having access to space at Broadmeadow. This does not impact the financial position of the programme.

Summary of the Options

3.19 Option 1 in the table above represents a model that involves a greater reduction in the physical estate than was consulted on. The option is assessed in full in the next section, however this option would have a far greater impact on service users and would also require additional consultation (so could not be achieved within a timescale consistent with delivering MTFP savings), and therefore is not recommended.

3.20 Option 2 is the consultation model, with the specific required changes outlined in sections 3.15 – 3.18 above.

3.21 Options 3 and 4 are amended versions of Option 2, which respond to differing degrees to the consultation feedback. This section should be read in conjunction with the following section which summarises the public consultation, the feedback received, and how that feedback has been analysed. These Options balance the feedback from the consultation with the financial imperative set out under the provisions within Securing Kent's Future (considered by Cabinet 17th August 2023 and 5th October 2023), as set out elsewhere in this document.

3.22 In seeking to respond appropriately to the consultation feedback a more detailed review of the public transport network has informed the options set out in the report. As part of the consultation, modelling was provided to assess the accessibility of the revised building network on public transport considering a 30-minute travel time. Greater analysis of timetable data was used to develop the post-consultation options that respond to feedback from residents. This analysis considered both an extended travel time of 35 minutes and the regularity of the service by applying a criteria that there should be at least one

service per hour over the nine-hour period 8am to 5pm, which reflects the general service offering timeframe. It is appreciated that regularity of service is an important additional factor for residents above merely the journey time itself.

3.23 An assessment was made to determine which communities were outside of the catchment area of the new network, which highlighted ten sites proposed for closure that would be reconsidered under the amended criteria outlined in section 3.22.

3.24 Option 3 rules out the closure of 2 buildings where the journey on public transport to the nearest alternative is over 35 minutes and there is less than one service per hour when averaged over a 9-hour period.

3.25 Option 4 represents a model which goes further in the response to the consultation feedback and brings 10 buildings back into the model (the 2 buildings from option 3 and another 8). This option rules out the closure of a buildings where there is less than one service per hour when averaged over a 9-hour period, regardless of the journey time.

3.26 Option 5 is a 'Do Nothing' option and retains the current building network and service delivery model.

4 PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Kent Communities Programme Consultation

4.1 A public consultation ran between 17 January and 26 March 2023 to give service users, Members of the public and strategic partners the opportunity to review our proposals in detail and provide their response. The feedback from the consultation has resulted in the development of additional alternative options (Options 3 and 4).

4.2 Throughout the consultation a schedule of proactive engagement events took place with service users, Members of the public and partners. A total of 158 hours of proactive engagement took place during the consultation period.

4.3 Throughout the consultation there was consistent engagement with KCC staff and the Trade Unions. Engagement with staff and the unions has continued throughout the period since the close of the public consultation.

4.4 A breakdown of the feedback received from the consultation is included within the Consultation Report at Appendix B. A draft of KCC's formal response to the consultation (to be finalised when decision making has been completed) is included at Appendix C. A detailed table summarising, building by building, the consultation feedback is included at Appendix G.

4.5 At consultation we set out that the rationale behind the programme was to reduce costs for the Council both in terms of what we spend on our physical buildings (known as our Corporate Landlord costs) and in terms of what we spend to

deliver the services themselves (service costs) while prioritising service delivery for our most vulnerable communities. The consultation document also set out the requirement to reduce CO2 emissions from our estate in line with our Net Zero commitments. The feedback from the consultation demonstrates a desire from respondents to see KCC retain buildings within local communities and not to shift the delivery method towards outreach and/or digital provision, which is an understandable response from our communities.

4.6 As set out above and below, since the consultation closed the financial position for the Council is even more pressing than it was when the consultation was live at the beginning of 2023. The implication of retaining buildings beyond those identified by the Needs Framework would be a requirement to make greater cuts in other parts of the Council's operations, which could impact the delivery of other services.

4.7 The consultation explained the Needs Framework as the methodology underpinning the Kent Communities proposal. The Needs Framework used a wide range of data and indicators that when combined, profile the different level of need for services within our communities. The data included service-held metrics, such as user figures for each service. The consultation set out alternative methods for reviewing the estate and why they had been discounted.

4.8 As detailed in Appendix C, 44% of consultees agree with designing proposals based on where people have the highest need for services, while 42% disagree (12% undecided). 33% of consultees feedback that the usage of Children's Centres needed to be considered and the importance of the centres to those currently using them. The Council stands by its approach to the Needs Framework in this regard, as set out in section 3.1 service usage data was considered as part of the Needs Framework. 26% of respondents raised the issue of public transport accessibility and impact on non-car users, while 21% raised concerns regarding their ability to access alternative locations identified. The options presented for consideration by Members include two options that factor in the public transport accessibility as a response to this feedback.

4.9 The consultation set out our original proposals. This included the buildings that we proposed to retain and close in each district for each service in the programme scope. The consultation model proposed the closure of 45 locations used for service delivery across the services within the programme.

4.10 The proposals also set out 12 new co-location sites. Co-locating services within appropriate buildings (informed by the feasibility studies referenced at sections 1.11 and 1.12) allows the Council to make more efficient use of the retained estate. It also improves the service user experience, one of the key benefits of the proposals identified ahead of the consultation, by providing access to a wider range of complementary services within a single location.

