

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19th December, 2023

10.00 am

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone**





AGENDA

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 19th December, 2023, at 10.00 am
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone

Ask for: **Anna Taylor**
Telephone: **03000 416478**

Membership

Conservative (10): Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr T Bond, Mr D L Brazier, Mr N J Collor, Mrs L Game, Mrs S Hudson, Mrs S Prendergast and Mr O Richardson

Labour (1): Dr L Sullivan

Liberal Democrat (1): Mr A J Hook

Green and Independent (1): Rich Lehmann

Church Representatives (3): Mr J Constanti, Mr M Reidy and Mr Q Roper

Parent Governor (2): Ms R Ainslie-Malik and Ms H Carter

County Councillors who are not Members of the Committee but who wish to ask questions at the meeting are asked to notify the Chairman of their questions in advance.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)

A - Committee Business

- A1 Introduction/Webcast Announcement
- A2 Apologies and Substitutes
- A3 Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

B - Any items called-in

- B1 Call-in of Decision 23/00092 - Kent Family Hub Model - Implementation (Pages 1 - 40)
- B2 Call-in of Decision 23/00100 - Commissioned Youth Service Contracts (Pages 41 - 62)
- B3 Call-in of Decision 23/00101 - Kent Communities Programme (Pages 63 - 108)

EXEMPT ITEMS

(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

Monday, 11 December 2023

By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager
To: Scrutiny Committee – 19 December 2023
Subject: Call-in of Decision 23/00092 – Kent Family Hub Model – Implementation

Background

1. The proposed decision was discussed at the **Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November, 2023** prior to the key decision being taken by Cabinet on 30 November 2023.
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Mr Brady and Mr Streatfeild, thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political Groups.
3. The reasons of the call-in were 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 s17.73 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.
4. The reasons submitted for this call-in are set out in the attached document (a).
 5. The call-in request element determined as valid is the suggestion that it is not clear within the decision documentation to what extent and in what way due consideration has been given to whether the Youth Service provision within the Kent Family Hub Model meets the requirements under the Statutory Guidance issued in September 2023. The decision indicated that the Family Hub model would "integrate, Children's Centre services, Health Visiting and community-based midwifery care and youth services with other key community services into 0-19

years of age (and up to 25 years of age for young people with special education needs and disabilities [SEND]) countywide service.” The decision indicates that consideration was given to statutory obligations but there is limited detail. It is therefore appropriate for the Scrutiny Committee to seek clarity from the Executive on this point prior to any implementation of the decision.

[Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people’s well-being \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Process

6. As per the call-in procedure, Democratic Services must consider all call-in requests against the criteria detailed in the constitution, which are themselves based on the legal requirements under the Local Government Act 2000 to have an appropriate mechanism to allow Executive decisions to be scrutinised. 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.
7. The Cabinet Member and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
8. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation already 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.
9. The decision papers remain available online but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Options for the Scrutiny Committee

10. 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.

Attached documents

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Mr Brady and Mr Streatfeild.
- b) [23/00092 – Decision Report](#)
- c) [23/00092 – Record of Decision](#)
- d) [23/00092 - EqIA](#)
- e) [23/00092 – Family Hub Model Development EqIA \(post-consultation\)](#)
- f) [Appendix 1 – Family Hub Services Consultation Written Report](#)
- g) [Appendix 2 – Annex E Family Hub Model Framework](#)
- h) [Appendix 3 – Options Service Table](#)

Background Documents

[Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November, 2023](#)

Report Author

Anna Taylor, Scrutiny Research Officer

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Scrutiny Call-in Request: 23/00092 - Kent Family Hub Model – Implementation

Proposer: Alister Brady

Seconded: Richard Streatfield

Reasons for call-in:

(a) *Action proportionate to the desired outcome.*

As set out in the Decision Report (bullet point 1.2), 'KCC's proposal is to integrate Children's Centre services, Health Visiting and community-based midwifery care and **youth services** with other key community services into the 0-19 years of age (and up to 25 years of age for young people with special education needs and disabilities [SEND]) countywide service. We have placed emphasis on 'youth services' as this particular element of service provision does not appear to be reflected in the new Family Hub model. All of the expenditure incurred to date has been put towards services for families and those aged under 5: infant feeding; parenting support; home learning environment and perinatal mental health support. While these types of services are welcomed, and will greatly help families and young children, we seem to be forgetting about our young people and their needs. The Family Hub model should be prioritising spend and activity in the area of youth services. 87% of all consultation respondents said that the 'most common Family Hub service likely to be used in the future would be activities for older children and young people' (Decision Report, 3.1.2). We need to offer a full range of services from 0 – age 25, but it does appear that the Family Hub model has been heavily weighted towards Early Years services, and this has come at the expense of youth activities. This is a disproportionate model which does not deliver the 'desired outcome' to provide effective and integrated youth services.

Another agreed 'outcome', stipulated by Government, is that KCC must, in implementing a Family Hub model, deliver 'additionality' – i.e. deliver additional services to those which are currently offered. We are not offering any additional services, particularly in the Youth space. The Cabinet recently decided to stop funding commissioned youth services when the contracts expire next year - a clear reduction in service provision, not an addition. Can the administration and senior officers guarantee that we are offering enough 'additionality' across the Family Hub model and who is accountable for this.

Government have also stressed that Family Hub services must be 'universal'. This is explicitly set out in the [Family Hubs and Start for Life Programme](#) Guide (page 9): *'The universal Start for Life offer should include the essential support that any new family might need'*. If services are to be truly 'universal', then provision across the county must be consistent and residents, no matter where they live, their background, their perceived need or lack of need, or their status within Council services currently, everyone should be able to access the services. Unfortunately, however, this will not be the case – or at least not when it comes to services delivered face-to-face. The Decision Report states that 'it will not be possible to have a Family Hub site in all localities, particularly in rural areas with low population density, as outlined within the Kent Communities programme' (bullet point 7.8.2). Residents are effectively left, then, in a 'postcode lottery' situation; the level of service provision (particularly face-to-face services) will depend on where you reside. This is not 'universal' nor equitable. We also find it somewhat puzzling that the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services argued last week at Cabinet that she did not consider maintaining *some* of the commissioned youth service contracts as a possible option, as she felt that this would be unfair on residents and would lead to a 'postcode lottery' predicament. Well, this situation in front of us – in relation to the location of Family Hub sites – is exactly the same. Some residents will enjoy access to sites which are within their immediate vicinity, while others will either have to travel several miles to their nearest site, if they can get there, or will simply have to make do without; as a result, service provision will differ greatly across the county. We therefore do not think we can turn round to

Government and say we are offering a consistent, 'universal' service. What is the legal advice on this matter?

(b) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers.

We have already referred to the delivery of in-person / face to face services, and this is a theme which was picked up throughout the public consultation. Overwhelmingly, '90% of all consultees stated that face-to-face was their preferred access route' and that 'they felt comfortable' with this mode of delivery. It would follow that the vast majority of the Family Hub services (indeed, around 90%) should be delivered face-to-face, so as to reflect the wishes of the residents that we serve (this is of course notwithstanding that outreach and digital services work for some people, and that we do need an element of all three delivery methods). It could be argued then that residents' views have not been adequately reflected in the development of the service proposals, and that this could even be viewed as a **predetermined decision**. For 90% of respondents to state that face-to-face services would be their preference is resounding, and so what more could residents have possibly done for Cabinet to have reconsidered their stance on the mode of service delivery? It is detailed that an outreach provision may be offered but there is very little detail on this and how this can be continued once the family hub funding has been spent. There was no desire for a replacement digital offer in-lieu of face to face, however this has also been offered in compensation to residents for the withdrawal of services.

(e) Clarity of aims and desired outcomes.

It is worth noting that 32% of responders stressed that there should be a 'place specifically for teenagers' and that there 'should be activities and support in place' for this cohort (Decision Report, 3.1.4). In response to this, it is stated that 'within every district there will be a space that is accessible and identifiable as a delivery space for young people'. What does this mean in practice? And what will these 'spaces' look like – will they be traditional Youth Hubs, or will they be shared spaces within Children's Centres / Family Hub sites? We and other Members have been asking this question for some time now, but we are yet to receive a detailed and explicit answer, from either the Cabinet Member or the relevant Officers involved. This supposed 'delivery space for young people' needs to be clarified before this decision is implemented, and if it does indeed transpire that these dedicated 'spaces' will be co-located with other Family Hub services, then this will need to be reconsidered. Those who responded to the consultation highlighted that there would need to be a separate place '**specifically for teenagers**'; these young adults will not want to share this space with children and parents, nor would it be practical from them to do so. They need to be in the presence of their peers, in a safe space where they can communicate and interact openly and authentically. The Youth element of the Family Hub model needs to be clarified before this decision is progressed.

The Council is facing incredible financial pressures and this will impact services across the board. As set out in the Decision Report, the Family Hub "transformation project is entirely funded through DfE grant monies, but long-term service delivery will have to be funded through the base budget. Therefore, the model must be sustainable, and this has influenced the model development' (bullet point 10.2). Our concern is that, as budgets become increasingly stretched, we will see less focus on face-to-face services and an even greater reliance on digital and online services (purely because they are cheaper to deliver), and if this is indeed the reality moving forward, then the Council will be ignoring the views and preferences expressed by residents throughout the consultation. Until Members are assured that the Family Hub model is financially sustainable, and that service delivery will not be drastically altered in the future to deliver savings, we do not think this decision should be progressed.

Also, the statutory guidance under Section 507B of the 1996 Education Act states that local authorities must consult, and take into account the views of young people in their area on:

- the suitability of the existing provision
- the need for additional activities and facilities

- access to those activities and facilities
- the redesign of a proposed service

We argue that this statutory duty has not been met, and young people were not involved in the decision making to move to a family hub model. This emergency decision paved the way for these cuts in youth provision in the absence of conforming with the statutory obligations. Given that the subsequent consultation occurred after the decision, we argue that this proves that young people were not listened to which is a direct breach.

(f) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework

Family Hubs are not in line with the Councils Policy Framework and are not mentioned once in Framing Kent's Future. This is outside of the Council's Policy Framework which is a decision made by full council.

The Administration and Senior Officers have not listened to residents on this, including not involving residents (children and young people and their families) in the previous urgent decision to adopt this model and approach. This is contrary to the principles of openness and transparency. There has been no Member or resident involvement - this is in clear breach of the Councils Policy Framework, as quoted in Framing Kent's Future. There has been no accountability for this failure yet either. Below is a list of the policy framework breaches. As stated above this is the Councils main and overriding policy framework document agreed through a full council decision. The Executive and Senior Officers cannot bypass this.

We need to shift more of our focus to understanding people's needs and the design of services, with greater resident, user, staff and provider engagement so that the full range of options available to meeting need can be properly considered. Page 11.

Commit to funding a diverse infrastructure support offer for the social sector in Kent, which enables organisations to have access to the support they need to thrive, whilst ensuring the sector has a voice to influence and advocate for the people and communities they support. Page 39

Ensure that as we redesign the way we deliver our services and adapt our physical presence in communities, we make these places accessible and inclusive for local community groups and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, offering a space for people to meet or use these assets to deliver activities. Page 39

Create the right conditions to ensure there is a community-based offer of activities for young people that is led by the community and meets the needs of a diverse population. Page 39

Ensure that the voice of social care users and their carers is heard and influences all service design and commissioning decisions. Page 59

Resident engagement: We will ask Kent's residents about their experiences and perceptions of KCC's services to help us understand how we are doing and how we can improve the planning and delivery of services in the future – Page 61

The council's policy framework must align with Government guidance and the council's statutory obligations - It is argued that this decision conflicts with Government guidance and statute. For example, Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 ('Section 507B') <https://www.nya.org.uk/stat-duty/>, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6512d57eb23dad000de70697/Statutory_duty_guidance_for_local_authorities_youth_provision.pdf states that Local Authorities are statutorily responsible 'to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, leisure-time activities and facilities for young people aged 13 to 19 and those with learning difficulties or disabilities aged 20 to 24'. This statutory duty was

recently updated and published in September 2023 which was during the consultation period, therefore this decision does not take these changes into account. The scope of the duty is clear:

Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services' namely:

a sufficient quantity of educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities and a sufficient quantity of recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

The two forms of activity are not mutually exclusive but local authorities must, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for young people to sufficient forms of, and facilities for, both types of activities. They include, but are not limited to: sports and informal physical activities, cultural activities, outdoor residential, weekend or holiday-time activities special interest clubs and volunteering activities.

Without clear plans which detail where and how young people can access a sufficient quantity of leisure time activities the council is in clear breach of the Education Act.

From: **Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services**
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: **Cabinet – 30 November 2023**

Decision Subject: **23-00092 - Family Hub programme**

Key decision It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions
It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Future Pathway of report: Implementation of decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

This decision brought before Cabinet relates to the implementation of the Family Hub model in Kent. This follows on from the policy decision by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services that KCC would move forward with the principle of adopting the Family Hub approach and the related agreement by KCC to accept the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October 2022 with the DfE. This MOU creates obligations to meet specific provision, deadlines and timescales associated with transformation activity and demonstration of progress towards implementing Family Hubs by the end of March 2025 and sustaining this beyond the life of the grant funding.

In this report we will outline what Family Hubs are and what the model will look like. We have used a data driven methodology to analyse the results of our recent consultation undertaken to support and inform the planning of our model.

