

**From:** Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Rebecca Spore – Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 13 November 2025

**Subject:** Decant of Invicta House into Sessions House Update Report

**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This report updates the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on the recent decant from Invicta House into Sessions House.

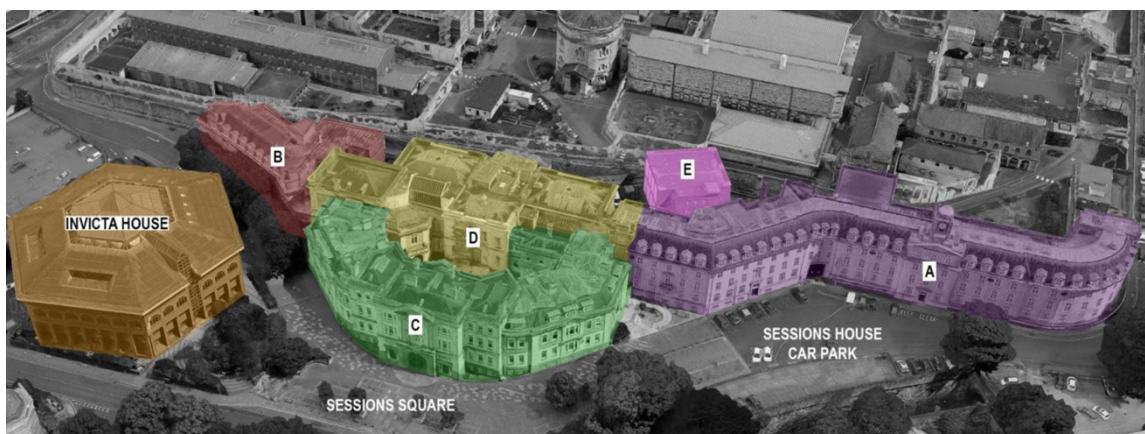
**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

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## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The decant of staff from Invicta House to Sessions House A Block was authorised by Key Decision ref 24/00100, which also approved a £1.75m capital spend to facilitate the minimum compliance and condition works required to enable staff to safely reoccupy A Block on a temporary basis and the relocation of the case conferencing suite.
- 1.2 At the end of the decant parts of blocks A, C and D in Sessions House are occupied with Block B and E remaining closed.



## 2. Compliance and Alteration Works

- 2.1 Compliance works were focused on A Block of Sessions House, and infrastructure throughout the building to support the reoccupation of A Block.
- 2.2 The majority of works focused on compliance with modern fire safety regulations, including the replacement of fire alarms, emergency lighting, and the introduction of new fire doors throughout A Block. Due to the listed status of

much of the building, there was a heavy reliance on wireless systems to avoid the need for new cable runs. Some of these works such as the fire alarm works were required across the whole building.

- 2.3 In addition, limited works were undertaken to heating, hot water, and lift systems to improve their resilience. The Facilities Management team are holding spare components in stock at Sessions House to minimise downtime in the event of component failure, but it should be noted that many of the building systems are now life expired.
- 2.4 While no lifts within the building are fire-rated with alternative evacuation procedures in place, the ongoing lift functionality is critical to the routine operation of the building, particularly for staff and members with accessibility needs.
- 2.5 The decant strategy adopted involved a like-for-like replacement of bookable desks and meeting rooms as to those that were previously available in Invicta House, to minimise the impact on service delivery during the decant period. The majority of needs could be met within A Block, but the specific requirements of the Case Conferencing function at Invicta House necessitated additional works, as set out below.
- 2.6 The Case Conferencing function has been relocated close to the Sessions House main reception, with its own sub-reception service delivered within the space due to service requirements. Limited works were undertaken to refurbish this space and create new rooms capable of accommodating the case conferencing function; this included sound-attenuating plasterboard and installation of video conferencing systems.
- 2.7 The majority of works concluded in June/July 2025, allowing for utility services to be recommissioned in the building.
- 2.8 Accounts are being finalised, but current projections indicate that all works will have been carried out within approved budgetary limits.