4.11 Appendix 7 summarises the consultation feedback by building for consideration by Members. However, by way of a summary, the main themes of feedback as it related to the building proposals are included here. 61% of respondents disagree

with the proposal to have fewer buildings from which to deliver services. The impact of building closure on residents does require careful consideration by Members, and the range of Options for discussion in this paper seeks to provide Members with an opportunity to do so. The impact of closures does need to be considered alongside the wider policy and financial context of the Council.

4.12 Within the consultation response 48% disagreed with the proposal to co-locate services together within a single location, citing concerns around the appropriateness of sites for co-locating services. The co-location of services has been, and will continue to be, carefully planned with expert service managers so that services are co-located safely and appropriately. Indeed, the Council has examples of successful co-locations already, such as the Ashford Gateway and Bockhanger Library/Sure Steps Children Centre.

4.13 Respondents did outline concerns relating to the accessibility of public transport within their feedback – 21% of respondents raise concerns about their ability to access services at the alternative locations identified within the consultation document. For example, concerns were raised regarding the number of families that required support but do not have access to a car; lack of reliability of the public transport network and travel times to alternative locations. The options detailed in section 3 include options that amend the Needs Framework to take greater account (to varying degrees) of the public transport network analysis than was included at consultation (details at section 3.21 – 3.25).

4.14 Within the consultation 24% of comments refer to the concept of outreach being a good idea. However, there is a note of caution in most responses that it depends on the service delivered, the service being well advertised and accessible. 21% of respondents expressed the view that the outreach offer needs to be accessible/close to home. The Council's proposed response is that outreach service is part of an overall model that responds to the need of our communities and provides the flexibility to serve communities that may currently be underserved. The precise service offer will be co-designed with partners and will be informed by the Needs Framework.

4.15 During consultation many organisations, particularly District Councils, set out that they were unclear about our outreach offer and would welcome being involved in the development of our outreach provision. As an example, in their response to a consultation question on outreach Maidstone Borough Council stated that they *'would welcome early opportunity to work with Kent County Council on identifying the needs of vulnerable residents and the ways in which they engage with services to ensure that services are accessible to them.'* As such, Section 7 details a co-design approach to outreach that would enable partners including Districts and other public sector colleagues to contribute both to the understanding of need and the service provision to meet that need.

4.16 Where residents have commented upon the accessibility of services, particularly in rural locations, the developing outreach model (outlined in section 7) is a key part of our response. The Needs Framework is an important tool that can be reviewed and utilised consistently to measure changing levels of service

requirement within communities. A proactive, iterative co-design approach to the outreach offer addresses concerns about service accessibility. It does so by working with partners to best understand the changing needs of communities, particularly given the level of insight available to District authorities, and then agreeing the most effective use of outreach to deliver services to communities that would benefit from it. By delivering outreach directly within communities, utilising other centres such as parish or town halls, the requirement to travel to a KCC building is removed entirely.

4.17 As part of the feedback from the Community Services Consultation, 45% of consultees indicated that the most important consideration when accessing services online is the perceived ease of use/simple access/being user friendly. This was supplemented by feedback demonstrating that consultees wanted an option to access face to face delivery as well as online delivery. Residents do not see online services as a viable replacement for face-to-face delivery, rather an additional channel to give more options to access services. The Council's Digital Transformation Strategy is detailed in section 8 by way of a proposed response to this consultation feedback. It is important to point out that both the Kent Communities programme and the Family Hub model (subject to concurrent paper) consider digital/online provision as one part of a wider mix including the face-to-face service delivery whether that be in a permanent KCC location or a part of an outreach model.

4.18 The response of the programme to the feedback received is summarised in the preceding paragraphs and detailed in draft form within appendices for member consideration. Members should carefully consider the feedback from the consultation when making their decision. It is the view of the programme that by amending the Needs Framework to take account of the public transport analysis (as set out in section 3.21 – 3.25 and 4.13 above) that members are presented with options that respond to this feedback to varying degrees. The building specific feedback is also included at Appendix G. Given the policy and financial context it is difficult to consider each building on an entirely individual basis and doing so would jeopardise the Needs Framework methodology which underpins the programme. By focusing on the public transport analysis, we have sought to apply a fair and reasonable criteria to the entire model, amending the Needs Framework itself, rather than focus on criteria relevant to individual buildings – for example, those sites with the highest number of comments.

Family Hub Model Consultation

4.19 This decision is coordinated alongside the Family Hub Model Key Decision. A public consultation on the Family Hub Model was held between 17 July 2023 and 13 September 2023. The Family Hub consultation focused specifically on *'what'* the Family Hub service offer is, compared to the Kent Communities consultation that focused on *'where'* the services are delivered. The consultation set out the mandatory requirements required by the DfE and included what discretionary activities KCC could choose to offer, depending on feedback.

4.20 Whilst the Family Hub consultation primarily focused on setting out the service offer under a Family Hub model, the consultation did invite people to express views on the locations of the buildings.

4.21 All feedback from respondents that dealt with building locations has been included at Appendix G, however a summary is included here. The primary themes of response in relation to buildings are the same or similar to those received in the Kent Communities consultation. The ease of accessing alternative services if certain existing centres were to close; and the accessibility of services more generally for more rural areas were the bases of the most common feedback. Given the similarity in the feedback received between the Kent Communities consultation and the Family Hub consultation the response outlined above at section 4.11 – 4.15 considers the feedback of both consultations appropriately. Similarly, the desire to see existing centres retained was also central to the feedback in the Family Hub consultation (26% of respondents raised this). The options presented later in this report do present Members with a choice to retain more existing centres within rural locations.

4.22 One element that does emerge from the Family Hub consultation is a sense of discomfort in accessing services online and a resultant desire from respondents to avoid face to face services replaced with digital provision. 13% of respondents indicated that they would be partly or very uncomfortable accessing services online. The Family Hub model is clear that digital/online services are not meant as a replacement, but one part of an overall mix of services. It is also the case that Family Hub will include digital support within the physical locations to help residents build confidence to access services using alternative methods. However, this response to the Family Hub consultation further reinforces the additional review of transport accessibility that is the main outcome of the Kent Communities consultation. The review of the transport network accessibility impacts the Kent Communities proposals as it results in the options that retain more buildings and reduces the requirement of residents to travel greater distances on the public transport network to access the services they require.

4.23 The feedback from both consultations is available within the appendices to this report and the Family Hub model report. The draft responses to both consultations are also available within Appendix C. Members are asked to consider the consultation feedback alongside the other factors outlined within the report.

Petitions

4.24 During the Kent Communities consultation period seven petitions were formally submitted to KCC, and an eighth was not formally submitted. These are detailed in the table below.

Title	Signatories	Completed	Lead Petitioner

Save Our Children's Centres - Blossom and The Sunflower Centre	77	May 2023	Michaela Barnes
Blossom Children's Centre & The Sunflower Centre (Paper)	Over 1000	March 2023	Michaela Barnes
Keep Tunbridge Wells Children's Centres open in Rusthall, Southborough, High Brooms and Broadwater	3	April 2023	Jayne Sharratt
Save our nursery – Explorers nursery site, Ramsgate – Priory Children's Centre	1102	April 2023	Kim Hammond & Clair Jones
Save Our Canterbury Childrens Centres	173	March 2023	Mel Dawkins
St Mary's Children's Centre (Paper)	351 Change.org (196 signatures)	March 2023	Frances Rehal
Save Callis Grange Children's Centre (Paper)	221	April 2023	Jennifer Matterface
Save New Ash Green's Children's Centre	Not formally submitted		

4.25 The impact of retaining all locations that are the subject of a petition listed above would be a loss of savings for the Corporate Landlord of £325k which, when deducted from the estimated £1.37m saving identified in Option 2 (the consultation option) would leave an overall Corporate Landlord Saving of £1.04m.

4.26 Of the locations subject to the petitions above, three are reintroduced into the model under option 4 where (as set out above) the reanalysis of the public transport network as a response to the consultation feedback results in Sunflower CC, Apple Tree CC and New Ash Green CC being retained.

4.27 The Council recognises the strong feelings of users of these centres and other residents who have signed these petitions. Those views have been taken into consideration alongside the consultation responses. The Council considers that it is important to take a principled approach to deciding which centres should be prioritised for closure, as adjusted to take account of public transport accessibility. While volume of signatures does not in itself directly indicate greater need for a centre, or greater impact on users in the event of closure, the Council has considered whether the size of the petitions indicates a greater need than previously assessed.

4.28 Appendix G sets out the rationale for the decision on each building, including those that were subject to petitions. Respondents to the consultation did highlight whether usage had been adequately taken into consideration (33% of respondents commenting). The Council stands by the original assessment made, since usage data was included within the data provided by CYPE while the Needs Analysis was being developed (more information at section 3.1). For convenience, the usage figures are also detailed here. Blossoms Children's Centre (over 1000 online and 77 paper responses) is in a ward with a need score of 42, which is the lowest need score of any ward with a Children's Centre in Dover District. It does however have high usage figures – reaching 1626 individuals based on 2019 (i.e., pre-Covid) data. The current Deal Youth Hub is 1.3 miles away and would serve the existing community utilising Blossoms. Whilst considering the high usage, given the low need score and the proximity to the current Deal Youth Hub the proposal across all options remains to exit Blossoms Children's Centre.

4.29 As shown in the table at section 4.24, there was also a petition relating to the Explorers Nursery and Priory Children's Centre service (1102 responses). The Children's Centre is proposed to be relocated 0.3 miles away within a co-location at Ramsgate Library. This continues to serve the same community that currently access the Priory Centre. The Nursery provision remains unaffected by the Kent Communities Proposals and as is instead subject to the existing terms of its lease agreement with KCC. This will be managed under the Council's standard estate management practices.

5. OPTIONS APPRAISAL

5.1 Following the public consultation and review of the responses received, the Programme Team, in collaboration with the Cross Directorate Team and supported by the Strategic Reset Programme Team, have developed the range of options for consideration that are detailed at section 3.15 to 3.18 above.

5.2 As part of the options appraisal each option has first been assessed against two sets of Pass/Fail Criteria that assess whether the option achieves our Critical Success Factors and whether it responds to the Needs Framework. This reflects the rationale and the methodology that seeks to achieve the savings required. Each option has then been ranked against a wide variety of factors including the financial and non-financial benefits as well as risks. The detailed Options Appraisal is available at Appendix E, however the implications of proceeding with each option are set out below.

5.3 This method of appraisal is necessarily broad. It seeks to achieve an objective appraisal of the options as a decision-making tool. The options appraisal should not be considered as a standalone factor, however. Rather, this options appraisal should be considered alongside all other factors outlined within this report.

5.4 Based on the detailed appraisal set out in Appendix E, Options 1 and 5 are discounted due to receiving a Fail in one or both of the Pass/Fail appraisals.