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to agree the proposed decision to:

- a) Approve the implementation of the Family Hub model in Kent, as per the arrangements set out in the report.
- b) Approve the development and delivery of the workstreams detailed within the Start for Life and Family Hub programme.
- c) Confirm the viability of the Kent Family Hub Model within any estate map outlined within the Kent Communities Programme.
- d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education (CYPE), in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care & Public Health, to undertake the

- detailed service design and delivery within the relevant estate map, as determined via Kent Communities Programme decision-making.
- e) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for CYPE to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 In September 2020, Dame Andrea Leadsom MP undertook a review of outcomes for babies and the first 1,001 days of a child's life. Following this review, the Department for Education (DfE) and Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) developed a framework to support successful and ambitious local authorities (councils) to work with health partners to develop a Start for Life concept and the Family Hub model.
- 1.2 We know that reducing health inequalities and improving health and wellbeing requires organisations to work closely together. KCC's proposal is to integrate, Children's Centre services, Health Visiting and community-based midwifery care and youth services with other key community services into 0-19 years of age (and up to 25 years of age for young people with special education needs and disabilities [SEND]) countywide service. This will bring services and organisations together to provide a single point of access to a range of family support services.
- 1.3 The 1,001 critical days from conception to the age of two are crucial for development and impact a child's health for the rest of their life. The Start for Life offer targets these first 1,001 days and is part of the core offer that the DfE requires Local Authorities to provide. This includes parent/carer support with Infant Feeding, Perinatal Mental Health (parents' mental health during pregnancy and the first 12 months after birth) and parent/carer– infant relationships. The Family Hub grant funding requires us to both do more in these and other mandated areas, enhance existing provisions and innovate in these mandated areas to provide new supports and services. The DfE Family Hub model fits perfectly into KCC's 'Framing Kent's Future' strategic vision for children, young people, and families. It also supports the wider national and community challenges following the pandemic.
- 1.4 In August 2022 the DfE launched the national Family Hub Programme Framework alongside an application for 75 Local Authorities to apply for transformation funding to create multiagency community-based provision. Kent was identified as one of the eligible Local Authorities for funding aligned to the Family Hub and Best Start for Life strategy.
- 1.5 Following Kent's successful application for Family Hubs Transformation Funding we signed an MOU with the DfE. This was the beginning of a series of Decisions which are outlined below:
- 14 October 2022 - MoU signed and urgent Key Decision taken (22/00094) – to endorse the development of Family Hubs in Kent. The implementation or full delivery of a Family Hub model in Kent is subject the development of detailed proposals, appropriate consultation, engagement and governance through normal Executive Decision-making arrangements.

- The principle of adopting a Family Hub Model of provision for Open Access Services in Kent, in accordance with the Government Policy on Family Hubs and Start for Life which align with the priorities of the Executive and the Council as per the Strategic Statement.
 - To accept relevant funding via the Family Hub Transformation Authority programme, including agreement to the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding requirement to participate as a Transformation Authority
 - To confirm that any implementation or full delivery of a Family Hub Model in Kent will be subject to the development of detailed proposals, appropriate consultation, engagement and governance through normal Executive Decision-making arrangements.
 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, to undertake relevant actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.
- 8 March 2023 - Key Decision Family Hub Transformation Funding (23/00015)
 - commence development and co-design of the Family Hub model for Kent in line with Government Family Hub framework for delivery and associated plans.
 - Note and confirm the expenditure, activity and planning for funding already allocated under Key Decision 22/00094, progressed under the delegation to receive and deploy initial funding in accordance with the requirement to develop and explore detailed transformation plans.
 - Note that the implementation of the full range of changes required to transform KCC's existing provision to meet the requirements set out in the Government's Family Hub model plan will be subject to future Executive decision-making.
 - To delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services and the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.
- 20 April - Scrutiny Committee - Response to call-in request on 23/00015
- August 2023 - Officer Decision for submission of Delivery Plan to the DfE (OD 23/0007)
 - Approve the updated Family Hubs Delivery Plan for submission to the DfE.
 - Highlight to the DfE that implementation of the Family Hub model and related service changes / updates detailed in the Delivery Plan remain subject to ongoing formal decision-making.
- 12 September 2023 - Key Decision – Infant Feeding 23/00076
 - Approve the service development to increase current infant feeding activity through amendments to the Co-Operation agreement relating to Public Health Services dated 22 March 2021 (as accepted under key decision 19/00064); approve the required expenditure, via the Family Hub Grant Funding, to deliver the activity.

- Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, allocating resources, expenditure, entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.
 - 12 September 2023 – Key Decision – Parenting Support - 23/00081
 - Approve the service development and activity increases for Parenting Support as part of ongoing development and improvement work, making use of Family Hub Grant funding where this aligns to KCC’s existing Start for Life commitments.
 - Approve the required expenditure to deliver this activity via Family Hub Grant Funding up to £2,032,065 for the period ending April 2025.
 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services and the Director of Public Health, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to allocating resources, expenditure, entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.
 - 12 September 2023 – Key Decision – Home Learning Environment - 23/00082
 - Approve the service development and activity increases for Early Language and Home Learning Environment, as part of ongoing development and improvement work, making use of Family Hub Grant funding where this aligns to KCC’s existing Start for Life commitments.
 - Approve the required expenditure to deliver this activity via Family Hub Grant funding up to £1,325,435 for the period ending April 2025.
 - Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services and the Director of Public Health, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to allocating resources, expenditure, entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.
 - 12 September 2023 – Key Decision – Perinatal Mental Health - 23/00075
 - Approve the development and improvement activity to deliver Perinatal Mental Health and Parent Infant Relationships Interventions
 - Approve the required expenditure, via the Family Hub Grant Funding (£3,051,809 – expires 2025) and, subject to evaluation and availability of funds the Public Health Grant (post March 2025), to deliver and sustain this activity for up to two years beyond the Family Hub Grant period – total service period – 2023 – 2025 with the potential for 2 x 1 year extensions;
 - Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, to exercise relevant contract extensions and enter into relevant contracts or legal agreements;
 - Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to allocating resources, expenditure, and entering into contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.
- 1.6 On 17th August 2023 Cabinet agreed the provisions set out in the report ‘Securing Kent’s Future – Budget Recovery Strategy and Financial Reporting’. The

provisions outlined in that report has guided the proposals for the approach towards the Family Hub model. At the core of all our decision making is an understanding that we must be able to sustain any service we provide from our base budget beyond the programme grant funding.

- 1.7 On 5th 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.
- 1.8 Section 3 of the report sets out why the Council must prioritise our Best Value statutory responsibility. Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities (DLUHC) have recently issued revised statutory Best Value guidance which reconfirms our duties under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1999 to "make arrangements to secure continuous improvement in the way in which its functions are exercised, having regard to the combination of economy, efficiency and effectiveness." The report goes on to state 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 decisions.
- 1.9 Securing Kent's Future represents a fundamental shift in the strategic priorities of the Council since the inception of the Family Hub Network and the agreement of the DfE Family Hub MOU. However, we still have a legal responsibility to meet the requirements of the grant balanced with a need for efficient spending across all areas of service.

2. Family Hub services Consultation

- 2.1 The Kent Family Hub public consultation ran from 19 July to 13 September 2023 and gave service users, members of the public and strategic partners the opportunity to review our proposals in detail and provide their response.
- 2.2 As part of the consultation 908 consultees took part in the consultation questionnaire. The KCC team also received feedback via email/letters. Emails/letters were passed to Lake Market Research to review and include comments in this report accordingly.
- 2.3 Consultees were asked if they currently use, or may use in the future, eleven proposed Family Hub services. These are outlined below:

Education for parents on child development
Activities for children aged 0-5
Activities for older children and young people

Information, advice and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
Information and signposting to mental health services (children and adults)
Support for parents/carers of adolescents (teenagers)
Online safety for children and young people
Support for young people with substance misuse (alcohol/drugs)
Domestic abuse support
Debt and welfare advice
Signposting to information to support separating and separated parents

- 2.4 During the consultation we set out the rationale behind the programme and also proposed changes to youth services delivering discretionary services that are commissioned by KCC and to no longer continue with commissioned youth services after the end of their current contract in March 2024.
- 2.5 The consultation used a data driven approach, our data shows that there are differences in outcomes for people across Kent depending on where they live. Our data aligned with the Needs Framework which provided 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.
- 2.6 The consultation was available on the Council's "[Let's talk Kent](#)" website. There were 22,256 page views made by 8,752 visitors during this time. Two questionnaires were available, aimed at different audiences: residents/service users, and staff/professionals. The former had 908 responses (95 of which were easy read) and the latter had 263 responses. The consultation was actively promoted at children's centres and youth hubs, with paper copies of the consultation materials available at these sites.
- 2.7 Staff were available at a number of activity events during the consultation period (24 events across the county) to engage with participants about the proposals, answer queries and encourage participation. In addition to service user feedback, feedback was sought through attendance at meetings from District Councils, Health services and wider partnerships.
- 2.8 Young people were engaged directly and had the option of how they participated (for example, questionnaires, group discussions etc).
- 2.9 To raise awareness of the consultation and encourage participation, the following activities were undertaken:
- Promotional material sent to Health Visiting service and community-based midwifery

- Social media via: Open Access district Facebook pages, and KCC's corporate Facebook, X (Twitter), LinkedIn and Nextdoor accounts
- Paid Facebook advertising
- Posters and promotional postcards in Children's Centres, Youth Hubs, Kent Libraries, and Gateways
- Promoted on Kent Library PC welcome screens
- Emails to stakeholder organisations (e.g. health, schools, district councils, Kent Association of Local Councils, Healthwatch etc)
- Invite to over 9700 people registered on Let's talk Kent who had asked to be kept informed about new consultations
- Articles in KCC's residents' e-newsletter
- Articles on the Kelsi website and e-bulletin for education professionals in Kent
- Article in NHS newsletter
- Media release issued at the launch of the consultation
- Banners/information on Kent.gov.uk homepage
- Articles on KCC's staff intranet and e-newsletters and email to staff groups.

2.10 The [consultation website](#) contained a short introduction and all the consultation information (the full document, summary document, Equality Impact Assessment, questionnaires, other background information, and easy read and large print documents. A Word version of the questionnaire was available for those that did not want to complete the online form.

2.11 Promotional materials (and the website) included details of how to request alternative formats. Postcard content was translated into 3 languages (Punjabi, Polish and Slovak) for centre staff to use to engage relevant service users where necessary. A telephone number and email address were available for queries and feedback.

2.12 A breakdown of the feedback received from the consultation is included within the consultation report which was collated and assessed by LAKE market research, this is included at Appendix 1. The feedback from the consultation has been considered and evaluated in preparation for this proposal.

3. Consultation and consideration of responses

3.1 Resident Feedback

3.1.1 Of the eleven proposed Family Hub services put forward to consultees, the most commonly used are activities for children aged 0-5 (70%) and activities for older children and young people (48%). This is followed by education for parents on child development (35%), information, advice, and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (31%) and information and signposting to mental health services (children and adults) (31%). This has been built into the model and Family Hubs will utilise our partnership working with the wider universal system which offers SEND support and Family Hub staff will be able to signpost and refer into more specialist SEND services.

- 3.1.2 Of the same eleven proposed Family Hub services, the most common activities likely to be used in the future are activities for older children and young people (87%), support for parents / carers of adolescents (teenagers) (73%) and online safety for children and young people (73%). This will be offered in the model, and the model will include focused activities for young people and digital information on activities for young people as well as topic-based support for parents/carers of adolescents through a digital offer and/or face to face.
- 3.1.3 Potential interest is also high for information and signposting to mental health services (69%), activities for children aged 0-5 (65%) and information, advice, and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND) (62%); reflecting an interest in a wider range of services for future use compared to those currently used. This will be reflected through wider information to families and improved connectivity to the Family Hub network to improve access to services.
- 3.1.4 When asked to indicate what other services should be available for children, families and young people through the Family Hub network, the most common suggestion put forward is a place specifically for teenagers / activities for teenagers / support for teenagers / youth activities (32%). We will retain a dedicated space in each district for youth provision recognising there are many other youth facilities and services, not provided by KCC, across districts.
- 3.1.5 Of the three means of potential access to Family Hub services put forward to consultees, face to face is the most popular with 90% of consultees indicating they feel comfortable with this access route. 76% indicated they would be comfortable with accessing information services online. 55% indicated they would be comfortable with accessing virtual services (e.g., groups, course, live chat). The main reasons put forward for lower comfort levels with virtual access are a preference for face to face / in person approach, anxiety / feeling awkward, limited / no access to internet / equipment and a perception that face-to-face access is more effective. Family Hubs will offer a hybrid approach to services and online and virtual services are an enhancement and not a replacement for the opportunity to meet a KCC staff member face to face, either in a one-to-one or group activity. The main enhancement will be improved access to online information through a new website covering 0-19 and up to 25 for SEND. Later in the report, we go into detail regarding each potential access to Family Hub services.
- 3.1.6 When asked to comment on the concept of Family Coaches, just under half of consultees answering (45%) commented that the concept was a good idea / beneficial to families. However, concerns are also expressed with regards to the training / expertise of these coaches and how this can be managed / ensured. In response to these concerns, we recognise that there will need to be regular support for Family Coaches through meetings, training, and peer support through Family Hub practitioners. Family Hub Coaches training will include safeguarding advice and clear protocols around offering information, advice and guidance and any links to professionals where there is a need for more specialist advice.
- 3.1.7 When asked to comment on any other considerations for the development of Family Hub services, consultees commented on physical access to such services

in terms of travel / public transport / the ability to travel needs to be considered. Face to face contact and retaining current centres / contact is also highlighted. Family Hub face to face services will be delivered either through KCC owned buildings or outreach locations in the community. The Kent Communities proposal will determine where KCC buildings can be used to deliver Family Hub services and the Kent Communities proposal has used a Needs Framework which has considered, amongst other factors, a review of the transport network and how this may impact access to buildings.

3.2 PROFESSIONAL / ORGANISATION FEEDBACK

- 3.2.1 Consultees were asked to select the access methods they consider suitable for delivering the pre-defined eleven services featured in the resident consultation questionnaire.
- 3.2.2 Face to face (in person) contact is considered the most suitable access route across all eleven services with between 82% and 97% selecting this access route for each service. This will form part of the service offer alongside any online information.
- 3.2.3 When prompted to comment on Family Coaches, some consultees were positive towards the concept and felt it was a good idea / beneficial to families. However, concerns were expressed with regard to the level of training / expertise required and questioned whether the service can be effective with volunteers only. Some also highlighted that there is potential duplication in delivery of these services both currently and historically. In response to this, there will be Family Hub practitioners with the level of training and expertise to support families where needs are identified. Family Coaches will be supported by Family Hub practitioners and offer support at a lower level of need, focussing on access to information that is new in the Family Hub model such as Perinatal Mental Health through being available to listen, provide information or refer to a professional where needs are higher.
- 3.2.4 There is a high level of interest in the support, advice and opportunities presented to consultees. A high proportion would like to see opportunities for organisations to share their knowledge and expertise (80%), opportunities for organisations to deliver their services alongside other Family Hub network partners (79%) and training and development opportunities (78%). This is a very important part of the model to ensure Kent Families experience and report improved access to a range of services through partner organisations having improved knowledge of local services and being able to help families navigate the wide range of information and services available that best meet their needs.
- 3.2.5 Finally, when asked to provide suggestions for anything else that should be considered in the development of Family Hub services, consultees expressed some concerns with regards to user access in terms of transport, location and distance and stressed the importance of keeping youth / adolescent support services and the resources / organisations / staff required to deliver these effectively. The Kent Communities Programme Needs Framework has been reviewed following their consultation to include a more detailed review of the

public transport network that has informed the Family Hub 0-19 sites within the options set out in the paper.

4. Family Hub Model

4.1 Aims and Vision

- 4.1.1 The central desire for Family Hubs across the UK and in Kent is to give confidence to parents, carers, and all families to be able to give children the best start for life in their early years and throughout childhood, adolescence and into adulthood. To enable this there must be high quality and easily accessible access to information and advice to empower parents and carers to develop their own knowledge on how best to support their children from 0-19 (25 SEND) years.
- 4.1.2 KCC is committed to delivering the best outcomes through a hybrid of universal and targeted support for children, young people, and their families, delivering services identified through the Family Hub guidance. 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.
- 4.1.3 For families and young people with additional needs there will be a more targeted support approach. Family Hub will also develop a new offer of advice and guidance to parents of adolescents including supports for their children's emotional wellbeing, support for young people at risk of or involved in alcohol and substance misuse and children at risk of extra familial harm. There will also be a more targeted intervention offer for vulnerable young people and their families in support of these areas and other identified need areas.
- 4.1.4 For families with a more specialist need as outlined above, the support will be tailored to their level of need. First and foremost, when approaching a Family Hub site, you would be offered signposting to appropriate advice and guidance from a Family Hub staff member. If your need is more complex you will be provided with advice, and where appropriate, support specific to your area of need from a trained Family Hub practitioner. Finally, if your level of need requires specialist support you will be referred into a specialist service specific to your need.
- 4.1.5 We will continue to further develop our partnership workforce in relation to skills and knowledge to provide more information and advice to children and families. To ensure families can receive universal advice we will introduce Family Hub coaches and more peer-to-peer groups. Our Family Hub Coaches and volunteers will have access to more training to develop their own knowledge and skills in a wide range of areas, such as Perinatal Mental Health for mothers and fathers, child and parent attachment, and wider family support, e.g., debt and financial signposting. Within the Family Hub families will be able to receive advice and guidance to help them navigate the support they need for their child, including where needed through coordination of a partnership supported approach. We will support families to build resilience and assist them to more easily access the tools and provision available to them.

4.2 Core Principles

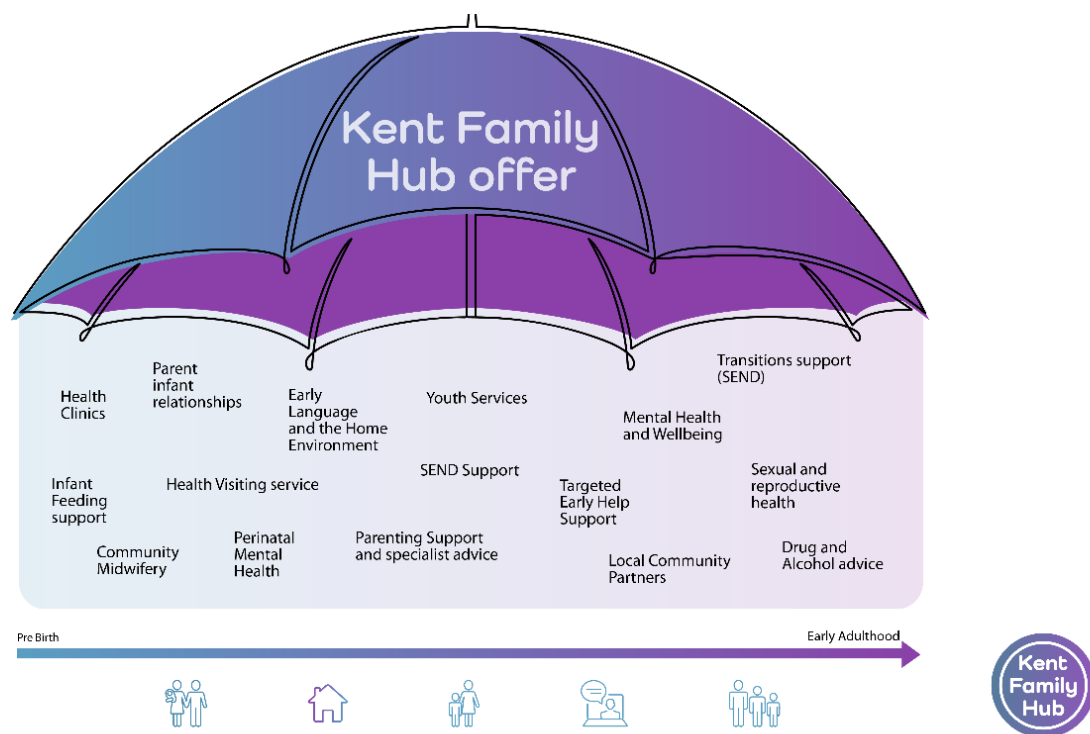
4.2.1 The key themes highlighted through the Family Hub services public consultation have allowed us to set out a series of key principles which have defined the options presented within this paper for consideration.

- Further develop our services and support for children and families for 0-19 (25 with SEND)
- Develop a whole system approach with integrating public health priorities, working with colleagues across KCC, both within Integrated Children's Services and Public Health, Housing and wider partnerships.
- Co-location of services within our Family Hubs, building on our current model including health visitors and community midwifery.
- Working with the voluntary and community sector to become partners within the Family Hub Network and offer relevant training on areas such as child and adolescent development, safeguarding, mental health and emotional wellbeing. The Family Hub Network will improve access to local services by enhanced sharing of knowledge and information.
- Build a sustainable model upskilling staff and those within the wider Family Hub Network, retaining specialist knowledge within our network to deliver this support and provision beyond 2025. The wider Family Hub Network is an all-encompassing term to cover partners who wish to be part of the services under the Family Hub umbrella and want to work in partnership under this term to help families access local services.

4.2.2 Family Hub will encompass a number of core services as defined by the national programme. We will also further develop targeted supports and services within our districts to offer provision based on the identified need, taking a data driven approach.

The diagram consists of four rounded rectangular boxes arranged in a 2x2 grid. Each box has a title in a purple header and a definition in a light blue body. The top-left box is titled 'Kent Family Hub network' and defines it as a group of organisations across a local area that work in partnerships to deliver services for children, young people and families under the Umbrella of Kent Family Hubs. The top-right box is titled 'Kent Family Hubs' and defines it as the name for the proposed Countywide service. The bottom-left box is titled 'Kent Family Hub site' and defines it as a building where Family Hub services are delivered from. The bottom-right box is titled 'Family Hub model' and defines it as the government's description of how we should approach delivering the Family Hub service(s).

The diagram consists of a single rounded rectangular box with a purple header and a light blue body. The header is titled 'Kent Family Hub service(s)' and the body defines it as a service or group of services that are proposed to be delivered under the banner of "Kent Family Hubs".



4.3 Supports and services delivered through our Family Hub model

4.3.1 The following services are required to be delivered through the Family Hub network as mandated through the DfE and stated within the MOU. There is no flexibility in regard to this spend as outlined in the DfE Family Hub Guidance Annex E (appendix 2).

- Develop Early Language skills through the Home Learning Environment
- Preparation and support for pregnancy, and parenthood
- Enhanced Infant feeding support
- Perinatal Mental Health
- Introduce a Family Hub Digital offer
- Implement a new range of outreach support
- Improve and diversify our Information, advice, and support
- Integrate our recording and reporting
- Co-design and evaluation

- Workforce development

4.3.2 Many of our existing services that families will recognise will continue to be delivered in similar ways, although the offer may be increased or enhanced as part of our transformation programme. This will include, but is not limited to the following:

- All families will continue to be offered the mandated health and wellbeing reviews
- Healthy Child Clinics, and Infant Feeding drop-in sessions
- Specialist Infant Feeding service
- Opportunities for early years learning and development
- Opportunities to support the personal, social and emotional development of vulnerable young people
- Opportunities to build the capabilities that young people need for learning, work, and transition to adulthood.
- Support for parents' emotional wellbeing and understanding child development.
- The current digital and online support offer
- The current participation networks
- Parenting education programmes and family courses through the network
- Support for children and young people with SEND
- Information, advice, and guidance

5. What services the Family Hub programme will deliver as defined under Start for Life and Family Hub DfE guidance that will be new or enhanced

5.1 Develop early language skills through the Home Learning Environment (HLE)

5.1.1 Early language skills support all aspects of babies and young children's development including how they are able to manage their emotions and communicate their feelings.

5.1.2 We will develop a package of support for Parent/Carer Education, focused on developing early language for babies and preschool children in and around the home. The Family Hub service will expand the access to this support across the Family Hub network to ensure the knowledge to provide appropriate advice and support is well understood across communities. This will include the sharing of a range of tools, resources, and knowledge. As part of the Family Hub model, development of evidence-based home learning programmes will be implemented such as Early Talk Boost, and Making it Real.

5.1.3 BBC Tiny Happy People is being rolled out to families and 3-4 year old BookStart packs will be distributed to nursery's in targeted areas.

5.1.4 We will run parenting support groups for children, young people and their families who would be affected by:

- Domestic abuse
- Emotional health and wellbeing concerns

- Low early childhood attachments
- Difficulties in developing play and engagement with children
- Social, emotional and behavioural complex needs

5.2 Preparation and support for pregnancy and parenthood

5.2.1 The Parenting Education offer will provide parents/carers with knowledge to support their child's development from birth through to adulthood. This includes a good awareness of infant, child and adolescent development and the positive parenting skills required at each stage of their development.

5.2.2 Family Hub services will work with parents and carers to identify how they would like to learn more about child and adolescent development and include this in the procurement of digital learning opportunities.

5.2.3 We will use evidence based parenting programmes including Triple P (positive parenting programme) and Solihull (understanding children's behaviour), to support parents of younger children to look after themselves and build their confidence as a new parent and make friends and support their bonding with their child and understanding how to support the healthy development of their child(ren).

5.2.4 We will continue this support for parents/carers throughout their children's development by supporting them with key areas such as child/parent-carer relationships, sleep and healthy routines, child development and understanding and managing common ailments.

5.2.5 We will deliver parent/carer group support activity that emphasises the importance of communication, play and growing together.

5.2.6 As children develop into adolescence, we will structure our support accordingly to support them and their parents/carers to address areas such as online harm & safety, child and adolescent development, support for young people with anxiety and emotional wellbeing, and child to parent violence.

5.2.7 Within our Family Hub services consultation feedback, key themes were identified in relation to access to advice and guidance for parents/carers including:

- 73% of those responding wanted access to information on online safety,
- 69% of those responding wanted information and signposting to emotional wellbeing and mental health services.
- 73% of those responding wanting information and support for parents/carers with older children.

5.2.8 Our digital offer will include advice for parents/carers and signposting to relevant external support services the offer advice on online safety and KCC's mental health support.

5.3 Enhanced Infant Feeding Support

5.3.1 We will offer all families an information session before a child is born, a virtual infant feeding session in the early days after birth and an offer of weekly sessions until the infant is 12 weeks old.

5.4 Infant Feeding and Perinatal Mental Health (PNMH)

- Responsive feeding animation films developed and available for families to access via this weblink: family.kentcht.nhs.uk/responsivefeeding which will be included in our digital advice and support offer so families can easily access. We will also work with practitioners to further develop their knowledge to enable them to promote this offer.
- Breast pump loan scheme for electric devices launched alongside hand pump scheme targeted at families eligible for Healthy Start, given out by health visitors.
- Baby Friendly Initiative (BFI) training to improve advice on responsive feeding for early help support workers and health visitors. The advice will be provided within group work with parents and through family home visits.
- Trial scheme for nursing bra e-voucher targeted to women eligible for Healthy Start, launched in August 2023 in our most deprived districts Thanet, Dover, Swale, Folkestone and Hythe and Gravesham to improve breastfeeding rates in targeted areas.
- More breastfeeding friendly spaces in the community through engagement of businesses with provision of a toolkit and grant scheme.
- Developed support videos for perinatal mental health to be uploaded to the Start for life website:
 - general awareness for the public (translated into 5 languages and BSL)
 - non healthcare support workers
 - healthcare workers
- Communications planned via social media campaign and service to disseminate.
- Developed PNMH guide for non-health and clinical professionals containing all the local service staff. Professionals are utilising the guide to appropriately signpost families to the correct service.
- “Release the pressure” telephone support service provided for families experiencing PNMH.

5.4.1 Awareness development training for practitioners working within our Family Hubs to enable them to support parents/carers in developing and strengthening the parent infant relationship and attachment with their child. This initially will form part of the ongoing support and delivery for our most at risk families before being rolled out county wide to support all families who access our universal offer.

5.5 Perinatal Mental Health

5.5.1 Our offer for perinatal mental health and wellbeing will be focused on community-based support for mothers, fathers and their wider support network to provide advice, guidance tools and other resources to self-manage their needs and to be supported by their partners/family/friends. Family Hub staff will be trained and upskilled to advise and discuss perinatal mental health with mothers, their partners and the network, and as part of our partnership working approach, signpost to those within the health service, who will have enhanced level training if their needs increase.

