Hello

We (Kent County Council) would like to tell you about our plans to move our services out of Maidstone Gateway.

In September 2015 we asked people what they thought about this plan.

This is called a consultation.

People had 12 weeks to tell us their views.

We looked very carefully at what everyone had told us.

This document tells you:

- about the consultation
- what people told us
- what decision was made.

It is a shorter version of the full report which you can read on our website at:

www.kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
Our plans for Maidstone Gateway

The Gateway is in King Street, Maidstone. It is a building where people can access a range of services provided by:

- Kent County Council (KCC)
- Maidstone Borough Council
- other organisations they work with.

We needed to check that it was still value for money for us to stay in the Gateway.

To do this we looked at how many people used our services there.

Out of the number of people who visited the Gateway in 2014:

- 88% were for Maidstone Borough Council
- 8% were for other organisations
- and only 4% were for KCC services.
KCC pays 50% of the running costs for the Gateway.

This is £162,600 a year.

We asked people how they might be affected if KCC moved services out of the Gateway.

This is called a consultation.

KCC and joint services at the Gateway are:

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Kent Supported Employment</th>
<th>Kent Deaf Services</th>
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<td>Age UK</td>
<td>Health Trainer Service</td>
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<td>KCC general enquiries</td>
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How the consultation worked

The plan to move services out of the Gateway to other locations would affect a number of different groups.

Some of these groups included:

- Age UK service users
- Kent Deaf Service users
- Kent Supported Employment clients
- KCC general enquiry customers
- KCC Maidstone Council Members
- Voluntary organisations in the Gateway
- KCC staff.

Voluntary organisations in the Maidstone Gateway were invited to a meeting before the consultation opened.

This meeting looked at the effect on the organisations and plans for working together.
The consultation included:

- a document telling people all about the plans
- a questionnaire
- 6 drop in sessions for people to ask questions.

The documents and questionnaires were available:

- in easy read
- in accessible formats
- on the internet
- and could be made available in other languages.

Letting people know about the consultation

We aimed information at the people who would be most affected by the plans.
We told people about the consultation by:

- having a display in the Gateway building with information and questionnaires

- displaying information and questionnaires at County Hall, The Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone Adult Education Centre and Maidstone libraries

- having staff and volunteers at the Gateway telling people about it

- putting it on the KCC website

- emails to staff and voluntary organisations

- putting it on public television screens in the Maidstone Gateway.

- putting it in the local papers

- having promotional events

- Community Liaison Officers and Community Wardens telling people

- briefing local KCC Members.
Equality and accessibility

To make sure everyone could have their say we:

• Provided an easy read version of the document and questionnaire.

This increased the awareness of the consultation among customers who may have had difficulty in understanding the full document.

• Provided Microsoft Word versions

These are accessible for people using computer software that reads documents out loud.

• Provided information online

Put the consultation document on the KCC website and displayed paper copies in the Gateway.

• Providing alternative formats and languages

These could be asked for by telephoning us.
• Holding 6 drop in sessions

People could ask their questions face to face with representatives of the Gateway.

• Asking people about themselves

We used KCC’s standard questions to ask people about themselves so we could check if we had missed anyone or anything.

Equality Impact Assessment

When we make a change that could affect people we check people will not be affected unfairly by following the equality laws.

These are called ‘Equality Impact Assessments’.

You can read the one for this consultation on our website at: www.kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
What people told us

A total of 66 consultation responses were received.

The information below tells you what the biggest answers were. You can read them all in the full report.

Question 1: We asked if people who they were completing the form for.

The biggest answer was for ‘themselves’.

Question 2: Could you tell us your postcode.

Most people gave a ‘Maidstone’ postcode.

Question 3: How often do you visit the Maidstone Gateway?

The biggest answer was ‘Never’.

Question 4: Do you visit Maidstone Gateway for KCC services?

The biggest answer was for ‘general enquiries’.
Question 5: Asked for people to comment on the plan for moving services out of the Gateway.

These are some of the subjects people commented on:

- Location
- Saving money
- Services all in one place and being value for money
- Parking.

You can read the full list in the main document on our website.

This what some people said about the locations.

“Some of the locations are in the town which is ideal”.

“The Gateway is currently very easy to use in the town centre”.
Some people were worried about the accessibility of the locations that services could be moved to.

We looked at this very carefully to make sure they can all be reached by bus and there is general and disabled parking nearby.

The locations we looked at are:

- The Kent History and Library Centre
- County Hall
- Invicta House
- The Adult Education Centre
- Allington Library and Coxheath Library.

This is what some people said around saving money.

“It makes economic sense to use current KCC buildings.”
“We need to be saving money so should consider all options.”

These are examples of what people said about having services in one place and value for money.

“Why not expand KCC services at the Gateway?”

“Would prefer services all together to prevent confusion.”

We did look at expanding services at the Gateway.

But other services (such as education) were well served already.

So we could not see which services we could add.
These are examples of what people said about parking.

“Parking may be an issue.”

“There is very little parking away from the town centre.”

We know that parking for Maidstone Gateway is easy as it is just behind the building.

So we have looked carefully to make sure the locations to move to have good parking as well.
The decision

We have looked very carefully at all the evidence and research.
And looked carefully at what people have told us.

We put our findings to the KCC Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services, Bryan Sweetland.

He has agreed to re-locate KCC services from Maidstone Gateway to other locations in Maidstone.

This decision was made on 15 January 2016.

It was also agreed to look at seeing if another organisation could provide KCC general enquiries at the Gateway.

You can read more on our website at: www.kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway
Thank you

We would like to say thank you to Rachel Coppins and all the Gateway Volunteers who promoted the consultation.

They helped people to take part and give us their views.

Alternative formats

If you would like this document in any other format or language, please email: alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk

Or telephone: 03000 421553.

Text relay 18001 03000 421553.

This number goes to an answer machine, which is monitored during office hours.

You can read more about this consultation at:

www.kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway