Kent County Council

Maidstone Gateway
Consultation Report

December 2015

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# Contents

1. Acknowledgements 3
2. Executive Summary 3
3. Introduction 5
4. Background 6
5. Consultation Process and Activities 7
6. Equality and Accessibility Considerations 11
7. Consultation Responses 11
8. Main Consultation Response Themes 15
9. Equality Impact Assessment Summary 23
10. Next Steps 26
Appendix A Consultation Questionnaire 28
1. **Acknowledgement**

1.1 On behalf of Kent County Council (KCC), we would like to say thank you to Rachel Coppins and all of the Gateway Volunteers who went above and beyond to promote the consultation in Maidstone Gateway and encourage service users and potential customers to take part. Their input has been invaluable and their efforts have been greatly appreciated.

2. **Executive summary**

2.1 A 12 week public consultation on the proposed relocation of KCC services from Maidstone Gateway ran from 21st September to 13th December 2015. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was conducted prior to the development and delivery of the public consultation. This has been updated and finalised following the consultation (Appendix B).

2.2. The EqIA helped to shape the engagement and participation action plan; identifying protected characteristics which had the potential to be negatively or positively impacted by the proposed policies.

The consultation consisted of a questionnaire (Appendix C), which was also produced in an Easy Read version and available in electronic and paper formats. Six drop in sessions at the Gateway where KCC staff were available to answer questions.

2.3 A variety of consultation methods were used to promote the consultation, they included:

- Consultation page on KCC website and link from Gateway Service page
- Emailed consultation documentation to KCC Gateway service leads
- Press statements sent to Maidstone Newspapers
- Consultation pull up banner and consultation document displayed in the Maidstone Gateway
- Promotional postcards and consultation documents displayed in other KCC buildings in Maidstone including Libraries
- Briefing of Gateway staff to direct customers to consultation material
- Briefing of KCC Maidstone Members and Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services
- Community Liaison Officers and Community Wardens asked to promote the consultation at local meetings they attended during the consultation.
- Information was also sent to each of the eight partner organisations operating from Maidstone Gateway, who were actively encouraged to distribute this to their service users.

2.3. In addition, the Gateway partners were invited to attend pre consultation engagement sessions run by KCC and Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) officers. These were attended by Hi Kent, Migrant Helpline and Citizens Advice Maidstone.

2.4. A total of 66 consultation responses were received.
2.5. This report sets out the background of the consultation, the consultation process, equality and accessibility considerations, and discusses the consultation responses and key themes.
3. Introduction

3.1. Since Maidstone Gateway opened in King Street, Maidstone, people have visited the Gateway to access a range of Kent County Council (KCC), Maidstone Borough Council (MBC) and partner services. To make sure every pound spent in Kent is delivering better outcomes for our customers, communities and businesses, we must review the services we provide and where we provide them from to ensure we are getting value for money.

3.2. We are now considering whether the Maidstone Gateway is the right location from which to provide KCC services. We know that customers frequently visit Maidstone Gateway to access services provided by both MBC and the VCS partners. However, data collected over recent years has shown that customers rarely use Maidstone Gateway to access KCC services.

3.3. Out of 50,406 recorded visits to the Gateway in 2014:
- 88% were for Maidstone Borough Council services
- 8% were for other partner services
- 4% (2,919 of visits) were for KCC services (or those that we commission or partly fund).

At the same time, KCC contributes 50% of running costs of the Gateway each year, which is £162,600 in property costs alone. This amounts to an average cost to KCC of just over £56 per customer transaction in the Gateway. Whilst we would never had expected that the KCC services would account for 50% of the transactions, in the current economic climate we have a responsibility to test our service offer to ensure that we are effectively using the resources that we have available.

3.4 Between the 21st September and the 13th December, a public consultation was held on the future location of the KCC services currently accessed in Maidstone Gateway. The consultation focussed on identifying how customers and our partners would be impacted if KCC decided to relocate services from Maidstone Gateway in October 2016. The consultation proposed like for like service provision and a number of options were given as to the possible locations in Maidstone. An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was carried out to assess the potential impact of the proposals on our customers with identified protected characteristics.

3.5 The consultation aimed to:
- Identify how stakeholders (including: all service users, potential service users and VCS partners) could be impacted if KCC decides to withdraw from the Gateway.
- Present possible options for the re-provision of KCC services and those commissioned by us and welcome feedback on their suitability.

The responses to the consultation have been used to review and update the EqIA, which will be considered along with the consultation responses before any final decision is made.
3.6 Following discussion of the feedback received and recommendations from Members of the Policy and Resources Committee, a decision will be taken by the Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services, Bryan Sweetland. If the decision is taken to withdraw, a delegated decision taken by a KCC officer is required on the enactment of the break clause to withdraw from the Gateway.

4. Background

4.1 Current Service Provision
KCC provides or commissions the following services from the Maidstone Gateway:

4.1.1 Kent Supported Employment clinics - 2 days per week
Kent Supported Employment help people who face additional barriers to employment. This service uses the Gateway to hold pre-booked face-to-face clinics with customers. These take place in the Gateway every Wednesday and Friday.

4.1.2 Kent Deaf Services - 1 day per month
Kent Deaf Services provides help, support and advice to deaf people aged over 18 whose first language is British Sign Language. Customers can visit the service’s desk in Maidstone Gateway on the second Monday of each month from 9.30am - 1pm.

4.1.3 Age UK -1 day per week
Age UK provides an information and advice service from a desk in Maidstone Gateway. Customers can also visit the Age UK desk to pick up an application form for the Disability Travel Voucher scheme. The Age UK helpdesk is open in the Gateway every Tuesday from 8.30am - 3.30pm.

4.1.4 Health Trainer service - 2 days per week
A Health Trainer is in the Gateway every Wednesday and Friday from 9.30am - 2.30pm and every Wednesday for pre-arranged appointments. Health Trainers carry out health checks on patients who have been referred by their doctor.

4.1.5 'Meet and Greet' General Enquiries - weekdays
People can also come into the Maidstone Gateway with a general service enquiry. For example this could be to find out how to apply for a bus pass or Blue Badge or to report a problem on Kent’s roads. Gateway staff can help by, signposting to the right team or member of staff at KCC. In many cases, they will give customers the KCC website address or a telephone number to contact the team directly.

4.1.6 The breakdown of KCC customer transactions within the Gateway is shown below:
5. Consultation Process and Activities

5.1 Stakeholder groups

5.1.1. The proposals outlined in the consultation had the potential to affect a number of different stakeholders. It was therefore important to devise engagement mechanisms to provide the opportunity for participation across stakeholder groups, being mindful of communication preferences and accessibility of information.

5.1.2. The following stakeholder groups were identified and targeted as part of the consultation:

- Age UK service users
- Kent Deaf Services users
- Kent Supported Employment service users
- KCC Gateway meet and greet customers
- All Gateway customers
- KCC Maidstone Members
- Member for Commercial and Traded Services, KCC
- Voluntary Community Sector organisations in Maidstone Gateway
- KCC meet and greet staff
- Maidstone Borough Council front desk staff
- Gateway volunteers
- Potential future Gateway customers living in Maidstone area
- Maidstone residents
- All other KCC staff members and managers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Service (KCC or commissioned by KCC)</th>
<th>Total transactions recorded (January – December 2014)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>General Enquiry</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Re-direction by reception staff to other buildings, staff phone numbers or website address or providing customers with application forms for services etc.</td>
<td>KCC General Enquiry (unspecified) 1,719</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Blue Badge Application forms enquiry/ collection 191</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kent Highways enquiry 71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kent Support and Assistance enquiry 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service specific helpdesk in Gateway, run by service representatives</td>
<td>Age UK Helpdesk visit 135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Deaf Services Helpdesk visit 20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pre-booked clinic and/or drop in sessions run by service representatives</td>
<td>Kent Supported Employment 589</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Health Trainer Service 135</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2 Consultation and engagement activities

5.2.1 All voluntary sector partners in the Maidstone Gateway were invited to attend pre-consultation engagement sessions prior to the public consultation. These were jointly held by KCC and MBC officers with them aim of engaging partners and updating them of KCC’s proposals. The sessions also explored how to maintain partnership working going forwards regardless of whether a decision is taken to relocate from Maidstone Gateway. These were attended by Hi Kent, Migrant Helpline and Citizens Advice Maidstone.

5.2.2 Consultation and engagement activities included the following:
- A consultation document setting out the proposals accompanied by a consultation questionnaire to capture feedback.
- The questionnaire was available on our website and in hard copy.
- Easy Read and Word versions of the consultation document and questionnaire were also produced and available online and in hard copy.
- Six drop in sessions were held at the Gateway with staff from KCC’s Property and Consultation teams available to answer questions.
- Verbal feedback from service leads and customers during the consultation.

5.2.3 The consultation document was downloaded from the website 358 times (PDF version 277 times and Word version 81). The Easy Read consultation document was downloaded 69 times.

5.3 Promotional activities

5.3.1 Promotional activity for this consultation was targeted at those who are potentially most impacted by the proposals, including KCC customers who access our services via Maidstone Gateway, Maidstone residents and VCS partners.

5.3.2 Promotional activities included the following:
- Hard copies of the consultation document, pull up banner and promotional postcards displayed in the Maidstone Gateway.
- Hard copies of the consultation material displayed in Sessions House reception, the Kent Library and History Centre, the Maidstone Adult Education Centre and other Maidstone Libraries.
- Entry on KCC’s consultation directory (www.kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway) and a link from the Gateway service page on Kent.gov.uk
- Consultation promotion uploaded to television screens in the Gateway.
- Press statement sent to the local Maidstone newspapers (KM and Downs Mail)
- Promotion of consultation to KCC staff through the intranet, email newsletters and building television screens.
- Consultation material provided to KCC Members for promotion at local events.
- KCC Community Liaison Officers and Community Wardens asked to promote the consultation to their Maidstone contacts and at local meetings they attend during the consultation.
• All KCC’s Gateway service leads were emailed the consultation document and asked to distribute them to their customers and staff.
• Email sent to all VCS services notifying them of the launch of the public consultation and inviting them to feedback.
• Staff in the Gateway, including those on the front desk, volunteer service and CAB briefed and agreed to direct customers to the consultation material.
• Briefing email to KCC Maidstone Members and Cabinet Member for Commercial and Traded Services.

5.3.3 A timeline of the consultation and engagement activities and the promotional activities is shown on the next page.
Consultation timeline

**21st September.**
Consultation opens.
Hard copy consultation
documents, postcards and
banner up in Gateway. Web
version uploaded to
consultation directory;
First drop in session held;
Post cards sent to KCC buildings

Press
statement sent
to KM and
Downs Mail
newspapers;
Promotion of
consultation
through KCC
internal media.

Third
public drop
in session
held in
Gateway

Second
public drop
in session
held in
Gateway

Fourth
public drop
in session
held in
Gateway

Fifth public
drop in
session
held in
Gateway

Sixth public
drop in
session
held in
Gateway

13th December.
12 week consultation closed.

September
October
November
December
January

2015
2016
6. **Equality and accessibility considerations**

Equality and accessibility considerations relating to the consultation process were as follows:

6.1 Produced Easy Read versions of consultation document

- In addition to standard versions of the consultation document, Easy Read versions were produced. Maidstone Gateway volunteers used the Easy Read version when discussing the consultation with customers over the course of the 12 weeks. KCC Gateway service leads were given copies of the Easy Read version of the consultation document, in addition to the standard format document. Age UK requested an additional 200 copies of the Easy Read consultation document. This considerably increased the awareness of the consultation among customers who may have had difficulty in understanding the standard format consultation document.

6.2 Provided Microsoft Word versions of consultation material to ensure that documentation is accessible to consultees using audio transcription software.

6.3 Uploaded consultation document onto kent.gov website, in addition to displaying hard copies in Gateway

- Both the Easy Read version of the consultation document and the standard format were made available online and in hard copy versions to improve accessibility of the consultation.

6.4 Alternative formats and languages could be requested

- In the consultation document it was stated that alternative formats could be requested through either an email or telephone number.

6.5 Holding face to face engagement sessions

- The consultation process also included six drop in sessions where KCC representatives would be present in the Gateway to answer any questions customers have. The aim of these sessions were to improve accessibility for people to participate in the consultation, raise concerns or ask questions during the consultation process in a face to face environment.

6.6 Capture of protected characteristics

- As part of the consultation process the questionnaire included KCC’s standard ‘About You’ questions to collect information to identify issues raised by customers who have recognised protected characteristics and ensure any additional equalities issues raised could be taken into consideration.

7. **Consultation responses**

7.1 A total of 66 consultation responses were received to the consultation, consisting of 18 hard copy responses and 48 online responses.
7.2 Question one of the consultation questionnaire asked whether respondents were giving feedback on behalf of themselves or as a representative from another organisation; such as a District Council, Voluntary Sector Organisation or Business. A graph setting out the breakdown of responses is shown below. The largest respondent group were completing the questionnaire on behalf of themselves.

7.3 Question two of the consultation questionnaire asked respondents for their postcode. 45 responses to this question were received, 29 of which indicated that the respondent live in Maidstone. Other respondents were from other locations in Kent, including Medway and Dover. 21 people did not respond to this question.

7.4 Question three of the consultation questionnaire asked ‘How often do you visit the Maidstone Gateway?’ A graph showing the breakdown of responses is shown on the next page. If each of the respondents shown in the table is multiplied by their reported frequency of visiting the Gateway, this equates to approximately 1,144 visits in a year (equivalent to just under 40% of all KCC visits recorded in 2014.) The largest respondent group on Q3 uses the Gateway ‘Never.’ Some of the respondents who indicated that they had never visited the Gateway were KCC staff or businesses, whilst others were individuals not from the Maidstone area.
7.5 Question four of the consultation questionnaire asked ‘Do you visit Maidstone Gateway for any KCC services, or those services partially or fully funded by KCC?’ A graph showing the breakdown of responses is shown on the next page. In line with the data on KCC service users, the largest group of respondents to question four reported that they visit the Maidstone Gateway for ‘General enquiries about KCC services’. ‘Other’ responses often included services not delivered by KCC such as council tax payments, and bus timetables.
7.6 Question five of the consultation questionnaire stated that the consultation document provides details of the possible options for accessing KCC services in future, and asked the question ‘Do you have any comments on these proposals?’ A number of detailed responses to this question were received. Some respondents raised a number of issues in their comments. These have been split and put under the relevant themes, which means that there are more comments counted than respondents to the questionnaire. These responses have been analysed and grouped into the themes shown below:

Table 1: Themes of responses to open consultation questions, ranked by frequency.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Theme of comments</th>
<th>Number of online comments</th>
<th>Number of paper comments</th>
<th>Most popular comments ranked</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Location feedback</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>1st</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economic sense of using other KCC buildings</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2nd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benefits of one stop shop/ colocation of services</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3rd =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Getting value for money from KCC Gateway investment</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3rd =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Service specific responses</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4th =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of knowledge about current Gateway set up / services in Gateway</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4th =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Parking concerns of new locations</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>5th =</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Value of having face to face services</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>6th</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No response</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>n/a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8. **Main consultation response themes**

8.1 **Theme 1 – Location feedback**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I particularly like the option of utilising Allington library to provide at least some of the facilities - as a local resident to Allington the more use made of the library that supports it's continued opening the better.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The Kent History &amp; Library Centre is in a more convenient location and is more naturally associated with KCC services.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Some of the proposed locations are located near the town which are ideal.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Negative:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[The Gateway] is currently in a very convenient location in the town centre.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Customers will have difficulty in accessing the proposed sites...try getting to the KHLC if you are old or disabled”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My husband couldn’t possibly walk the 15 minutes to these places and he doesn’t count as disabled”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I believe the alternative sites are not readily accessible for any persons who rely on public transport or have difficulty walking.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Needs to be within walking distance of the Town Centre.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Buildings need to be close to the centre of town or on bus routes”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

A key trend from the responses received was the accessibility of the proposed alternative locations. These responses were mainly submitted by individuals (13 comments), with one comment a member of Gateway staff and one comment from a District or Borough Council staff member. The accessibility issues for each location are considered below:

8.1.1 **Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone**

There is a bus stop for routes 101, 150 and 155 situated just beyond the right-hand side of the library building and on the opposite side of the dual-carriage way. The 101 bus goes directly from the Maidstone Gateway to the library. The library is a 0.2 mile walk from Maidstone East Railway Station.
8.1.2 Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone (general enquiries only)
There is a bus stop for routes 79, 88, 101, 130, 150 and 155 outside Sessions House. On the opposite site of the road there is a stop for routes 101, 135, 150, 155 and 508. The 101 bus goes directly from the Maidstone Gateway to Sessions House, County Hall. Sessions House, County Hall is 160 yards from Maidstone East Railway Station.