5.6 **Enhanced support for children and young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND)**

5.6.1 Our Family Hub model enables us to better support children and young people with SEND and their families at an earlier point working with them in their local communities. Following our Ofsted / CQC revisit in September 2022, partners across Kent are working together to transform SEND services, which is set out in our SEN area Accelerated Progress Plan:

5.6.2 We will align our Family Hub model with the SEND local offer. The SEND local offer is being developed to include a range of SEND Information Advice and Guidance Roadshows that are based on the premise that supporting families to access support and information when they need it will empower them to find and access help earlier. This advice and information will be available within Family Hubs without needing a diagnosis, assessment plan or lengthy waits and free at the point of access. This service will develop as part of our Family Hub development.

5.6.3 We will work closely with the Kent Portage team to further develop access to inclusive play activities; for example, additional sensory activities will be developed alongside the Home Learning Environment support.

6. **Test Sites**

6.1 During the Family Hub consultation, we tested the Family Hub model in our two commissioned Children's Centres (Millmead in Margate and Seashells in Sheerness). These centres were selected because they are based in areas where existing health outcomes are lower than in other areas of Kent.

6.2 Both centres were testing a whole family working approach and focused on the integration of services. A range of additional services were offered to the centres. These are outlined below:

- A new video stream promoting all Live Well Public Health services, including smoking cessation at the point of reception/waiting areas to promote family wellbeing services
- Enhanced signposting and advice on family health services through new Making Every Contact Count (MECC) trained champions
- Information session for new parents to access Healthy Start vouchers and new Kent Maternity Wear vouchers to promote our infant feeding aims

- Family workshop to providing Breast Pump Demonstration with supported conversation to encourage breastfeeding (this includes the access to breast pumps) –
- New advice from the Money Guiders programme from staff to give correct money guidance, including giving complex technical information
- Enhanced advice on oral health, food champions
- Reducing Parental Conflict during activities and interventions
- Developed and disseminated a perinatal mental health guide for non-health and clinical professions and gave to staff at both sites
- Developed Breastfeeding Champions with enhanced knowledge from specialist infant feeding service
- Provided sexual health advice for parents and young people accessing services

- 6.3 Within the Kent Communities Need Framework, both test sites were identified as requiring a Family Hub service. In order to better understand the lived experience of parents, focus groups were held in the test sites to help us further develop the Family Hub model proposals. This feedback was considered in developing the options.
- 6.4 Parents described their parenting challenges as concerns about online safety. They voiced that ‘kids can access everything’. Other parenting challenges included money concerns, childcare costs, children’s behaviour, lack of SEND support and needing support for siblings of those with SEND.
- 6.5 The feedback identified the following services that would help, food pantry, exercise equipment, opportunities for physical activities, family activities, mental health services for adults, children and teenagers.
- 6.6 Families also shared that having a safe and welcoming space was important to them, alongside building good relationships with staff. Parents valued signposting, opportunities to meet with staff face to face and being able to access different professionals. It is important to parents that services are easy to get to, and that services are accessible online if they can’t get to a building.
- 6.7 Parents are supportive of outreach services but felt they would need longer to make a connection with staff. They like ‘pop-up’ services which provide signposting, and suggested using churches, schools and other community spaces.
- 6.8 Feedback from parents around online services identified that they are not accessible to everyone and shared concerns that online services were a gateway to removing face to face services. Online services that parents would like to see include how to inspire your child to be creative, information such as checklists, milestones for children, teenage health, potty training, print out for colour in nature trails, information on good nutrition and cooking skills.
- 6.9 Parents identified the following professionals and services as those that they would like to see in Family Hubs; midwives, maternity assistants, sexual health,

mental health, play services, citizens advice bureau, health visitors, youth workers with experience of different ages, Domestic Abuse (DA) help and awareness, addiction awareness and financial services and signposting.

7. Delivery Model

- 7.1 Family Hub services will be delivered through a number of different avenues. This will include face-to-face, a digital offer and community outreach. Our Family Hubs will offer a one stop shop for advice and information for children and their families.
- 7.2 The Family Hub approach delivers joined up whole family services across each district. This model will be used to strengthen our arrangements with co-located partners and ensure a consistent model for Start for Life partnership across the county.
- 7.3 The model will strengthen the arrangements with health visiting and community midwifery to ensure through co-location and system arrangements, we work towards a family only needing to tell their story once.
- 7.4 Every Family Hub provision will be managed across a district, and staff will continue to work across the range of Family Hub sites ensuring that each location is appropriate for the services at that site. For example, appropriate spaces for adolescents, ensuring that services on school sites maintain safeguarding requirements, and ensuring support services to families, such as debt and welfare advice or parental conflict are delivered in an appropriate space maintaining privacy of participants.
- 7.5 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.
- 7.6 **Face to Face**
 - 7.6.1 Our face-to-face offer will be similar to what Kent residents will recognise within our current provision. It is the opportunity to attend a Family Hub site as and meet with a practitioner in a physical location, either in a 1-to-1 capacity or in a group setting. This could include, for example, meeting with a midwife, health visitor, a Family Hub coach or community volunteers or attend an activity. Family Hubs will provide a one stop shop for all children and families and provide advice and information as well as providing a number of supports and services.
 - 7.6.2 According to the consultation, of the three delivery media in relation to accessing our Family Hubs, face to face is the most popular with 90% of consultees responding indicating they feel comfortable with this access route. 76% of those responding indicated they would be comfortable with accessing information services online. 55% of those responding indicated they would be comfortable with accessing via a digital offer (e.g., groups, course, live chat).
 - 7.6.3 The main reasons put forward by those responding for lower comfort levels with digital access were a preference for face to face / in person approach, anxiety /

feeling awkward, limited / no access to internet / equipment and a perception that face-to-face access is more effective.

7.6.4 Some example verbatims from those responding supporting face to face can be found below:

- *“Because people need to speak to each other in person and have that human contact and relationship if the work is to be meaningful and purposeful.”*
- *“Too much emphasis is now towards online services - it is lazy, not compassionate or effective and does not capture the real person that would be face to face.”*
- *“I don't feel that online engagement delivers the best outcomes for those in need. It is a cheap shortcut to delivering services.”*
- *“Because they are not specific enough to each individual's needs and they feel like a cop out for providing real support to those in need. There is not easy, real-time way to feedback how useful/not useful they are.”*

7.7 Digital Offer

7.7.1 Our proposed digital offer will act as central point of advice, information and guidance for parents, carers, young people, our Family Hub workforce and colleagues across the Family Hub network including our volunteers. As outlined in our consultation our digital offer will provide:

- Improved access to information – through designing digital and telephone offers and using digital tools to better promote information and advice on supports and services available.
- Digital services – through better promotion of what is available for children and their families, delivery of online parenting programmes through better use of social media and inclusion within community forums.
- Digital access to parent and carer panels and digital tools

7.7.2 Outreach provision will include a digital offer supported by face-to-face sessions from practitioners, volunteers or other local community services. We envision our digital offer being utilised by families and accessible to anyone with caring responsibilities for a child or young person. The Family Hub digital offer will be easy to navigate and access and provide the range of information and advice. We are currently developing our digital offer and will co-design the provision with our parent-carer panels and further engagement with wider stakeholders, including children and young people.

7.7.3 Information will be in “bitesize format” supported by audio visual content to make this more engaging and expand access and will include advice and guidance around further support and self-help techniques.

7.7.4 Some examples from the consultation verbatims from those responding supporting digital can be found below:

- *“I felt a bit anxious when it was my first time doing live chat online but once you get that first time out of the way it becomes a lot easier! Personally, I don't think that people just get anxiety because it's a virtual online chat - I think that most people feel this way when they are doing something new e.g., first day of new job/new course, or first driving lesson or first time on aerospace etc...”*
- *“I have an extremely busy job, prefer to do it from the comfort of my house in my time.”*
- *“It's a step to overcome to excess help and support. Online might be easier but talking in person might be giving better results.”*
- *“Sometimes anxiety can cause me to not want a face to face.”*
- *“I think I am just more use to online things.”*
- *“It's comfortable to do online for me because don't need to go anywhere and especially my child is autistic and our days depend on day.”*

7.7.5 For balance, there were comments from people who would like only a face-to-face service, which can be found below:

- *“Continue as much contact face to face and through groups as possible this is what families need to avoid mental health difficulties.”*
- *“Making sure that face-face opportunities are still available. Parenthood can be isolating and it is important that there are chances for parents to engage with each other and professionals. Sometimes people do not know they need help and therefore if more services are online they require the knowledge and desire to seek these services, rather than being around professionals who might be able to see and sign post.”*

7.8 Community Outreach

7.8.1 There are four specific categories of need that have been identified through a data driven approach, as areas of focus within the Family Hub model that indicate a requirement for outreach provision within the community.

- 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.

7.8.2 Outreach work in the community within the Family Hub model will be delivered across both urban and rural localities informed by need/data. Outreach is community-based provision, delivered in non-Family Hub sites e.g., libraries, community centres and may take place in family homes (for example health

visitors attending a family home). It will not be possible to have a Family Hub site in all localities, particularly in rural areas with low population density as outlined within the Kent Communities programme. Outreach delivery will improve reach to isolated and/or vulnerable communities through its flexibility/agility in responding to need and not being tied to a physical Family Hub site location. In these cases, the Family Hub offer will be delivered from existing community buildings e.g., libraries, halls, as well through a digital offer with the nature of delivery varying and informed by local need and data. The need/type of outreach provision will be reviewed on a regular basis, examples include:

- Practitioners delivering targeted groups/activities from locations such as community halls and libraries.
- Joint work with community and health partners
- Practitioners working alongside existing groups, such as toddler groups on a regular basis to extend the reach/access to information, advice, and guidance.
- Practitioners holding drop-in surgeries/sessions to provide 1 to 1 signposting and support.
- Practitioners holding targeted virtual groups and activities online.
- The frequency of outreach and rural delivery will be determined by need and data, and in some cases may be weekly, monthly, or termly.

7.8.3 From the consultation, when asked to indicate what other services should be available for children, families and young people through the Family Hub network, the most common suggestion put forward by those that responded was a place specifically for teenagers / activities for teenagers / support for teenagers / youth activities (32% of respondents). Within every district there will be a space that is accessible and identifiable as a delivery space for young people. This may be in co-located buildings with other services or in a Family Hub site. KCC are committed to working with the VCS, faith groups and the community wherever possible, to provide activities and support for teenagers are available throughout the county. These activities and supports will not always be provided by KCC staff.

8. Options For Consideration

8.1 Following the public consultation and review of the responses received, a range of options for consideration are detailed below:

8.2 Option 1: Do not implement the Family Hub model

8.2.1 This would mean the Local Authority would not meet the minimum expectations set by the DfE in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, with the associated risk of losing c£11m of additional funding. If this were to occur, we would not be able to offer any additionality to our existing services.

8.3 Option 2: Deliver the mandatory enhanced services set out by the DfE

8.3.1 We will continue to deliver a 0-19 (25 SEND) Family Hub model offering enhanced services only in the DfE mandated areas set out in the following Key Decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Public Health;

- Infant Feeding 23/00076
- Parenting Support - 23/00081
- Home Learning Environment - 23/00082
- Perinatal Mental Health - 23/00075

8.3.2 Families will still have access to Family Hub staff members who will be able to offer them assistance in finding the help that they need to access local services through signposting only.

8.3.3 If we proceed with this option, we will meet the grant requirements for the DfE, as set out in Appendix 2.

8.4 Option 3: Wider Family Hub offer

8.4.1 We will continue to deliver a 0-19 (25 SEND) Family Hub model offering enhanced services in the DfE mandated areas set out in the following Key Decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Public Health;

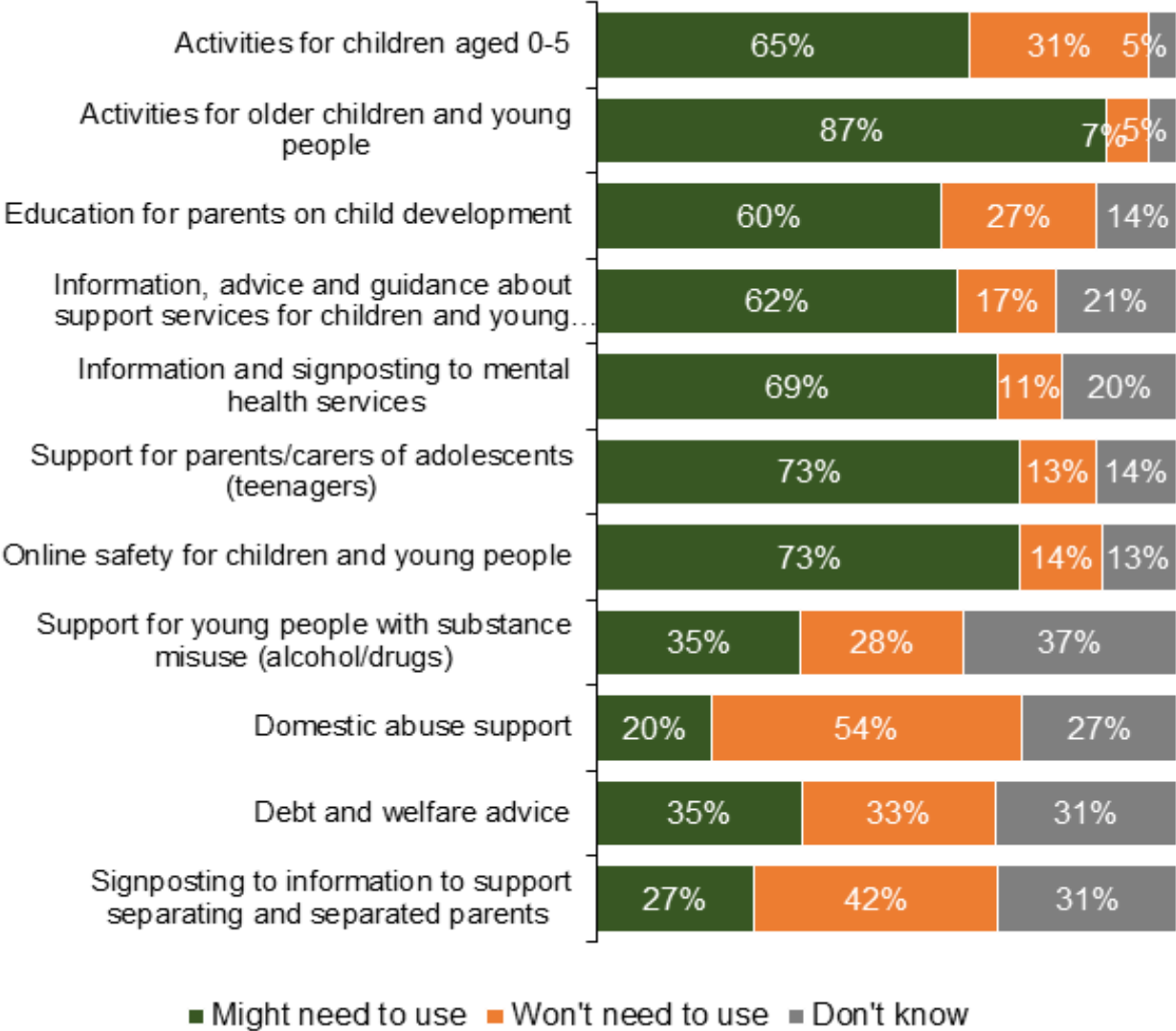
- Infant Feeding 23/00076
- Parenting Support - 23/00081
- Home Learning Environment - 23/00082
- Perinatal Mental Health - 23/00075