5.5 Options 2, 3 and 4 are all considered viable. There is a difference in the financial considerations between the options in terms of the Corporate Landlord Revenue saving and there is no difference in the saving attributed to ASCH. There is a difference between the options in the savings achieved by CYPE, the implication of which is that savings would need to be made elsewhere within the service to meet the shortfall. There are significant differences between the options in terms of the potential capital receipts and the reduction in the backlog maintenance liability.

5.6 Option 1: 'Go Further' would result in a level of impact on service users that has not been assessed fully and so cannot reasonably form part of a decision. This option would also require further consultation work ahead of any decision and would result in an unacceptable delay to benefit realisation. It would also not respond to the views expressed during the consultation. Option 1 does not achieve a Pass against the Needs Framework appraisal as it is a reasonable assumption that to 'go further' buildings would likely be under threat in areas of higher need. The implications of proceeding with this option would mean that a decision could not be taken at this stage.

5.7 Option 2: 'Consultation Model' delivers the best viable revenue saving and therefore reduces pressure to find alternative savings solutions elsewhere within the Council. Of the viable options, Option 2 meets the Needs Framework in its unamended form (i.e., not amended in line with consultation responses as it is in Options 3 and 4) and performs best against the Critical Success Factors. Our Best Value duty considerations and the financial challenges facing the Council may be considered the most important factor meaning that, whilst the consultation feedback has been carefully considered, the decision is taken to proceed with the option as set out at consultation. This option does respond to the feedback from partners regarding outreach provision as set out in section 4.15. The option protects the MTFP savings of the services in scope and delivers the CLL MTFP savings estimated from this Phase of the programme.

5.8 Option 3: 'Minor Amendments' does not represent much difference between Option 2 in terms of revenue savings in terms of the CLL revenue savings. However, the service model implications of retaining additional buildings does impact the savings realised by the Family Hub service team. Option 3 meets the amended Needs Framework (when amended to give slight weight to the public transport analysis in response to the consultation feedback). Proceeding with Option 3 would mean that whilst overall we are delivering the financial and non-financial benefits, there would be a requirement to find alternative savings elsewhere to meet the MTFP saving target. The shortfall is estimated to be c£100k for the CLL and c£44.8k for Open Access. Option 3 does demonstrate a response to the consultation by reviewing the transport accessibility and making changes as a result. It also responds to the feedback from partners regarding outreach provision as set out in section 4.15. The response to the consultation is balanced against the financial challenge.

5.9 Option 4: ‘Major Amendments’ demonstrates a much more significant response to the consultation, meeting the amended Needs Framework in response to the consultation (when amended to give greater weight to the public transport analysis in response to the consultation feedback). However, proceeding with this option would mean a lower savings realisation. The shortfall for CLL is estimated as c£260k and c£179.2k for Open Access. This would likely impact other parts of the Council’s operations either within this Directorate or across other areas of the Council’s service offer as alternative savings solutions will need to be found to make up this shortfall.

5.10 Option 5: ‘Do Nothing’ does not make any change to the physical estate and does not respond at all to our needs analysis. This option is not considered viable as it does not pass either of the Pass/Fail appraisals. Proceeding with Option 5 would mean that alternative solutions need to be found to deliver the entirety of the financial and non-financial benefits the programme is designed to deliver. This will impact other service areas and will almost certainly impact statutory service delivery.

5.11 The Options Appraisal summarised here is one consideration for Members, alongside the overall financial challenge the Council faces, the Equalities Impacts and the consultation response. Based purely on the detailed analysis in Appendix E and summarised above, the preferred option with which to proceed is ‘Option 2: Consultation Option’. The next preferred viable option is Option 3, and it is noted that there is very little difference in the scoring between them. Option 4 is also considered viable, although it should be noted that when considering the ranking scores, Option 4 does not provide the same level of benefit as Option 2 or 3, most notably resulting in a shortfall against MTFP targets for both CLL and CYPE which would need to be met elsewhere (impacting other service areas).

5.12 **Members are asked to consider the options appraisal set out above, the relative importance of each factor considered within the options appraisal, and the implications of proceeding with each option in light of all of the available information including the consultation feedback throughout the Committee hearing and Cabinet Decision process.**

6 SERVICE IMPACTS

6.1 The five options set out above have different impacts on the provision of services from physical buildings across the different services within the scope of the programme.

6.2 As explained above in 3.19 and 3.26, Option 1 and Option 5 are not considered viable. Therefore, this section focuses on the relative impacts on the service provision between Options 2, 3 and 4.

6.3 The Gateway service is not a statutory service, as set out at section 1.2. As detailed in the table at 3.14 above, the model for the Gateway service is common across Options 2, 3 and 4. The service will be delivered from 10 locations, all of which are co-location sites with other services and partners. The locations have been determined by the Needs Framework and the availability of sites that can facilitate the co-location with other services whilst ensuring there is no growth required in the revenue budget to deliver the Gateway service. Where services are proposed to move location, there is no planned reduction is service hours.

6.4 As set out at section 1.2, the Community Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities service is not in itself a statutory function. The proposed model is, as is the case with Gateways, common across the three viable options (2, 3 and 4). Each option helps to protect the £2.2m MTFP saving identified for this service. The saving has already been realised as the service has not established itself in some locations following the Covid-19 pandemic. This has been driven by changes in service user requirements since the pandemic. As such the KCP model simply formalises the changes already made by the service in response to the changing needs of its user base. No additional savings are achieved but by making these changes the Council can protect the saving made by the service and remove the likelihood of future growth in the budget requirement.

