

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

CABINET

DECISION NO:

23/00101

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

Key decision: YES

significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions

- *the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks;*
- *significant service developments, significant service reductions, or significant changes in the way that services are delivered, whether County-wide or in a particular locality.*

Title of Decision: Kent Communities Programme (Community Assets)

Decision:

Cabinet agree to:

- 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;'
- Consider the options as set out in the decision report and **confirmed Option 3** to be implemented including agreement of:
 - 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
 - The decommissioning of services at those buildings which are no longer to be utilised to support the delivery of the services outlined above.
 - The co-design of outreach services with partners.
- Approve expenditure from capital budget to enable adaptations to the agreed network of buildings in order to facilitate the co-location of multiple services;
- 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
- 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.

Reason(s) for decision:

The Kent County Council (KCC) property estate across the portfolio is unsustainable, with high associated revenue costs to run buildings to support service delivery. The cost of maintaining our buildings at the current level is unmanageable, with estimated backlog maintenance cost standing at £42m across the buildings in the scope of this decision.

The Council needs to reduce the size of its property estate to reduce revenue costs in line with the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), reduce the backlog maintenance bill to ease pressure on the capital budget and protect the authority against future market uncertainty. This reduction will also support the Councils net zero commitments as it will bring a reduction in CO2 emissions from the estate.

The COVID-19 pandemic saw a shift in how service users' access services and demonstrated that alternative delivery methods were viable. This decision facilitates a significant shift in service delivery towards alternative methods where appropriate.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Ahead of the Cabinet decision an All-Member briefing was held on the 17 November 2023 and the item was discussed at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Meeting on 22 November 2023. The Cabinet Committee resolved through a majority vote to endorse the proposed decision.

Public consultation was undertaken between 17 January 2023 and 26 March 2023 and feedback has been considered within the proposals of this decision.

The link to the consultation is here: [Community Services Consultation | Let's talk Kent](#)

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The following options were identified as alternative methods for reviewing the size of the property estate and the buildings used for specific services:

- Close the most expensive buildings to run.
- Close the most valuable assets.
- Close the most environmentally inefficient buildings.
- Do nothing.

The consultation document concluded that these options would either disproportionately impact some of the highest need communities, or in the case of the 'Do Nothing' option, would not achieve the required outcomes.

Specific options have been developed following the consultation and are included for member consideration and decision. The other options as set out in the paper were;

1. **Go further:** making more significant changes to the model, closing more sites than originally set out in the consultation model.
2. **Consultation option:** proceed and implement the option as set out in the consultation.
3. **Amend Need Framework to take greater weight of public transport network analysis:** responding to the consultation by bringing back into the model centres based on consultation feedback regarding transport accessibility.
4. **Amend Need Framework to take greatest weight of public transport network analysis:** more significant changes to the model as a response to the consultation feedback.
5. **Do nothing:** continue with the status quo and make no changes.

In considering the decision Members weigh the relevant factors including;

- The overarching policy and financial context.
- The Needs Framework.
- The impact on residents including Equalities Impact Assessments.

- Options Appraisal

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

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signed

date 30 November 2023