8.4.2 In addition, we will offer the 7 services we consulted on below that service users felt they might most use. These will be delivered by Family Hub practitioners, through enhanced and additional modes of delivery, in each district throughout the county. We have used the consultation data and the design of the Family Hub model to allow residents to access services in a way that suits their preferences and fits in with their lifestyle wherever possible; for example, some consultees clearly prefer face to face groups and appointments, however some consultees stated they find it easier to access information online and talk to experts virtually. Young people had a very clear voice in our consultation and had a clear preference for face to face delivery which we have taken into account.

- Education for parents on child development
- Activities for children aged 0-5
- Activities for older children and young people
- Information, advice and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Information and signposting to mental health services (children and adults)
- Support for parents/carers of adolescents (teenagers)
- Online safety for children and young people

8.4.3 As you can see from the data below, we saw a very clear gap in the preference for services that consultees said they might use in the future.

Which of the following do you think you might need to use in the future?



SUPPORTING DATA	% might need to use	% won't need to use	% don't know
Activities for children aged 0-5	65%	31%	5%
Activities for older children and young people	87%	7%	5%
Education for parents on child development	60%	27%	14%
Information, advice and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)	62%	17%	21%
Information and signposting to mental health services	69%	11%	20%
Support for parents/carers of adolescents (teenagers)	73%	13%	14%
Online safety for children and young people	73%	14%	13%

Support for young people with substance misuse (alcohol/drugs)	35%	28%	37%
Domestic abuse support	20%	54%	27%
Debt and welfare service	35%	33%	31%
Signposting for information to support separating and separated parents	27%	42%	31%

8.4.4 If we proceed with this option, we will meet the grant requirements for the DfE, as set out in Appendix 2.

8.5 Option 4: Deliver a Family Hub model through a developed Family Hub Network. Our preferred option.

8.5.1 KCC will continue to deliver a 0-19 (25 SEND) Family Hub Model offering enhanced services in the DfE mandated areas set out in Key Decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Public Health;

- Infant Feeding 23/00076
- Parenting Support - 23/00081
- Home Learning Environment - 23/00082
- Perinatal Mental Health - 23/00075

8.5.2 As outlined in option 3, the following services will be delivered by Family Hub practitioners:

- Education for parents on child development
- Activities for children aged 0-5
- Activities for older children and young people
- Information, advice and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Information and signposting to mental health services (children and adults)
- Support for parents/carers of adolescents (teenagers)
- Online safety for children and young people

8.5.3 In addition to these, we will also ensure that the remaining 4 services (which are outlined below) are accessible through the Family Hub model. The additional specialist services in option 4 will be delivered through partnership working with the VCS and partners (the Family Hub Network). We have outlined each service and the changes applicable for each option in appendix 3.

- Support for young people with substance misuse (alcohol/drugs)
- Domestic abuse support
- Debt and welfare advice
- Signposting to information to support separating and separated parents

8.5.4 Option 4 does not include an exhaustive list of services, however, feedback from the consultation showed these specialist services were required by some

parents and are included because they are reflective of our understanding of the needs within our districts to reduce harm to children.

8.5.5 We do currently deliver these services in partnership across districts, however the access to services varies between each district and we want to ensure there is consistency for services users across Kent.

8.5.6 Option 4 is our preferred option because we recognise the importance of all 11 services following feedback from the consultation and within our Family Hub model we are in a position to offer, in an innovative and consistent way across the county, to deliver joined up services to meet the need of children, young people and families.

8.5.7 If we proceed with this option, we will meet the grant requirements for the DfE, as set out in Appendix 2.

8.6 Regardless of the level of service option chosen, all four Family Hub options will be deliverable within each of the five KCP options.

9. Kent Communities Consultation Links

9.1 Earlier in 2023, prior to the Family Hub services consultation a Kent Communities consultation was carried out, looking at the KCC estate. This consultation is linked to the Family Hub consultation as it will inform the buildings the Family Hub model will utilise. The options for the physical buildings the Family Hub network use will be informed by the Key Decision for Kent Communities. KCC will reconfigure existing standalone Open Access inhouse services into a whole family approach model for infants, children, young people and their families aged 0 to 19 (25 with SEND)".

9.2 We have included below a summary of the responses to the Family Hub model proposal, from the **Kent Communities consultation**:

9.2.1 Consultees were also given the opportunity to provide any comments in their words on what they believe to be important to consider when transitioning to the Family Hub Model. For the purpose of reporting, we have reviewed respondents' comments and have grouped common responses together into themes. These are reported in the table below. 34% of consultees provided a comment at this question.

9.2.2 The most important consideration put forward by consultees for consideration of the Family Hub transition is users being able to get there / travel there / location (46%). This includes consideration that some would prefer to, or only be able to, walk to reach the location or access via convenient and reasonably priced public transport.

9.2.3 This is followed by ensuring access is possible for everyone that needs to (with consideration to different age groups / demographics and possible needs - 27%). This includes provision of service for all concerned and the equipment / space setting / staffing for all needs.

9.2.4 24% of consultees commented that they believe it is important that individual services provided under the Family Hub offering isn't diluted / remains distinct for each user group.

9.2.5 21% of consultees expressed concerns about the suitability of proposed space / buildings for the services under consultation and 18% expressed concerns about the compatibility of the range of services being provided in one place.

9.3 We support the Kent Communities options proposals. It is important to note that utilising a higher number of Family Hub buildings (sites) that we have to integrate into the model will have a staffing cost implication that will affect savings outlined in our Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP). All four Family Hub options will be deliverable within each of the five KCP options.

10. Financial Implications

10.1 The Family Hub Grant from the DfE totals to £11,051,715 over a 3-year period and is distributed across a number of mandatory programme strands.

10.2 The transformation project is entirely funded by DfE grant monies, but long-term service delivery will have to be funded through base budget. Therefore, the model must be sustainable and this has influenced the model development.

10.3 Overall Grant allocation by DfE funded areas:

Programme Strand	Total Grant
Family Hubs Transformation Funding - PROGRAMME	£2,314,483
Family Hubs Transformation Funding - CAPITAL	£578,559
Parent-Infant Relationships and Perinatal Mental Health	£3,162,147
Parenting Support	£2,032,065
Infant Feeding	£1,271,332
Early Language and Home Learning Environment	£1,325,435
Publishing the Start for Life Offer	£184,695
Parent and Carer Panels	
Trailblazer	£183,000
Total	£11,051,715

10.4 Existing Service cost:

10.4.1 The current affected service cost is £11.9m. This includes a range of different funding streams including Public Health and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

11. Legal implications

- 11.1 KCC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October 2022 towards becoming a Family Hub Authority and Key Decisions were taken as part of that process. Consideration has been given to KCC's statutory duties and will continue as the project is implemented.
- 11.2 KCC has engaged external legal advice and Counsel to support the review of the key processes and documents. 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 Programme and wider benefits of implementation.
- 11.3 The new model, linked with the Kent Communities Programme decision, involves a reduction in sites, for which a consultation was completed and consideration about such changes have been taken into account as part of the decision process.

12. Equalities implications

- 12.1 Initial assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has identified negative implications on young people within the Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity Protected Characteristics because the linked decision with Kent Communities programme will result in a reduction in the number of buildings available for service users.

13. Governance

- 13.1 The Family Hub programme delivery will be an iterative process. The decision required is agreement to the initial transition from existing Open Access to the new Family Hub approach across a reduced estate map (as per KCP decision). The decision also confirms the Family Hub grant spend across the lifetime of the programme.
- 13.2 Ongoing development work and detailed implementation planning will be delegated to the Corporate Director in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

14. Recommendation

- 14.1 Cabinet is asked to agree the proposed decision to:
- a) Approve the implementation of the Family Hub model in Kent, as per the arrangements set out in the report.
 - b) Approve the development and delivery of the workstreams detailed within the Start for Life and Family Hub programme.
 - c) Confirm the viability of the Kent Family Hub Model within any estate map outlined within the Kent Communities Programme.
 - d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education (CYPE), in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care & Public Health, to undertake the detailed service design and delivery within the relevant estate map, as determined via Kent Communities Programme decision-making.
 - e) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for CYPE to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

15. Appendices

1. Full Consultation Report including an executive summary
2. Annex E: Family Hub Model Framework
3. Options Service Table

16. Contact details

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Relevant Director:

Carolann James, Director of Operational ICS

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Cabinet

DECISION NO:

23/00092

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

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or*
- b) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
 - *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.*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Kent Family Hub Implementation

Decision:

Cabinet agree to:

- a) Approve the implementation of the Family Hub model in Kent, as per the arrangements set out in the report.
- b) Approve the development and delivery of the workstreams detailed within the Start for Life and Family Hub programme.
- c) Confirm the viability of the Kent Family Hub Model within any estate map outlined within the Kent Communities Programme.
- d) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education (CYPE), in consultation with the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care & Public Health, to undertake the detailed service design and delivery within the relevant estate map, as determined via Kent Communities Programme decision-making.
- e) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for CYPE to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

- 1.1 This decision relates to the implementation of the Family Hub model in Kent. This follows on from the policy decision by the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services that KCC would move forward with the principle of adopting the Family Hub approach and the related agreement by KCC to accept the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October 2022 with the DfE. This MOU creates obligations to meet specific provision, deadlines and timescales associated with transformation activity and demonstration of progress towards

implementing Family Hubs by the end of March 2025 and sustaining this beyond the life of the grant funding.

1.2 The key themes highlighted through the Family Hub services public consultation have allowed us to set out a series of key principles which have defined the options outlined in the report to Cabinet.

1.3 Family Hub will encompass a number of core services as defined by the national programme. We will also further develop targeted supports and services within our districts to offer provision based on the identified need, taking a data driven approach.

Options

Option 1: Do not implement the Family Hub model

This would mean the Local Authority would not meet the minimum expectations set by the DfE in accordance with the Memorandum of Understanding, with the associated risk of losing c£11m of additional funding. If this were to occur, we would not be able to offer any additionality to our existing services.

Option 2: Deliver the mandatory enhanced services set out by the DfE

We will continue to deliver a 0-19 (25 SEND) Family Hub model offering enhanced services only in the DfE mandated areas set out in the following Key Decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Public Health.

Families will still have access to Family Hub staff members who will be able to offer them assistance in finding the help that they need to access local services through signposting only. If we proceed with this option, we will meet the grant requirements for the DfE, as set out in Appendix 2.

Option 3: Wider Family Hub offer

We will continue to deliver a 0-19 (25 SEND) Family Hub model offering enhanced services in the DfE mandated areas set out in the following Key Decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Public Health. In addition, we will offer the 7 services we consulted on below that service users felt they might most use:

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- Activities for older children and young people
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- Information and signposting to mental health services (children and adults)
- Support for parents/carers of adolescents (teenagers)
- Online safety for children and young people

Option 4: Deliver a Family Hub model through a developed Family Hub Network. Our preferred option.

KCC will continue to deliver a 0-19 (25 SEND) Family Hub Model offering enhanced services in the DfE mandated areas set out in Key Decisions taken by the Cabinet Members for Integrated Children's Services and Adult Social Care and Public Health.

As outlined in option 3, the following services will be delivered by Family Hub practitioners:

- Education for parents on child development
- Activities for children aged 0-5
- Activities for older children and young people
- Information, advice and guidance about support services for children and young people with Special Education Needs and Disabilities (SEND)
- Information and signposting to mental health services (children and adults)
- Support for parents/carers of adolescents (teenagers)
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In addition to these, we will also ensure that the remaining 4 services (which are outlined below) are accessible through the Family Hub model. The additional specialist services in option 4 will be delivered through partnership working with the VCS and partners (the Family Hub Network).

- Support for young people with substance misuse (alcohol/drugs)
- Domestic abuse support
- Debt and welfare advice
- Signposting to information to support separating and separated parents

Option 4 is our preferred option because we recognise the importance of all 11 services following feedback from the consultation and within our Family Hub model we are in a position to offer, in an innovative and consistent way across the county, to deliver joined up services to meet the need of children, young people and families.

Financial Implications

The Family Hub Grant from the DfE totals to £11,051,715 over a 3-year period and is distributed across a number of mandatory programme strands.

The transformation project is entirely funded by DfE grant monies, but long-term service delivery will have to be funded through base budget. Therefore, the model must be sustainable and this has influenced the model development.