6.5 As set out at section 1.2, CLS (Adult Education) service is not in itself a statutory function. The CLS Service model is common across the three viable options as is the case with Gateways and Adults with learning Disabilities services. CLS is a demand-led service and as outlined at consultation stage will seek to secure space to deliver offer as needed – primarily within the existing estate, but by seeking outreach alternatives where needed. The CLS service will retain the same number of locations, however, will come out of the Broadstairs Memorial and Pottery Centre and co-locate into Broadstairs Library. This reduces the running costs of multiple buildings for the Council.

6.6 The Open Access and Public Health / Family Hub services (subject to concurrent report) represent most of the change for the services and between the options outlined. As set out in section 1.3 there are statutory elements to the service delivery which will continue to be delivered under the Family Hub model.

6.7 Whilst the detail around the proposed Family Hub model is contained within the Family Hub Model decision reports, a summary is provided here for convenience. It is important to make clear the distinction between the service provision and the buildings. Service provision and the buildings footprint are different, albeit closely related, considerations. The Family Hub model sets out a hybrid whole family approach including universal and targeted support for children, young people (0-19 years of age and up to 25 for SEND) and their families. This will include a community based universal offer to provide information and advice on child and adolescent development. This access to universal advice complements existing universal services accessed through partners such as schools, Health Visitors and GP's. Family Hub sites in each district will deliver a range of Start for Life

and partnership services and will work with the voluntary and community sector to provide access to a wide range of services.

6.8 Where an existing building, which provides current Open Access Children's, Youth or Public Health services closes, the Universal Start for Life Services will still be provided from other physical locations within the district area, in line with the retained buildings set out in each option for consideration. The Need Analysis identifies areas for Outreach provision as set out in section 7 below. It is not the case that where an existing building closes, outreach provision is to be automatically offered as a mitigation for that community. Instead, the Needs Analysis looks at all existing communities and identifies where outreach provision is likely to be the most effective method of provision. Section 7 below goes into more detail. All residents will be able to access advice and guidance online either from home or from within one of the Family Hub locations.

6.9 The approach to Outreach and Digital encouraged by the Family Hub Model means that the provision of services is no longer so tightly constrained by the physical estate.

6.10 Each of the options set out in the Family Hub Model is deliverable across each of the five options set out in this paper for consideration.

7 OUTREACH PROVISION

7.1 Outreach provision takes many different forms but is essentially the delivery of a service away from a permanent, dedicated KCC premises. This could mean home visits for public health teams, detached youth work in the community, fixed term parenting courses from a village hall or alternative KCC setting – for example a library.

7.2 The strength of outreach is in its flexibility: it aims to meet people where they are – delivering our services precisely where they are needed, not forcing our most vulnerable residents to come to us. It allows for timely interventions by way of 'pop up' services where needed. As a result of this flexibility, outreach provision is resource intensive and therefore more targeted.

7.3 Our Needs Framework has indicated where outreach provision may be the most suitable method of service delivery. It is not the case that where a building is proposed for closure, outreach has been proposed as a mitigation. The programme has sought to understand the levels and nature of need for our services and then proposed a solution using the different service delivery mechanisms available to us (physical buildings, outreach and digital).

7.4 The following information sets out the outreach offer proposed for each service.

7.5 Open Access Services:/Family Hub Model (subject to concurrent paper on Family Hub model – see other paper)

7.5.1 Outreach is a key part of the existing offer and will continue to be a fundamental pillar of the service offer as the service seeks to engage those families that have typically been less likely to access services, meaning that Universal and targeted services could be delivered in a range of ways such as:

- Parenting Education programmes in local community buildings
- Sport for children with additional needs in local community buildings
- Access to digital support at Leisure centres
- Education, Employment and Training support in a school
- Online counselling through Zoom
- Pop up activities, information, and advice at community events
- Information and advice at local activities, such as play groups
- Early Language development at the Family home
- Support for community groups to deliver specific services

7.5.2 The Kent Communities programme changes the way outreach provision is planned and delivered (7.5.3 below sets out how the change has been developed). There are four specific categories of need within the model that indicate a requirement for outreach provision. Four categories have been identified as areas for focus for any potential outreach activity subject to the provisions detailed later in this section:

i) Specific 'edge-of-town' communities falling outside the 20 min walking distance but high proportion of families and young people living in deprivation sitting outside the boundary and therefore '0-19' outreach activity is required.
ii) Larger communities 'whole towns' that see a high cumulative 0-19 deprivation linked need across the whole area but not enough to warrant a whole building.
iii) Rural communities with high levels of deprivation that may otherwise be cut off, with cumulative level of need requiring specific 0-19 outreach provision.
iv) Areas where specific flexible detached youth provision is required – often 'in the field' and not linked to specific building locations.

7.5.3 To determine the four categories identified above an analysis was undertaken on the revised network by identifying communities that sat outside of a 20 minute 'pram-push' catchment of a proposed centre. The highlighted communities were then assessed to identify which LSOAs (Lower layer Super Output Area) have 50 or more 0–15-year-olds living in income deprivation. This identified village locations with higher levels of deprivation that required service provision and the specific edge of town communities outside of walking distance from a proposed centre. It is also suggested that larger communities that do not have a centre within the proposal but do show a cumulative build of need across a larger area is a category for outreach.