### **3. Basement**

- 3.1 The courtyard car park has been closed for a number of years due to the structural condition of the reinforced concrete deck below the entrance archway, above the basement.
- 3.2 Temporary propping has been in place to ensure the archway remained safe and open for pedestrian movements, as a key component of the fire evacuation strategy, but this propping was not sufficient to safely allow vehicles to travel over the surface.
- 3.3 Listed building consent was obtained in liaison with Maidstone Borough Council for a permanent reinforcement solution which would allow limited vehicle access to the courtyard to be reinstated.
- 3.4 Width restrictions in the form of bollards are being introduced within the archway to ensure vehicles travel at low speeds and in the centre of the passageway.

- 3.5 Works will be delivered within the overall budgetary limit for the compliance and decant project.
- 3.6 These works are due to conclude on 31 October 2025 and following scheduled cleaning of the Courtyard the 8 spaces will then be made available for allocation.

#### **4. Decant**

- 4.1 Following conclusion of compliance works, an exercise to relocate equipment and staff from Invicta House to Sessions House A Block took place within the period from 21 July 2025 to August 2025.
- 4.2 Close liaison with impacted staff and services was necessary to scope storage and spatial requirements as part of the relocation exercise. While the majority of desks within SHQ are openly bookable, there are a number of teams and individuals who require dedicated provision which needed to be replicated in the move.
- 4.3 Engagement also took place with staff groups to understand the impact on specific cohorts, including engagement with Level Playing Field to capture any reasonable accommodations which could be integrated into plans.
- 4.4 It was possible to populate the majority of A Block with desks in advance of the relocation dates by sourcing desks from elsewhere across the estate, with limited need to purchase replacements where spatial constraints limited options. Any furniture that could not be reused was recycled via licensed contractors.
- 4.5 Relocation works involved the movement of storage, equipment, and records for specific teams, as well as the relocation of all IT equipment from Invicta to Sessions House.
- 4.6 Movement activity was broken down into discrete areas per week, with the majority of the actual move activity taking place over weekends to minimise disruption and Health and Safety implications for staff. This strategy allowed a consistent desk and meeting room availability across the wider SHQ estate to be maintained through the entire decant period, with areas of A Block beginning to open before Invicta was fully closed.
- 4.7 Works were strategically targeted at the Summer Holiday break to minimise staff presence and disruption.
- 4.8 With the exception of the Case Conferencing service, Invicta House closed to staff on the 8 August 2025 with the closure of Floor 3.
- 4.9 Sessions House A Block is now principally laid out as follows, excluding spaces allocated to specific teams which are not bookable:
  - 1st Floor – 118 Bookable desks, plus 18-person team space
  - 2nd Floor – Meeting rooms – 23 Bookable rooms, plus 5x 2 person non-bookable

- 3rd Floor – 145 Bookable desks, plus 50-person team collaboration desks
- 4.10 As part of the decant, there has been no net reduction in the number of available desks or available meeting rooms. Familiarisation tours were made available to staff with staff from infrastructure undertaking floor walk to help staff transition into a new space.
- 4.11 All other facilities which were provided at Invicta House have also been relocated to Sessions House, including the "coffee shop" facility which has reopened in the Sessions House former restaurant, and the post room function.
- 4.12 Following the relocation to Sessions House the booking system for SHQ has transitioned from the previous outlook arrangement to the Matrix system. This allows for greater oversight when it comes to the utilisation of space, but also greater tools to address the issue of obsolete bookings not being cancelled in a timely manner to allow other staff to use the space.

## 5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Feedback from staff post-relocation has been broadly positive, with expected snagging issues which have been resolved. Some minor tweaks to floorplans are likely to be necessary to meet specific requirements which have emerged.
- 5.2 Ongoing engagement is taking place with staff groups to ensure that any emerging issues are understood.
- 5.3 The relocation activity has been delivered as planned, and within required budgets.

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## Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

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## 6. Background Documents

- 6.1 [Decision - 24/00100 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters \(SHQ\)](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2919)  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2919>

## 7. Contact details

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