

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

To: Scrutiny Committee, 25 November 2025

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

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

Background

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

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

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

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

Process

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

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

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

Recommendation – Options for the Scrutiny Committee

The Scrutiny Committee may:

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

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

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

Background documents

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

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