7.5.4 The table below is indicative and provides an example of areas for each of the four outreach categories outlined in paragraph 6.5.2.

Outreach Type	**Geographic based example (illustrative only)**
Edge of town community	East of Faversham, Whitfield
Larger area with cumulative need	Sevenoaks, Broadstairs
Rural village location	Marden, Leysdown, Lydd
Flexible Detached Youth	Flexibly deployed as required

7.5.5 The Needs Framework will continue to be monitored and updated to ensure that the Council continues to be agile and responsive to the evolving needs of the communities we serve. By reviewing the Need data regularly, the CYPE Open Access team can identify where the greatest investment in outreach provision is around the county. This will be an agile process which can change as required each year and will include support for community groups to deliver their own services where requested.

7.5.6 The specific outreach activities to be funded will be determined by the local area manager within the service given their deeper understanding of the requirements of the community.

7.5.7 There will be the opportunity for community partners, through the LCPG (Local Children's Partnership Group) or other frameworks, to contribute their understanding and assessment of the specific requirements of each community and the delivery of those services. This will ensure that where specific needs are identified there is a shared understanding and co-designed partnership approach to the delivery of multi-agency outreach. Further details are included within the separate Family Hub Key Decision report.

7.5.8 It is proposed that the needs analysis that has underpinned the work on the Kent Communities programme is reassessed at regular intervals and that service managers work with partners to allocate service provision appropriately as need fluctuates. This continued reanalysis of need will inform not just future decisions about a co-designed outreach proposal, but also decision around our estate.

7.6 Other services in scope:

7.6.1 Outreach provision already accounts for approximately 50% of the service offer for Adults with Learning Disabilities because a large part of the service offer centres on the needs and wellbeing of the clients and getting out in the community allows for greater independence. The service is directly responsive to the client needs and therefore outreach activities are planned accordingly. Increased investment of approximately £224k in outreach will allow greater opportunities for clients to access specialised equipment and skills.

7.6.2 Community Learning and Skills (CLS) are not proposing to change their current outreach model. Service demand is largely consistent across the county; however, provision already exists to venues as needed to deliver courses where demand emerges.

7.6.3 Gateways as a service are tied to specific locations and that is not proposed to change.

8 DITIGIAL TRANSFORMATION

8.1 The Council's existing digital offer will continue, as well as plans for Digital Transformation across the council as outlined within the draft Digital Strategy 2023-26. The Digital Strategy (due to Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, January 2024) sets out our plans to bring about Digital Transformation in KCC and is an overarching framework that encompasses our current and future digitally focused strategies and plans. The vision is to ensure that "People's digital experiences of KCC are accessible, inclusive, clear, trusted and designed with the user in mind to make their experience as positive as possible. They leave feeling confident, empowered, and respected". Four strategic ambitions are stated; Improve residents' digital experience; Simple, secure, and shareable; Well used and used well; and Data led. The strategy is underpinned by Digital Design Principles:

- Start with user needs, design services around the service user.
- Buy once, use many times.
- Design with data insight and analytics built in.
- Keep it simple, share and iterate.
- Consistent, not uniform.
- Support and upskill staff to embrace digital.

8.2 Activity identified within the digital strategy includes service engagements for 'Digital discovery' to identify and exploit digital opportunities to improve our services. A specific engagement was conducted to investigate a dedicated booking application that is specifically aimed at facilitating the increased use of co-location sites by partners that this programme requires. The booking app would allow for common spaces to be booked out by the co-located services to help organise and manage the shared use of key facilities for service delivery.

8.3 Scoping work has been undertaken that assesses the requirements of different services that will be sharing co-located buildings. That scoping work has informed the information included below, setting out the investment in terms of time and resource required to facilitate this facility.

8.4 Our digital transformation Team has assessed the various requirements of the services that would be co-locating across our estate and have indicated that one off investment of circa £73,000 and on-going annual costs of circa £49,000 would

be required to further scope, develop, test, install and train staff for the booking app facility. A period of approximately 18 months will be required to undertake the work required.

8.5 The precise expenditure and timeframe required will be subject to a Business Case which will be submitted to the Strategic Technology Board for agreement. This will include the options covering the staffing resource with the specific skillset to deliver the agreed solution.

9 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS OF THE OPTIONS

9.1 As detailed above in sections 1 and 2, the rationale for the Kent Communities programme focuses among other factors, on the need to make revenue savings within the Corporate Landlord budget and to facilitate revenue savings across our service areas.

9.2 The requirement to secure revenue savings was further emphasised on 17 August and 5 October 2023, when Cabinet adopted the recommendations within the report 'Securing Kent's Future'.

9.3 The rationale also includes the requirement to reduce the pressure on the backlog maintenance cost linked to our buildings and to reduce our CO2 emissions from our own physical estate. For convenience, the CO2 savings are summarised here and detailed within Appendix E.

9.4 The Corporate Landlord MTFP Savings target is £2.9m and the anticipated revenue saving for the preferred option is £1.37m.

9.5 The table below sets out the financial impact of each option. Gateways and CLS did not have MTFP targets and having worked through the financial modelling with these services, no savings are meant to fall out. There is no growth in their budget as a result of the KCP changes.