Overall Grant allocation by DfE funded areas:

Programme Strand	Total Grant
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Early Language and Home Learning Environment	£1,325,435
Publishing the Start for Life Offer	£184,695
Parent and Carer Panels	
Trailblazer	£183,000
Total	£11,051,715

Existing Service cost:

The current affected service cost is £11.9m. This includes a range of different funding streams including Public Health and the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG).

Legal implications

KCC entered into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) in October 2022 towards becoming a Family Hub Authority and Key Decisions were taken as part of that process. Consideration has been given to KCC’s statutory duties and will continue as the project is implemented.

KCC has engaged external legal advice and Counsel to support the review of the key processes and documents. 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 Programme and wider benefits of implementation.

The new model, linked with the Kent Communities Programme decision, involves a reduction in sites, for which a consultation was completed and consideration about such changes have been taken into account as part of the decision process.

Equalities implications

Initial assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has identified negative implications on young people within the Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity Protected Characteristics because the linked decision with Kent Communities programme will result in a reduction in the number of buildings available for service users.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children’s and Young People Cabinet Committee considered the decision on 21 November 2023

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

The options are outlined above and in the decision report that accompanies this document.

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

.....
signed

date 30 November 2023

By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: Scrutiny Committee – 19 December 2023

Subject: Call-in of Decision 23/00100 – Commissioned Youth Service Contracts

Background

1. The proposed decision was discussed at the **Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November, 2023** prior to the key decision being taken by Cabinet on 30 November 2023.
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins, thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political Groups.
3. The reasons of the call-in were 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 s17.73 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.
4. The reasons submitted for this call-in are set out in the attached document (a).
 5. The call-in request element determined as valid is the suggestion that it is not clear within the decision documentation to what extent and in what way due consideration has been given to whether Youth Service provided by the Council, in the absence of the discontinued Commissioned Youth Service, meets the requirements under Statutory Guidance issued in 2023. The decision indicates that consideration was given to statutory obligations, but the level of information is

limited. It is therefore appropriate for the Scrutiny Committee to seek clarity from the Executive on this point prior to any implementation of the decision.

[Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's well-being \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://publishing.service.gov.uk)

Process

6. As per the call-in procedure, Democratic Services must consider all call-in requests against the criteria detailed in the constitution, which are themselves based on the legal requirements under the Local Government Act 2000 to have an appropriate mechanism to allow Executive decisions to be scrutinised. 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.
7. The Cabinet Member and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
8. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation already 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.
9. The decision papers remain available online but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Options for the Scrutiny Committee

10. 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.

Attached documents

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Mr Brady and Ms Hawkins.
- b) [23/00100 – Decision Report](#)
- c) [23/00100 – Record of Decision](#)
- d) [23/00100 – EqIA](#)
- e) [Appendix 1 – Family Hub Services Consultation Written Report](#)

Background Documents

[Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November, 2023](#)

Report Author

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Scrutiny Call-in Request: 23/00100 - Commissioned Youth Service Contracts

Proposer: Alister Brady

Seconder: Jenni Hawkins

Reasons for call-in:

(a) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework

As part of Framing Kent's Future (FKF), this Council has committed to 'supporting activities and facilities for young people in all areas of Kent, including deprived areas' (FKF, page 23). The Cabinet Member has stated that KCC will continue to offer youth services once these contracts come to an end through a combination of existing in-house provision and as part of a new Family Hub offer. However historically, the youth work professional role and the youth service has dramatically changed since 2013 and in 2015 we saw a move towards Early Help. This meant the youth work offer has been significantly reduced from the previous model of a universal open access provision and methodology with trained and qualified professionals under the National Youth Agency Youth Work Curriculum <https://www.nya.org.uk/resource/nya-national-youth-work-curriculum/>. The change saw a social work first model in which the entire aim of the youth work provision was not a service in itself but sought to intervene and support social work services.

The proposed decision further reduces what is offered by the council to young people and further distances itself from the FKF commitment - whichever way you look at it, this is a significant reduction in youth service provision. If the Council is genuinely committed to 'supporting activities and facilities for young people in all areas of Kent', then it should not be withdrawing the commissioned youth services.

The Council's policy framework, Framing Kent's Future (Page 23), states that the Administration will 'maximise the National Youth Guarantee to support activities and facilities for young people in all areas of Kent including deprived areas that may not otherwise take it up'. The National Youth Guarantee <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/government-outlines-ambitious-plans-to-level-up-activities-for-young-people> has not been achieved, therefore, this is a clear breach of the Policy Framework. Reducing what is offered to Kents young people through this policy change demonstrates this further.

This decision not only contradicts the Council's own Policy Framework, but actually conflicts with Government guidance and statute. For example, Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 ('Section 507B') <https://www.nya.org.uk/stat-duty/>, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6512d57eb23dad000de70697/Statutory_duty_guidance_for_local_authorities_youth_provision.pdf states that Local Authorities are statutorily responsible 'to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, leisure-time activities and facilities for young people aged 13 to 19 and those with learning difficulties or disabilities aged 20 to 24'. This statutory duty was recently updated and published in September 2023 which was during the consultation period, therefore this decision does not take these changes into account. The scope of the duty is clear:

Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services' namely:

a sufficient quantity of educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities and a sufficient quantity of recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

The two forms of activity are not mutually exclusive but local authorities must, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for young people to sufficient forms of, and facilities for, both types of activities. They include, but are not limited to: sports and informal physical

activities, cultural activities, outdoor residential, weekend or holiday-time activities special interest clubs and volunteering activities.

Leisure time activities are activities outside of the school setting, the KCC decision document suggests this can be achieved through school provision, however, this is not the case and is a clear breach of the Education Act.

This cessation of the commissioned youth service contracts is a clear reduction in the youth offer – we argue that the proposed provision does not *sufficiently* meet the council's statutory duty, as stated above. The Cabinet Member has stressed that youth services will be remodelled as part of the wider Family Hub offer, however, through this process there will be a lengthy mobilisation period. We are not satisfied that in the interim the Council will be complying with its legal obligations to support our young people to access 'leisure-time activities'.

I am also concerned that we appear to be relying on the voluntary and community sector and schools to pick up the slack and to fulfil our statutory obligations (see Decision Report, points 3.7 and 7.2, respectively). There are questions here about the impact this will have. If these organisations are unable to source appropriate funding and have to cease some of the youth services they offer, the council will be in further breach of its statutory obligations. Indeed, while we are on the topic of funding, it is important to note that other public sector organisations and charities are facing similar financial pressures to that experienced by the Council. It is too simplistic to say that as a Council we need to make savings and so we must stop delivering this service; KCC is one cog in the wider public sector system, and the savings we deliver have a material impact elsewhere and despite assurances that this is not the case, this is 'cost shunting'. Relying on other sectors to deliver the Councils statutory obligations is in direct breach of the Education Act.

Contracts are extended year on year, and barriers to contact procurement have been removed under the regulation changes post Brexit. Considering the updated statutory guidance and until it can be demonstrated that these are being met, a needs assessment and analysis must be completed to confirm the Council is not in breach of this statutory guidance. Before this can happen, these contracts must and should be extended. If this does not happen, the Council will be opening itself up to legal challenge through the mechanism of judicial review because of the stated reasons. Given the Council does not have a local youth offer plan it cannot demonstrate 'need' – it is also clear that young people have not been sufficiently consulted regarding the proposal changes and future model redesign. Both of these are clear breaches of the statutory guidance. It is the right of all young people to be heard and it must be evidenced that they have been listened to - this has not happened.

d) A presumption in favour of openness

It may very well be argued in response to the point above that the Council is in fact confident it can still meet its statutory obligations despite the reduction in service provision, and that it has consulted with legal experts to confirm this (see section 7 of the Decision Report – Legal Implications). However, why has this legal advice not been shared with all Members of the CYPE Cabinet Committee? I do not believe that this type of privileged advice should be restricted to decision-makers. As Members, we are entitled to all the necessary information we need to make informed decisions. I understand that CYPE Cabinet Committee is an advisory body, but how can Members of the Committee provide sound advice without access to this type of crucial information? Members' voting behaviour may have been influenced if they were to have seen this legal advice. In the spirit of transparency and 'openness', I think this information should have been shared with all Members of CYPE Cabinet Committee at the very least, and I would go so far as to argue that this decision should be paused until *all* Members have had sufficient time to scrutinise the legal advice which was provided to the Cabinet Member. Members of the Scrutiny Committee should also be given this 'privilege' in order for them to be able to 'scrutinise' this decision.

(b) Due Consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers.

We have already spoken about legal advice – let us now turn to the professional advice which was provided as part of the consultation. As set out in 3.3 of the Decision Report, professional/organisational consultees ‘expressed concerns that increased numbers of young people are needing to access support and so stopping services is the *opposite* of what is needed. In addition, consultees referenced the potential implications of this in terms of mental health and safety concerns. What is the point of consulting if we are not going to follow the advice of professionals, who are the experts in their field? To me, the consultation was merely a legal formality and the decision to end the contracts was a predetermined one. In addition to the professional advice cited above, 31% of consultation responses explicitly asked for the commissioned youth services not to be cut, while 21% stressed that it would be detrimental to the children and young people if these services were not maintained. If the Cabinet wish to dispel this claim of ‘predetermination’, how many more people would have had to respond in order for the decision to be overturned.

Also, the statutory guidance under Section 507B states that local authorities must consult, and take into account the views of young people in their area on:

- the suitability of the existing provision
- the need for additional activities and facilities
- access to those activities and facilities
- the redesign of a proposed service

We argue that this statutory duty has **not** been met, and young people were not involved in the decision making to move to a family hub model and to stop the commissioned youth service contract. This emergency decision paved the way for these cuts in the absence of conforming with the statutory obligations. Given that the subsequent consultation occurred after the decision, we argue that this proves that young people were not listened to which is a direct breach.

Finally, again under the statutory guidance in ‘judging what is reasonably practicable, lack of funding alone should not be considered sufficient justification not to secure services’. The Council receives direct funding from the government to deliver these statutory services, therefore, stating budgetary requirements as a reason for under delivery is again a direct breach of the statutory guidance.

(a) Action proportionate to the desired outcome

We argue that this short-term saving will lead to longer-term costs. We have already seen from the consultation responses that both service users and professionals are concerned about the detrimental effect this decision will have on our young people’s mental wellbeing, and we also know that increasing numbers of young people are suffering with mental health issues. This decision will simply exacerbate this, and more young people may end up entering our system with statutory care needs later down the line as they transition into adulthood. To put this into a pithy maxim: this decision will deliver a “short-term gain but at the expense of long-term pain”. Who is accountable if this leads to costs elsewhere in the system both internally and externally? The desired outcome is to make savings, but we argue this will not be an overall net saving for the Council because of the above reason, therefore, the action is not proportionate to the desired outcome.

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From: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services
Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education

To: Cabinet – 30 November 2023

Subject: Decision – 23-00100 Commissioned Youth Service Contracts

Key decision: It affects more than two Electoral Divisions
It involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m.

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of report: Implementation of Decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary:

The existing contracts for the commissioned Youth Services are due to expire at the end of March 2024. A decision on the future service provision and spend is required.

The cost of the current Youth Service contracts is £1.2m, the savings made by not continuing to commission these services would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and this would enable a further reduction to the current DSG overspend.

In accordance with Securing Kent's Future, it is necessary for all services to review future spend, in particular where contracts are reaching end points. In addition, the development of a whole family 0-19 delivery model (Family Hub) at the same time offers the Council an opportunity to refresh KCC's current offer in Youth Service provision without the commissioned activity previously put in place through these contracts.

Recommendation:

Cabinet is asked to agree on the proposed decision to;

- a) AGREE to cease the delivery of service provision through the commissioned Youth Service contracts from 1 April 2024 when existing contracts come to an end.
- b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC's offer of Open Access services includes a directly delivered service and commissioned provision. These services work together seamlessly to engage young people requiring services across all 12 of the districts. This model has been in place since 2016.
- 1.2 In addition to the 12 in-house Youth Hubs, there are 7 providers delivering Youth Services across the 12 Districts for children aged 8-19 as well as those with disabilities up to 25. This typically includes group sessions on weekday evenings that are free at point of delivery with music, cooking, dance, sport and craft being common activities.
- 1.3 With the exception of one commissioned contract, being the service delivered in Canterbury through a contract held by Canterbury Academy, none of the proposed contracts to be ended are subject to the Kent Community Assets Key Decision. The majority of commissioned Youth Service providers occupy KCC buildings, although (with the exception of Canterbury) this is not detailed within the Youth Services contracts. There are separate leases for the building occupation. The progression of the Kent Community Assets Key Decision is therefore not more than minimally linked to the decision to cease these contracts when they naturally end at the end of March 2024.
- 1.4 It is estimated that the savings associated with ending these contracts would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and this would enable a further reduction to the current DSG overspend.

