

**From:** Paul Carter, Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Audit, Transformation and Commercial and Traded Services

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee - 22<sup>nd</sup> July 2016

**Decision No:** 16/00058

**Subject:** Re-location of KCC Services and Commissioned Services from Dover Gateway

**Key decision** Affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of Paper:** DMT, CMT

**Future Pathway of Paper:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** Dover North: Cllr Steve Manion  
Dover Town: Cllr Pam Brivio  
Dover Town: Cllr Gordon Cowan  
Dover West: Cllr Geoff Lymer

**Summary:** Since the Dover Gateway opened in Castle Street, Dover, people have visited the Gateway to access a range of Kent County Council (KCC), Dover District Council (DCC) and Partner Services.

To make sure every pound spent in Kent is delivering better outcomes for our customers, communities and businesses, we must review the services we provide and where we provide them from to ensure we are getting value for money.

We have been considering whether the Dover Gateway is the right location from which to provide KCC services. We know that customers visit the Gateway to access services provided by both DDC and Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) partners; however, the proportion of visits to access KCC services is low.

While the services that KCC provides will not change, we have been exploring the possibility of accessing them from alternative locations including other KCC buildings in Dover. It is anticipated that this relocation would deliver property savings and synergies from residents being able to access a more holistic range of KCC services.

KCC currently provides or commissions the following services from the Dover Gateway:

- Health Trainer Services
- Life Choice Independent Living
- Occupational Therapy Service

- Kent Supported Employment
- Blue Badge Assessments
- Community Wardens
- Smoking Cessation
- Hi Kent
- General KCC enquiries

**Recommendation(s):** The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee are asked to endorse and comment on the proposed decision to be taken by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Audit, Transformation and Commercial and Traded Services for KCC to relocate its services and commissioned services from Dover Gateway to the Dover Discovery Centre.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The proposal to relocate KCC services from Dover Gateway follows a series of KCC Service Reviews of the Gateway programme which were carried out between 2012 and 2014. The reviews considered the effectiveness of the delivery of its services in the Gateways.
- 1.2 The initial review, which looked at the overarching Gateway programme, found that although Gateways provided the potential to generate significant savings for KCC through rationalisation of processes and premises, realisation of this potential has been limited. Transactional data showed that the take up of KCC service provision at Gateways (other than for Library provision and Adult Education) by visiting customers generally had been consistently low. In addition, there was perceived to be limited opportunity across KCC to increase service provision in Gateways going forward.
- 1.3 Following the conclusions of the review into KCC's presence at the Gateways it was recommended that further analysis was required into each Gateway to consider the KCC service provided and whether the Gateway continues to be the best place from which to deliver KCC services.
- 1.4 It is proposed that there will be a separate consultation for each Gateway and key decision taken by the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Audit, Transformation and Commercial and Traded Services. Each consultation will put forward one or more options for relocation of the relevant KCC Gateway services, and will offer the opportunity for the public and Gateway partners to comment on this. There will be an open question in each consultation to allow for any unidentified issues to be raised. The feedback from each consultation will be considered as part of the decision making process.
- 1.5 Public consultation on the relocation of KCC services from Dover Gateway went live on 21<sup>st</sup> March 2016 and a key decision will be taken in July 2016.

## 2. Dover Gateway

- 2.1 The review of Dover Gateway, which analysed a year's transactional data, found that whilst the Gateway is well received by partners and those customers who utilise the service, the placement of KCC services and commissioned services within the Gateway and take up of those services has been consistently low. Customers frequently visit the Dover Gateway to access services provided by both DDC and the VCS partners; however, data shows that customers rarely use the Dover Gateway to access KCC services. Out of 37,859 recorded visits to the Gateway in 2015, only 11% of total customer transactions (3,929 visits) were for KCC services or those we commission.
- 2.2 The indicative face to face transactional costs for KCC at Dover Gateway are just over £113 per customer visit. These are significantly higher than the national channel costs which based on public service surveys, such as SOCITM's channel benchmarking survey are:
- £8.62 Face-to-face
  - £2.83 Telephone
  - £0.15 Website<sup>1</sup>
- 2.3 In addition, the review found that there may be other public facing buildings in Dover delivering KCC services and that there may be opportunities to deliver property savings through the relocation of services currently delivered from Dover Gateway.
- 2.4 To capture the views and understand the potential impact to our customers, KCC held a 12 week public consultation on the relocation of the KCC services and commissioned services from Dover Gateway. The consultation ran from 21 March to the 12 June 2016.
- 2.5 Following the consultation a full Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed (Appendix C). Following consideration of responses to the consultation, the final EqIA and feedback at this Policy and Resource Cabinet Committee meeting, the Leader of the Council and Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Audit, Transformation and Commercial and Traded Services will take a decision regarding KCC's future within Dover Gateway.
- 2.6 The proposals focus on the nine specific KCC delivered or commissioned services, which run either pre-booked or drop-in face to face clinics with customers from the Dover Gateway. These services are present in the Gateway at fixed times during the week, and utilise either a desk or a room in the Gateway. Each clinic is run by one or two members of the relevant service teams.