Impact	Option 1	Option 2	Option 3	Option 4	Option 5
CLL Saving	Highest	£1.37m	£1.27m	£1.11m	£0
Maintenance Reduction	Highest	£6.34m	£5.85m	£4.84m	£0
Capital Receipts (based on professional desktop valuations)	Highest	£3.8m	£3.8m	£3.2m	£0
Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities Savings*	Highest	£2.2m	£2.2m	£2.2m	£2.2m
Family Hub Service Savings*	Highest	£1.5m	£1.45m	£1.32m	£0
Estimated CO2 saving (tonnes)	Highest	977	938	798	0

*Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities have already achieved this saving and the KCP changes formalise the estate reduction around the service changes already made therefore preventing base budget growth back post savings realisation.

9.6 Due to the co-location of services proposed across all the options there is an estimated CLL saving of c£199k within the CLL savings figures detailed in the table at 9.5.

9.7 Further savings against the CLL MTFP target are linked to additional phases of the Kent Communities programme which will progress over the course of the next 12 months.

9.8 As set out in the Options Appraisal (Section 5) the cost of implementing the preferred option will be met from existing approved budgets.

9.9 There is a potential financial risk liability of up to £2.3m in clawback liability within Option 2, reducing to £1.8m in Option 3 and £325k in Option 4. Mitigations are outlined within section 11. There are other more minor risks associated with the preferred option. This includes currently unquantifiable liabilities such as redundancy or TUPE costs as clauses within third party contract agreements.

9.10 The current cost of the programme to date is £2.36m.

9.11 The table below sets out the cost of implementing the preferred option:

Cost Item	Revenue	Capital	Funding Options
Programme Costs to date	£2.36m		SRP Reserve
Capital Investment for Co-locations		£5.6m	SRP Capital Fund
Potential Clawback Liability Risk		£2.3m	Options Appraisal to mitigate risk
Total		**£7.9m**	

9.12 The backlog maintenance bill for the buildings in scope of the programme is estimated to be £42m. Option 2 represents a reduction of circa £6.34m in the backlog maintenance bill, reducing to £35.6m. Option 3 reduces the backlog maintenance bill by an estimated £5.85m (to £36.1m) and Option 4 reduces the backlog maintenance bill by an estimated £4.84m (to £37.1m).

10 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

10.1 Consideration has been given to KCC's statutory duties in relation to the provision of services affected by the proposals in this report. There is a nexus between these proposals, the Family Hub Programme, and commissioned youth services (to a lesser degree). KCC has retained external legal advice and Counsel in relation to these proposals and advice has been provided to the operational team on an iterative basis and advice provided to decision makers. The legal risks will need to be balanced against the requirements of the proposal and wider benefits of implementation.

10.2 The proposals outlined in the Kent Communities include changes for the Gateway and CLS services which are not statutory.

10.3 The Community Day Services for Adults with Learning Disabilities services is not in itself a statutory service, but does but does constitute one of the ways in which we meet statutory requirements under the Care Act 2014 to promote individual well-being; to provide services to prevent, delay and reduce need and; to meet assessed needs for individuals and carers. The changes proposed do not affect the delivery of our statutory requirements.

10.4 The elements of statutory provision delivered under the Children Act 1989 and the Childcare Act 2016 in relation to the current Open Access services and Public Health services are, from an operational perspective, retained within the proposed Family Hub model (subject to concurrent paper) and are designed not to be undermined by the changes within the Kent Communities Programme. This is because these services are still to be offered to residents of Kent following any decision on the Kent Communities Programme.

10.5 In line with KCC's obligations under the Public Sector Equality Duty a full Equality Impact Analysis was undertaken by each service. The draft EqIA for each service was included as part of the material during the public consultation. The EqIAs have each been updated by the services following review of the consultation feedback. The EqIAs for each service and for the Programme as a whole are included at Appendix 6. More detail regarding the EqIAs is provided at Section 12 below.

10.6 Whenever considering changes to our services as part of our general Duty of Best Value, the Council has an obligation under the Duty to Consult (Section 3 (2) of the Local Government Act 1999) to consult the public on the changes at an early and meaningful stage in the development of the new plans. Section 4 above sets out how KCC have demonstrated compliance with its Duty to Consult.

11 RISKS

11.1 The table below sets out the key risks associated with the implementation of the Kent Communities programme.

Risk	Mitigation
Clawback: Sure Start centres included capital grants at inception that are subject to clawback by the DfE if the asset is not used for Children's provision for a defined period following the grant.	Total potential liability of £2.3m capital clawback. This will be factored into the Options Appraisal when determining the plan for surplus assets with other uses considered that fulfil the criteria that the building must be used for Children's provision during the liability period.
Capital investment required impacted by inflation: The capital investment required to deliver the co-location sites has been estimated at £5.6m. Whilst this does include a contingency figure, increased inflation rates may impact the funding required to deliver the co-locations that result in surplus assets.	Contingency figure built into estimate at timer of decision. As projects are approved following key decision each individual project will be subject to KCC standard cost and risk management procedures including the appointment of a qualified cost consultant.
Options Appraisals: Subject to our adopted policy for disposal of assets, any building that is potentially surplus to requirements is subject to an Options Appraisal to determine whether there are any other uses the Council may have for the building. Should the Options Appraisal identify	Any options appraisal that significantly impacts the savings realisation will be considered by the Estate Strategy Board and if necessary, brought back to the Policy and Resources committee for formal consideration by Members before agreement.

other Council uses for an asset, this may decrease the savings realisation for the Corporate Landlord.	
Unknown costs linked to implementation: It has not been possible to fully quantify some costs in advance of the decision being taken. These include: 1. Costs associated with redundancy liability to third party contractors (cleaners in buildings that are proposed for closure). 2. Costs required to provide over and above ordinary support for site clearance and relocation/removal of equipment.	Any additional cost implications that impact the overall savings realisation or cost-benefit analysis of the preferred option will be considered at the Future Asset Board and any recommendations made to the Strategic Reset Programme Board where appropriate. Following decision, any engagement with third parties that has not been possible pre-decision (to protect against pre-determination risks) will be prioritised and any significant change to the benefit realisation will be reported back to the relevant Board ahead of implementation. It is the assumption of the programme that revenue costs for implementation will be met by existing core budgets.