2. Public Consultation and Securing Kent's Future

- 2.1 There are two key considerations which affect this proposed decision. The first is the Kent Family Hub services public consultation which ran between 19 July 2023 and 13 September 2023 to provide those who use the services, members of the public and strategic partners the opportunity to review the proposals in detail and provide their response. The feedback from the consultation has been considered and evaluated in preparation for this proposed decision.
- 2.2 Throughout the consultation a schedule of proactive engagement events took place with those who use the services, members of the public and partners. The consultation document set out 24 events across the county for the public to attend, learn more about the consultation and provide feedback. These events totalled 70 hours of proactive engagement during the consultation period. 32 of those hours were specifically for engagement with young people. In addition to service user feedback, feedback was sought through attendance at meetings with District Councils, Health services and wider partnerships.
- 2.3 An additional effort was undertaken by KCC and commissioned Youth Service staff in each local youth provision to dedicate time with young people and encourage them to give their views throughout the period of the consultation. This feedback was accepted in a range of formats allowing for the understanding that young people may not want to complete the entire consultation questionnaire.
- 2.4 Table 1: Youth Consultation response types by centre name:

Centre name	Feedback type
Brogdale CiC	1 video Youth feedback word document - 33 comments
Canterbury Academy	1 flip chart page
The Pavilion	3 flip charts
Canterbury Youth Hub	2 Youth feedback forms
Quarterdeck Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Kent Youth Voice	3 youth feedback forms
Dartford Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Gravesham Youth Hub	4 flip chart pages 3 post it notes
The Grand	2 flip chart pages
Northfleet Youth Hub	6 youth feedback forms 2 flip chart pages
Swale Youth Hub	5 youth feedback forms
Pie Factory	13 voice clips
Salus	3 flip chart pages 10 posters 2 videos
Ashford Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Dover Youth Hub	3 youth feedback forms
Folkestone & Hythe Youth Hub	4 youth feedback forms
Tunbridge Wells Youth Hub	8 youth feedback forms
Play Place	1 video

- 2.5 A breakdown of the feedback received from the consultation is included within the consultation report, which was collated and assessed by LAKE market research, this is included at Appendix 1.
- 2.6 During the consultation the rationale behind the programme and proposed changes to commissioned Youth Services was set out, including the proposal to no longer continue with commissioned Youth Services after the end of their current contracts in March 2024.
- 2.7 The second key consideration is financial. Since the consultation closed the financial position for the Council is even more pressing than it was when the consultation was live in the summer. This position is set out in Securing Kent's Future, which should be considered alongside this proposed decision.

3. Consultation and consideration of responses

- 3.1 As detailed in the consultation report, consultees were invited to comment on the specific activities highlighted in the consultation proposals and describe the difference stopping these activities would make to them. By way of a summary,

the main themes of feedback as it related to the cessation of the Youth Service contracts are included here.

- 3.2 When the question was put to residents, just under a third of consultees (31%) stressed the personal need for these activities and 17% indicated that they rely on these services. Just over a quarter (27%) believe it will result in them missing out on socialising/mixing/building confidence in making friends. Other comments highlight that the removal of these activities would be detrimental to children/young people that use them and have a negative impact and affect mental health/wellbeing/anxiety/feelings of isolation.
- 3.3 When the question was put to professional/organisational consultees, they expressed concerns that increasing numbers of young people need to access support and stopping services is the opposite of what is needed. In addition, consultees reference the potential implications of this in terms of mental health and safety concerns. Consultees also expressed concerns that these activities provide much needed services for 'hard to engage' young people/adolescents and that they may not interact with other service provisions.
- 3.4 Having considered all factors including these responses, KCC's preferred course of action remains to cease the commissioned Youth Service contracts at the end of March 2024, analysed below as Option 1.
- 3.5 Whilst KCC acknowledges the value of the work carried out by commissioned Youth Services for the duration of the current contracts, reflected in the consultation responses, the extent of the financial challenge the Council now faces has led to difficult decisions being necessary. The implication of continuing with the Youth Service contracts delivering discretionary services beyond March 2024 would be a requirement to make greater cuts in other parts of the Council's CYPE budget, which could require making cuts elsewhere.
- 3.6 In ceasing these contracts, the Council recognises that commissioned activities and clubs may stop or reduce unless the organisations are able to find alternative funding to deliver them.
- 3.7 Discretionary commissioned Youth Services is part of the overall offer for youth across the County. This includes a wide range of private, third sector and voluntary organisation offers which are not funded by Kent County Council, and youth provision provided in-house by Kent County Council, neither of which are within the scope of this proposed decision.
- 3.8 While ending the commissioned Youth Service contracts will be an unwelcome decision for those using the services, it is important to bear in mind that:
 - 3.8.1 There are a wide range of youth activities available and flourishing in our communities e.g., local sports clubs, faith groups, uniformed services and community-based youth work. The Council would continue to offer advice and guidance to existing groups to develop new local volunteer-led groups. We will seek to support the development of topic driven youth support services for both

the young people and their families as part of a co-produced model of support.

3.8.2 The Council will continue to deliver KCC's in-house youth provision which is delivered across a range of partnerships including schools. The way in which this will be delivered in the future is addressed below in Section 4.

3.8.3 In order to address the concerns expressed within the consultation responses insofar as is possible, if commissioned youth services are not renewed it will be important for us to work with young people and former contracted providers to identify and signpost appropriate services that they will be able to access through in-house youth provision and any other local services (e.g. in the voluntary sector), via a directory of youth services. Further details are provided below in Section 4.

3.8.4 The Council will, wherever possible, provide appropriate support to the affected groups to make applications for grant funding.

3.9 The current in-house youth provision offer will continue to be provided within a range of in-house sites which will (subject to parallel decision making) be renamed Family Hubs and will include face-to-face and outreach activities as well as a digital provision. This is set out in more detail in Section 4 below.

4. Youth Services delivered through the Family Hub model.

4.1 The youth services currently provided in-house will (subject to the parallel decision making regarding the Family Hub model) continue within the Family Hub network. KCC remains committed to meeting the needs of vulnerable young people in Kent.

4.2 Topic-based youth groups open to all will be offered with a focus on individuals who face barriers to participation in privately funded, third sector or community-based activities elsewhere.

4.3 Youth groups delivered as part of the Family Hub model will be informed by the voice of young people who completed the consultation. The topic of the group will be determined by the identified need and requirements of the young people in each district. Examples might be LGBTQ+, employment and housing support, online safety, and mental health and wellbeing. Support, advice and guidance will also be available for young people with a focus where necessary for young people with learning difficulties (13-24), young carers, and those with special education needs and disabilities (SEND).

4.4 Street based youth work will also continue within the 0-19 Family Hub model. This type of youth work is not building based, it takes place in community spaces that have been identified as areas that young people spend their time and where they can be particularly vulnerable e.g., parks or high streets. This makes support accessible to vulnerable young people who are unlikely to attend services which are building based. This is currently delivered by youth teams in various locations identified across multi-agency partnerships.

- 4.5 The criteria for each group will ensure that young people who face barriers to participation, can access some form of provision. The offer will consider:
- cost
 - location
 - timing
 - safety
 - age range
 - protected characteristics
 - young people’s perceptions of the offer
 - accessibility of the facilities, including transport link
- 4.6 The Council will also provide an up-to-date directory of youth services that are delivered both by KCC and through the community through half yearly updates. This will be managed centrally, and annual mapping activity in each district will be completed to ensure the information on local services is up to date. The information about these groups will be collated and made freely available by the Council however, it is recognised that this will not provide an exhaustive list of all services available. Local knowledge and expertise will also be available from Family Hub practitioners and partners working within the Family Hub network.

5. Options for Youth Services

5.1 Option 1:

5.1.1 No commissioned Youth Services contracts delivering discretionary services will be renewed when they end in March 2024, enabling a saving to the Council’s base budget of £913k and reduction of the DSG overspend of £321K. As described, the Council’s current youth provision will continue to be delivered within a Family Hub model and will provide youth provision for children and support for their families where it is most needed. Young people with SEND will continue to receive a universal support service through existing KCC channels and be supported in accessing wider groups and support through the Family Hub network.

5.1.2 Cessation of commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services would bring Kent in line with the national picture. This is the recommended option as it addresses the current requirements of the Council’s financial recovery strategy.

5.2 Option 2:

5.2.1 The alternative option (and is not the preferred approach) is for KCC to renew the contracts for the current commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services and not realise a saving of £913k and reduction of the DSG overspend of £321K. This decision would not impact on the Council’s proposed direction of travel to reconfigure existing standalone Open Access inhouse services into a whole family approach model for infants, children, young people and their families aged 0 to 19 (25 with SEND). If the savings cannot be realised by ending the commissioned

Youth Services contracts delivering discretionary services, it will not be possible to meet the commitment set out in our MTFP from this set of activities and savings will be required to be made elsewhere in the CYPE Directorate.

5.2.2 As an additional factor if the Council were to continue with these commissioned Youth Services, as the current contracts are due to come to an end, this will require the delivery of a new procurement process with its associated costs and delay for any deployment of new services. It is estimated that this process would result in an approximately six-month gap in youth provision. This estimate is based on the need to procure new commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services in line with the Family Hub model.

5.2.3 Due to significant budgetary challenges KCC needs to review all of its commissioned contracts that are coming to a natural end as these contracts are.

5.2.4 It is not recommended that KCC renew the current commissioned Youth Service delivering discretionary services contracts from April 2024 as this approach would not deliver the required savings.

6. Financial Implications and breakdown of providers

6.1 The cost of the current youth contracts is £1.2m, the savings made by not continuing to commission these services would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and would enable a further reduction to the DSG overspend.

6.2 Achieving these savings would contribute to meeting the spend reduction required in KCC Budget and the MTFP, as approved by Full Council.

6.3 Table 2: Commissioned Youth providers breakdown.

	District	New CV per annum
Canterbury Academy	Ashford	100,537.29
Canterbury Academy	Canterbury	114,797.97
Play Place	Dartford	92,389.50
Pie Factory	Dover	104,979.42
Salus	Folkestone & Hythe	91,035.00
The Grand	Gravesham	104,999.96
Salus	Maidstone	96,285.04
West Kent Extra	Sevenoaks	78,750.00
Southern (used to be opitivo)	Swale	140,647.50
Pie Factory	Thanet	143,795.36
Salus	Ton & Malling	85,889.92
Salus	Tunbridge Wells	79,589.92
	Totals	1,233,696.87

6.4 The commissioned Youth Services contracts include different building-based and detached activities such as music, sports, youth clubs, arts & drama clubs

and/or street-based such as skateboarding, sporting clubs and any other outdoor positive activities.

7. Legal implications

7.1 Consideration has been given to KCC's statutory duties in relation to the provision of commissioned youth services. In particular, the statutory guidance for local authorities on services to improve young people's well-being states as outlined below:

- Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services.
- A sufficient quantity of educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities.
- A sufficient quantity of recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

7.2 From an operational perspective, KCC considers that the existing in-house provision, including proposed developments within the planned Family Hub model will allow KCC to meet relevant statutory requirements without the commissioned Youth Services. This is because the offer across the Council's wider services including that provided by schools would meet this requirement.

7.3 There is a nexus between these proposals, the Family Hub Programme, and the Kent Communities programme. 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 that will need to be balanced against the requirements of the proposal and wider benefits of implementation.

8. Equalities implications

8.1 Initial assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has identified negative implications on young people within the Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity Protected Characteristics as the decision will result in a reduction in the number of dedicated Youth Services. However, the remaining service offer continues to meet statutory requirements.

9. Recommendation

9.1 Cabinet is asked to agree on the proposed decision to;

- a) AGREE to cease the delivery of service provision through the commissioned Youth Service contracts from 1 April 2024 when existing contracts come to an end.
- c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

10. Appendices

1. Full consultation Report including an executive summary

11. Contact details.

Report Author:
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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Cabinet

DECISION NO:

23-00100

For publication

Key decision: YES

Key decision criteria. The decision will:

- a) *result in savings or expenditure which is significant having regard to the budget for the service or function (currently defined by the Council as in excess of £1,000,000); or*
- b) *be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions – which will include those decisions that involve:*
 - *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.*

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Cessation of Commissioned Youth Services

Decision:

Cabinet agree to:

- a) cease the delivery of service provision through the commissioned Youth Service contracts from 1 April 2024 when existing contracts come to an end.
- b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education to take necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into any relevant contracts and other legal agreements, as required to implement this decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Background

1.1 The existing contracts for the commissioned Youth Services are due to expire at the end of March 2024. A decision on the future service provision and spend is required.

The cost of the current Youth Service contracts is £1.2m, the savings made by not continuing to commission these services would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and this would enable a further reduction to the current DSG overspend.

In accordance with Securing Kent's Future, it is necessary for all services to review future spend, in particular where contracts are reaching end points. In addition, the development of a whole family 0-19 delivery model (Family Hub) at the same time offers the Council an opportunity to refresh KCC's current offer in Youth Service provision without the commissioned activity previously put in place through these contracts.

2. Options for Youth Services

Option 1:

- 2.1 No commissioned Youth Services contracts delivering discretionary services will be renewed when they end in March 2024, enabling a saving to the Council's base budget of £913k and reduction of the DSG overspend of £321K. As described, the Council's current youth provision will continue to be delivered within a Family Hub model and will provide youth provision for children and support for their families where it is most needed. Young people with SEND will continue to receive a universal support service through existing KCC channels and be supported in accessing wider groups and support through the Family Hub network.
- 2.2 Cessation of commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services would bring Kent in line with the national picture. This is the recommended option as it addresses the current requirements of the Council's financial recovery strategy.

Option 2:

- 2.3 The alternative option (and is not the preferred approach) is for KCC to renew the contracts for the current commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services and not realise a saving of £913k and reduction of the DSG overspend of £321K. This decision would not impact on the Council's proposed direction of travel to reconfigure existing standalone Open Access inhouse services into a whole family approach model for infants, children, young people and their families aged 0 to 19 (25 with SEND). If the savings cannot be realised by ending the commissioned Youth Services contracts delivering discretionary services, it will not be possible to meet the commitment set out in our MTFP from this set of activities and savings will be required to be made elsewhere in the CYPE Directorate.
- 2.4 As an additional factor if the Council were to continue with these commissioned Youth Services, as the current contracts are due to come to an end, this will require the delivery of a new procurement process with its associated costs and delay for any deployment of new services. It is estimated that this process would result in an approximately six-month gap in youth provision. This estimate is based on the need to procure new commissioned Youth Services delivering discretionary services in line with the Family Hub model.
- 2.5 Due to significant budgetary challenges KCC needs to review all of its commissioned contracts that are coming to a natural end as these contracts are.
- 2.6 It is not recommended that KCC renew the current commissioned Youth Service delivering discretionary services contracts from April 2024 as this approach would not deliver the required savings.