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<sup>1</sup> SOCITM Customer Access Improvement Service Briefing, 2012

The KCC delivered or commissioned services provided from Dover Gateway are:

- Health Trainer Service (740 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Life Choice Independent Living (215 customers transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Occupational Therapy Service (108 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Kent Supported Employment (16 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Blue Badge Assessments (306 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Community Wardens (2 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Smoking Cessation (351 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- Hi Kent (41 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)
- KCC General Enquiries (355 customer transactions in Dover Gateway in 2015)

It is proposed that KCC relocate the nine service clinics listed above to the Dover Discovery Centre.

- 2.7 The Dover Discovery Centre is a KCC owned hub in the centre of Dover. The centre has both stepped and ramped access and there is a lift available to access each of the floors. The public already visit the Dover Discovery Centre to access the Library and Adult Education Services and there is also a publicly accessible reception that currently provides Blue Badge and other application forms for the public to complete. There are a suite of computers that are available for library members only on a pre-booked basis for a period of 1 hour per day.
- 2.8 Staff members at the Dover Discovery Centre can assist with other general enquiries about KCC services by signposting to the relevant team or department where possible. DDC and VCS services will continue to operate from the Dover Gateway. There is the possibility of considering the option of commissioning KCC general enquiries from other locations in the future.
- 2.9 All Gateway VCS partners were invited to attend pre consultation engagement sessions prior to the public consultation. These were to be jointly held by KCC and Dover District Council (DDC) officers; however each of the partners chose not to attend the face to face sessions, preferring to communicate by phone and email. Discussions were held on KCC's proposals and the importance of maintaining partnership working going forward regardless of whether a decision is taken to relocate from Dover Gateway. Dover and Deal Districts Citizens Advice Bureau were concerned about a move to the Dover Discovery Centre owing to the condition of the building, but others were not opposed to the relocation.

### 3. Public Consultation feedback

- 3.1 The consultation focussed on identifying how customers and our partners would be impacted if KCC decided to relocate services from Dover Gateway in July 2017. The consultation proposed continued face to face service provision from the Dover Discovery Centre in Dover.
- 3.2 The consultation consisted of a consultation document, five drop in sessions in Dover Gateway and a questionnaire, which was also produced in an Easy Read version and available in electronic and paper formats.
- 3.3 Stakeholders, including Gateway customers were invited to respond to the consultation using various communication methods.
- 3.4 37 consultation responses were received in total, including feedback from one of the drop in sessions and a response via email. Several detailed responses were received to the open consultation question, which asked for feedback on the proposals. The majority of responses were received online (26) and 9 were received in hard copy. 68% (25) of the responses received were in favour of the relocation, 27% (10) opposed the relocation of services and 5% were undecided. These responses have been grouped into themes; the most frequently discussed theme related to the economic impact that relocation would have on KCC.
- 3.5 The Consultation Report (Appendix B) sets out the consultation process and provides detailed analysis on the consultation feedback. The table on the next page is extracted from the consultation report and lists the main response themes.

Theme of comments	Number of positive comments	Number of negative comments	Most popular comments ranked
Economic Impact	17	1	1 <sup>st</sup>
Location of Sites	6	2	2 <sup>nd</sup>
Co-location of Services	4	3	3 <sup>rd</sup>
Accessibility of Proposed Site	1	3	4 <sup>th</sup>

3.6 An EqlA was carried out to accompany the proposals and shape the consultation. This has been updated following consultation feedback to include a full action plan. Table 3 of the EqlA lists the key issues which will need to be addressed if KCC is to relocate services from Dover Gateway. Table 4 of the EqlA sets out an action plan to address the identified issues and the key actions are as follows:

- Ensure all locations are accessible
- Ensure that staff in alternative locations can assist service users in completing Blue Badge applications
- Look at the feasibility of introducing hearing loops to the alternative location
- Look at the feasibility of introducing an OT Suite to the alternative location
- Raise awareness of any other transport routes to the alternative location
- Consideration of disabled parking at the alternative location

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 In 2009, KCC helped to establish the Dover Gateway by contributing £559,000 towards the cost of building the Gateway. In return Dover District Council has paid the annual property costs in full from 2009 to 2016. Should a decision to be taken to retain KCC services in the existing Gateway building, KCC will be required to pay a 50% contribution towards the property costs, which would be in the region of £32,410 a year for the remaining 7 years of the lease.

4.2 There will also be minor adaptation expenditure to create the appropriate modifications in the Dover Discovery Centre.

4.3 As a matter of good estate management practice KCC regularly reviews its asset base to ensure that KCC are making the best use of our accommodation and it meets the needs of our service users. This would include other KCC buildings in the Dover area to ensure that they meet our future service needs. Any proposed changes would be subject to appropriate consultation should they be brought forward.

4.4 The Partnership Agreement signed by both parties (Dover District Council (DDC) and Kent County Council) in March 2009 sets out the objectives, responsibilities and operational governance of the parties during the period of occupation. The agreement includes an Exit Strategy (clause 18) in the event that one or both parties wish to terminate the agreement prior to the initial minimum term of 15 years from the date of Practical Completion. In the event that one partner wishes to terminate the agreement, clause 18.1.2 stipulates that *'the Accountable Body (KCC) shall calculate the outstanding proportion of the Original Financial Costs of the remaining Partner (DDC) spread over a period of 15 years from the date of opening which will become payable by the Partner terminating the agreement (KCC).*

4.5 There is no definition of 'Original Financial Costs' provided with the agreement. Subject to verification from Legal Services 'Original Financial Costs' is interpreted to mean any capital contributions made at the start of the project. Dover District Council made no initial capital contribution to the Dover Gateway and as such there is not expected to be an exit penalty as a result of terminating the Partnership Agreement at the end of year 9. The costs of physically relocating the existing services into the Dover Discovery Centre remain under review, however are not expected to be significant.

## 5. Legal implications

5.1 KCC and DDC have a number of partnership agreements which govern the usage of the Gateway. KCC's decision on whether to relocate its services from the Gateway will be taken in accordance with the overarching partnership agreements. DDC have been fully engaged in advance of and throughout the consultation period.

5.2 The initial term of the Dover Gateway Building is for 15 years from 2009. The Partnership Agreement (clause 7.1.9) states that either partner may serve on the other partner *'on or at any time after the eighth anniversary of the date of practical completion written notice of not less than twelve months whereupon the agreement will terminate on expiry of the notice.'*

5.3 The date of Practical Completion of the Dover Gateway is still to be verified and for the purposes of this report is assumed to be no later than March 2009 when the agreement was signed. As such the earliest date that KCC may serve twelve months' notice to terminate the Partnership Agreement is March 2017 and the earliest date that KCC may relocate its services is March 2018. KCC is in discussion with Dover District Council about vacating the premises earlier and the likely cost implications of this.

## 6. Equalities Implications

6.1 An Equalities and Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed to support the consultation and has been updated (Appendix C).

## 7. Recommended Future Service Locations

7.1 The table below shows the KCC services currently delivered in the Gateway and the recommended future locations for each:

KCC service or commissioned service	Recommended future location
General Enquiries	Dover Discovery Centre
Health Trainer Service	
Occupational Therapy Service	
Life Choice Independent Living	
Kent Supported Employment	
Blue Badge Assessments	
Community Warden Service	
Smoking Cessation	
Hi Kent	

7.2 This takes into account the feedback from the consultation, as set out in detail in the consultation report (Appendix B, sections 7-9.)

## 8. Next Steps

8.1 The consultation report and full EqlA will be used to inform the decision on whether to relocate KCC services from Dover Gateway. A decision will be made following recommendations made at Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee and information will be made available online and in the Gateway.

## 9. Recommendation:

The **Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee** are asked to endorse and comment on the proposed decision to be taken by the Leader of KCC to relocate its services and commissioned services from Dover Gateway to the Dover Discovery Centre.

## 10. Background Documents

10.1 The documents which support this report are as follows:

- Dover Gateway Consultation Document - Standard and Easy Read versions (Appendix A)
- Consultation Report (Appendix B)
- Equality Impact Assessment (Appendix C)

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