11.2 Where it is not possible to mitigate risks effectively, and there is a resultant impact on the savings realisation specifically (for example if an Options Appraisal suggest an alternative use for a site which has a savings figure associated with its disposal) this will be reported to the relevant Board for consideration.

12 EQUALITIES

12.1 An initial Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken by each individual service in scope of the Kent Communities programme in advance of the consultation. These EqIAs assessed the impact of the consultation model on residents with one or more protected characteristics. The full set of EqIAs were included as part of the consultation material for review and comment by resident, partners and service users.

12.2 Since the consultation, the service EqIAs have been updated following a review of feedback from the consultation paying particular attention to equalities concerns raised.

12.3 A whole programme EqIA has been developed which summarises the service EqIAs.

12.4 The service and programme level EqIAs carefully consider the feedback from the consultation and any equalities impacts that arise from the response from residents. The impacts are set out for each protected characteristic and

explained fully. Any mitigations are detailed and an assessment of whether the impacts are justified is given, when taken in relation to the policy and financial context within which the Council currently operates.

12.5 Broadly, equalities impact affect residents that experience one or more of the following characteristics: gender, age, disability, race and ethnic background, and religion. The full set of EQIA's set out the impacts in more detail. The most significant impact identified on the protected characteristics is the requirement to travel further, possibly using public transport, or the requirement to walk further to access services. Some protected (age, disability, race) characteristics will be impacted more by the relocation of services than others, in that navigating around unfamiliar locations may prove difficult.

12.6 The positive impact of co-location opportunities is set out in the EqIAs, as is the extended outreach provision which will serve residents with protected characteristics in areas that do not currently find it easy to access services.

12.7 It has been assessed that the impacts on residents with protected characteristics will decrease depending on what option is chosen by Members. Option 1 would have the greatest negative impact. Option 2 would have the second greatest level of impact. Options 3 and 4 reduce the impact on residents with protected characteristics by reducing the number of building closures and therefore reducing the instances in which residents would need to travel further to access services.

12.8 The impacts, when considered alongside the mitigation measures detailed within the EqIAs and considered within the overarching policy and financial context on which the Council currently operates, are considered to be justifiable.

12.9 The service EqIAs and the programme EqIA have been subject to the council's EqIA approval process.

12.10 The EqIAs are included at Appendix F. Members are asked to consider the Equalities Impacts on residents with protected characteristics alongside the other relevant factors detailed within this report.

13 GOVERNANCE

13.1 The Full Business Case (FBC) for the Kent Communities programme has been reviewed and approved by the Strategic Reset Programme Board on 2 November 2023.

13.2 Ahead of the Cabinet meeting on 30 November 2023, the relevant proposals will have been discussed with Members at an All-Member Briefing and debated publicly at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 22 November 2023.

13.3 An update will be provided at Cabinet containing the key considerations and comments following the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

13.4 The risks outlined in section 11 will be carefully monitored by the Programme Team during the implementation period. If any risks impact the deliverability of the decision made by Cabinet, then it is proposed that a report with an updated recommendation will be taken to the relevant Cabinet Committee for consideration.

13.5 Other decisions, including relating to the disposal of surplus assets, will be taken during implementation in line with the Council schedule of Delegated Authority.

14 RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet is asked to agree to:

a) Consider and note the feedback from the Kent Communities Consultation on the proposals, as well as responses to the Family Hub Consultation, insofar as they are relevant to the Kent Communities proposals, alongside the amended policy and financial position set out in the report 'Securing Kent's Future;'

b) Consider the options as set out in the decision report and confirm an option to be implemented including agreement of:

i. The network of buildings to be utilised to support the delivery of following services:
- Open access youth and children services – including Public Health
- Adults with Learning Disabilities
- CLS – Adult Education
- Gateways

ii. The decommissioning of services at those buildings which are no longer to be utilised to support the delivery of the services outlined above.

iii. The co-design of outreach services with partners.

c) Approve expenditure from capital budget to enable adaptations to the agreed network of buildings in order to facilitate the co-location of multiple services;

d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Directors of Children Young People & Education (CYPE), Growth Environment & Transport (GET), Deputy Chief Executives Department (DCED) and Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH) to design the staffing model to support the changes as agreed in part b of the decision above, undertake the necessary staff consultation and implement any changes as a result; and

e)	Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to enter into the necessary contracts and legal agreements to facilitate the implementation of the decisions.

15 APPENDICES

Appendix A: Needs Framework Information
Appendix B: Consultation Report
Appendix C: Draft Response to Consultation Feedback
Appendix D: Proposed Buildings Retained and Closed by Option
Appendix E: Detailed Options Appraisal
Appendix F: Equalities Impact Assessments
Appendix G: Breakdown of consultation responses by building
Appendix H – Proposed Record of Decision

16 CONTACT DETAILS

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