3. Financial Implications and breakdown of providers

- 3.1 The cost of the current youth contracts is £1.2m, the savings made by not continuing to commission these services would be £913k from the base budget. The remainder c£321k of the funding is currently utilising the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and would enable a further reduction to the DSG overspend.
- 3.2 Achieving these savings would contribute to meeting the spend reduction required in KCC Budget and the MTFP, as approved by Full Council

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 Consideration has been given to KCC's statutory duties in relation to the provision of commissioned youth services. In particular, the statutory guidance for local authorities on

services to improve young people's well-being states as outlined below:

- Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services.
- A sufficient quantity of educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities.
- A sufficient quantity of recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

4.2 From an operational perspective, KCC considers that the existing in-house provision, including proposed developments within the planned Family Hub model will allow KCC to meet relevant statutory requirements without the commissioned Youth Services. This is because the offer across the Council's wider services including that provided by schools would meet this requirement.

4.3 There is a nexus between these proposals, the Family Hub Programme, and the Kent Communities programme. 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 that will need to be balanced against the requirements of the proposal and wider benefits of implementation.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 Initial assessment and Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has identified negative implications on young people within the Age, Disability, Sex, Race, Pregnancy and Maternity Protected Characteristics as the decision will result in a reduction in the number of dedicated Youth Services. However, the remaining service offer continues to meet statutory requirements.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Children's and Young People Cabinet Committee considered the decision on 21 November 2023.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Options outlined above and in the report attached to this decision.

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

.....
signed

date 30 November 2023

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By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager
To: Scrutiny Committee – 19 December 2023
Subject: Call-in of Decision 23/00101 – Kent Communities Programme

Background

1. The proposed decision was discussed at the **Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November, 2023** prior to the key decision being taken by Cabinet on 30 November 2023.
2. Following the decision being taken, the call-in request was submitted by Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins, thus meeting the requirement for any call-in to be requested by two Members from different political Groups.
3. The reasons of the call-in were 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 s17.73 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.
4. The reasons submitted for this call-in are set out in the attached document (a).
 5. The call-in request element determined as valid is the suggestion that it is not clear within the decision documentation to what extent and in what way due consideration has been given to whether the revised service arrangement within the updated estate map allows KCC to meet its statutory obligations in relation to Youth Service provision, specifically in relation to the Family Hub operations covered within the Kent Communities Programme decision. The call-in highlighted that new statutory guidance was issued in September 2023 and while consideration of statutory obligation is referenced in the decision documentation

but there is limited detail. It is therefore appropriate for the Scrutiny Committee to seek clarity from the Executive on this point prior to any implementation of the decision.

Statutory guidance for local authorities on services and activities to improve young people's well-being (publishing.service.gov.uk)

Process

6. As per the call-in procedure, Democratic Services must consider all call-in requests against the criteria detailed in the constitution, which are themselves based on the legal requirements under the Local Government Act 2000 to have an appropriate mechanism to allow Executive decisions to be scrutinised. 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.
7. The Cabinet Member and relevant Officers will be attending the Scrutiny Committee meeting to present their response to the call-in and to respond to questions.
8. The Scrutiny Committee should consider the reasons set out by the Members calling-in the decision, the documentation already 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.
9. The decision papers remain available online but are republished in the agenda pack as appendices for ease of reference.

Options for the Scrutiny Committee

10. 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.

Attached documents

- a) Scrutiny call-in reasons submitted by Dr Sullivan and Ms Hawkins.
- b) [23/00101 – Decision Report](#)
- c) [23/00101 – Record of Decision](#)
- d) [Appendix A. KCP Needs Framework](#)
- e) [Appendix B. Consultation Report](#)
- f) [Appendix C. Draft Responses to Consultation Feedback](#)
- g) [Appendix D. Proposed Buildings Retained and Closed by Option](#)
- h) [Appendix E. Kent Communities Programme Detailed Options Appraisal](#)
- i) [Appendix F. Kent Communities Programme Decision EqIA Pack](#)
- j) [Supplementary - Appendix F. Kent Communities Programme Decision EqIA Pack](#)
- k) [Appendix G. Breakdown of Consultation Responses by Building.](#)

Background Documents

[Children’s, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November, 2023](#)

Report Author

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Scrutiny Call-in Request: 23/00101 - Kent Communities Programme

Proposer: Dr Lauren Sullivan

Seconder: Jenni Hawkins

Reasons for call-in:

(a) *Action proportionate to the desired outcome.*

This decision is principally related to the Council's financial position and the requirement due to this position and 13 years of austerity and government cuts to local government, to make savings. However, looking at the financial rationale for this decision, we are not convinced that this will actually deliver sufficient revenue savings to justify this huge change. If we look at option 3 in the table below (as this was the option progressed by Cabinet) we can see that the immediate revenue savings total £1.27m. We can discount the £3.8m capital receipts at this moment in time, as this will take time to realise and will go back into the capital budget; we can also discount the £2.2m saving in day services for Adults as this already been achieved; and arguably, we can also discount the £5.85m revenue saving in terms of maintenance reduction as this will take time to achieve and will be spread over a number of years. We have also discounted the Family Hub savings as these form part of a different, albeit related, programme.

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.

So, effectively, the only immediate revenue saving is the £1.27m across the Corporate Landlord. It is worth noting at this point that there a number of unknown costs which have not been accounted for, which will potentially reduce this £1.27m revenue saving (in terms of the net position). For example, the outreach activities which will supposedly take place across the county have not been costed; the cost of this is likely to be fairly significant, and so why has this not been factored into the equation? It has also been explained that the team 'have not been able to fully quantify some of the costs, such as costs associated with redundancy liability to third party contractors and costs required to provide over and above ordinary support for site clearance' (Decision Report, 11.1). These 'unknown' costs, if they do indeed materialise, will also outweigh some of the £1.27m revenue savings. Therefore, considering all of the above, can the Administration guarantee that over the short-term this decision will deliver an overall net saving? Without further detailed information the costs and spends, particularly in relation to outreach activities, we cannot be certain. We acknowledge, of course, that savings may be delivered over the medium-long term in terms of the estate but if this leads to a reduction of services or capability to reduce services, can the Administration or Senior Officers guarantee that this will not lead to more and more expensive financial pressures later on such as in

social care or social services due to these cuts. but I do not think this decision will help us all that much in addressing our immediate financial pressures.

Many of the arguments in favour of closing the buildings state that services can be delivered from other buildings such as libraries or cafes, however spaces for children will have been purpose built for flexibility of use with accessibility considerations for children with special educational needs and disabilities. Again, funding will need to be produced to make the buildings fit for purpose, if the funding is not sufficient then the services will not be delivered sufficiently resulting in the original action not being proportionate to the desired outcome.

(b) Due consultation and the taking of professional advice from Officers.

Looking at the consultation, both the methodology used and the responses received. There is an inherent flaw within the updated transport methodology. As outlined, the model is predicated on the assumption that there is an hourly service between the hours of 8am – 5pm and that journey times, on average, take 35 minutes. But what happens if, say for example, a resident has a class / meeting at one of our buildings at 9am but the first bus is not until 8:45 am? In that scenario, they would be 20 minutes late for their appointment. Unfortunately, then, there will be a number of people who will slip through the cracks in our system and who will not be able to easily access our face-to-face services, and where the replacement services (outreach and digital) will not be suitable for them. We need to keep as many buildings open as possible to mitigate this risk. It is also worth noting that in September this year, Stagecoach cancelled several services across Kent, citing financial losses as the reason, who is to say that bus companies won't cut more in the future? Since the cuts, driver shortages have also been common and often lead to services being cancelled randomly throughout the day. A bus service is not something that can be relied on long term, particularly in rural areas. Who will be held accountable and responsible for issues arising from these decisions due to the disjointed and disconnected nature of the impact of these decisions.

Moving on to the buildings themselves, and the services which are delivered out of them, it is clear from the consultation that the majority of respondents (61% to be specific) 'disagreed with the proposal to have fewer buildings from which to deliver services' (Decision Report, 4.11). In addition, '48% of respondents disagreed with the proposal to co-locate services together within a single location, citing concerns around the appropriateness of sites for co-locating services' (Decision Report 4.12). It is also worth stressing that at this point, although the Family Hub consultation was a separate endeavour, 90% of the people who responded to that consultation stated that face-to-face was their preferred method of service delivery (Family Hub Decision Report, 3.1.5). So, effectively, what our residents are saying is: "We prefer face-to-face services, so please do not close any of the current buildings which are operational, as otherwise you will have to co-locate more services, and this is not always appropriate".

It is tokenism if we go out to consultation and do not listen to a word residents say. If we were genuinely committed to listening to what our residents have to say and were to act accordingly we would therefore urge the Cabinet to reconsider their decision.

Also, the statutory guidance under Section 507B of the 1996 Education Act states that local authorities must consult, and take into account the views of young people in their area on:

- the suitability of the existing provision
- the need for additional activities and facilities
- access to those activities and facilities
- the redesign of a proposed service

We argue that this statutory duty has not been met, and young people were not involved in the decision making to move to a family hub model which involves closing children's and youth centres. This decision will see in youth provision reduce as is taken in the absence of conforming with the

statutory obligations. Young people must be involved in the design process and, to date, this has not happened.

Given the Council does not have a local youth offer plan it cannot demonstrate 'need' – it is also clear that young people have not been sufficiently consulted regarding the proposal changes and future model redesign. Both of these are clear breaches of the statutory guidance. It is the right of all young people to be heard and it must be evidenced that they have been listened to - this has not happened.

(c) The decision is not in line with the Council's Policy Framework

As the Administration and Senior Officers have not listened to residents on this including in the design of this programme which had no member let alone resident involvement, this is in clear breach of the Policy Framework of the Council as quoted in Framing Kent's Future – here are just some of those breaches with the relevant page number. This is the main and overriding policy framework document of the council by full council decision. The Executive and Senior Officers cannot bypass this.

We need to shift more of our focus to understanding people's needs and the design of services, with greater resident, user, staff and provider engagement so that the full range of options available to meeting need can be properly considered. Page 11.

Commit to funding a diverse infrastructure support offer for the social sector in Kent, which enables organisations to have access to the support they need to thrive, whilst ensuring the sector has a voice to influence and advocate for the people and communities they support. Page 39

Ensure that as we redesign the way we deliver our services and adapt our physical presence in communities, we make these places accessible and inclusive for local community groups and the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector, offering a space for people to meet or use these assets to deliver activities. Page 39

Create the right conditions to ensure there is a community-based offer of activities for young people that is led by the community and meets the needs of a diverse population. Page 39

Ensure that the voice of social care users and their carers is heard and influences all service design and commissioning decisions. Page 59

Resident engagement: We will ask Kent's residents about their experiences and perceptions of KCC's services to help us understand how we are doing and how we can improve the planning and delivery of services in the future – Page 61

The council's policy framework must also align with Government guidance and the councils' statutory obligations – For example it is argued that that this decision conflicts with Government guidance and statute. For example, Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 ('Section 507B') <https://www.nya.org.uk/stat-duty/>, https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/6512d57eb23dad000de70697/Statutory_duty_guidance_for_local_authorities_youth_provision.pdf states that Local Authorities are statutorily responsible 'to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, leisure-time activities and facilities for young people aged 13 to 19 and those with learning difficulties or disabilities aged 20 to 24'. This statutory duty was recently updated and published in September 2023 which was during the consultation period, therefore this decision does not take these changes into account. The scope of the duty is clear:

Section 507B requires local authorities to, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for all qualifying young people to a sufficient quantity of 'youth services' namely:

a sufficient quantity of educational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being and sufficient facilities for such activities and a sufficient quantity of

recreational leisure-time activities which are for the improvement of their well-being, and sufficient facilities for such activities.

The two forms of activity are not mutually exclusive but local authorities must, so far as reasonably practicable, secure access for young people to sufficient forms of, and facilities for, both types of activities. They include but are not limited to: sports and informal physical activities, cultural activities, outdoor residential, weekend or holiday-time activities special interest clubs and volunteering activities.

Without clear plans which detail where and how young people can access a sufficient quantity of leisure time activities the council is in clear breach of the Education Act. These plans have not been published yet and young people have not been able to codesign these 'before' this decision has been made.

(d) A presumption in favour of openness.

To close, we would now like to look at the 'Needs Framework' which underpins this whole programme and which has been used to develop the various different options. Appendix A provides a brief explanation of the general premise and the metrics which have been used to determine the level of service provision required, but as Members we think we also need to see how the Framework has been used in practice. As Members, we are local experts who know our communities inside out more than any analytical team or dashboard or data point, and so we think we could have provided invaluable insight and helped to plug the gaps in the collection of information which was not adequately picked up by the data metrics. As we know, data does not always tell the full story, and so a more balanced view, including Members' comments, needs to be considered. Indeed, in the spirit of 'openness' and transparency, We think the entire Needs Framework document should be shared with Members before this decision is progressed any further. The Framework needs to be scrutinised and Members need to have oversight of this important document, especially when you consider how crucial it is the decision of the Kent Communities Programme.

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				
	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
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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 in 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 DIGITAL 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 EqlA for each service was included as part of the material during the public consultation. The EqlAs have each been updated by the services following review of the consultation feedback. The EqlAs for each service and for the Programme as a whole are included at Appendix 6. More detail regarding the EqlAs 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.

<p>other Council uses for an asset, this may decrease the savings realisation for the Corporate Landlord.</p>	
<p>Unknown costs linked to implementation: It has not been possible to fully quantify some costs in advance of the decision being taken. These include:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 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. 	<p>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.</p>

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 EqlAs assessed the impact of the consultation model on residents with one or more protected characteristics. The full set of EqlAs 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 EqlAs have been updated following a review of feedback from the consultation paying particular attention to equalities concerns raised.

12.3 A whole programme EqlA has been developed which summarises the service EqlAs.

12.4 The service and programme level EqlAs 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 EqlAs, 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 EqlAs and considered within the overarching policy and financial context on which the Council currently operates, are considered to be justifiable.
- 12.9 The service EqlAs and the programme EqlA have been subject to the council's EqlA approval process.
- 12.10 The EqlAs 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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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:

- 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 **confirmed Option 3** 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.

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 Equality 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

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