8.1.3 Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone
There is a bus stop for routes 79, 88, 101, 130, 150 and 155 right outside Invicta House. On the opposite site of the road there is a stop for routes 101, 135, 150, 155 and 508. The 101 bus goes directly from the Maidstone Gateway to Invicta House, County Hall. Invicta House, County Hall is 160 yards from Maidstone East Railway Station.

8.1.4 Maidstone Adult Education Centre
The 506 bus goes directly from King Street to Brenchley Gardens. The Brenchley Gardens bus stop is 200ft from the Maidstone Adult Education Centre.

8.1.5 Allington Library
The nearest bus stop to the Allington Library is on 0.2 miles away on Allington Way. The 60 bus goes directly from The Mall bus stop to Allington Way.

8.1.6 Coxheath Library
The nearest bus stop to the Coxheath Library is on 0.1 miles away on Pembroke Road. The 89 bus goes directly from The Mall bus stop to Pembroke Way.

8.1.7 It is useful to also note that for customers who wish to enquire about KCC services, face to face is not the only way of doing this. Customers can telephone the main KCC helpline contact number or visit the KCC website address www.kent.gov.uk. In fact, just over 75% of those who responded to the consultation did so online. However, we recognise that some respondents may be responding on behalf of others.

8.2 Theme 2 – Economic sense of using other KCC buildings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Withdrawing from the Gateway facility seems like a no brainer - the coast [sic] to KCC of it's contribution to the Gateway far outweigh the benefits”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It is too sparsely used to justify a KCC presence so in this time of austerity this is a good area to make savings with minimal impact on customers.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Cost effectiveness of using KCC buildings”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Good idea to move these”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It make economic sense to use current KCC buildings”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
“The low usage of Maidstone Gateway indicates that it is not good value for money and it would be far better.”

“Increase in privacy and money saved in times of austerity can only be seen as positive”

“It makes sense to relocate the KCC services to the Kent History Centre or another library in the area”

“We need to be saving money so should be prepared to consider all options”

8.2.1 The above consultation feedback notes the value for money associated with Kent County Council relocating KCC services from Maidstone Gateway to other KCC buildings in Maidstone.

8.2.2 This feedback was received mainly by individuals (6 comments), with feedback two comments submitted by support workers and two comments from members of Gateway staff.

8.2.3 This feedback supports KCC’s commitment to continually reviewing our services to ensure we deliver value for money to our customers. This includes looking at how and where our services should be provided from.

8.3 Theme 3 – Benefits of one stop shop / colocation of services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Negative:**

“Beneficial to the community to have one location for them to visit.”

“Moving services will fragment a joined up service for the residents.”

“Physical access to co-located MBC and KCC services is more efficient for the public.”

“Would prefer them all together to prevent confusion.”

“I feel that the services offered are better located in a single facility.”

“It makes sense that these are provided in the same place (from VCS service) It is beneficial so that customers can be cross-referred”
8.3.1 The third most frequent response theme discussed focussed on the benefits of having a number of KCC, MBC and voluntary sector services collocating in the same physical building.

8.3.2 These comments were mostly submitted by individuals (5 comments), with 2 comments received from District of Parish Council staff members.

8.3.3 We recognise that links between the KCC services and other partners services in the Gateway exist and are valued. Below are some examples:
- Age UK link with MBC functions such as assisting customers with Council Tax payments
- Deaf Services link with MBC functions such as assisting customers with Council Tax payments
- Kent Supported Employment work with Involve Gateway volunteers

8.3.4 In order fully to address the consultation feedback on cross-referrals and the benefits of colocation of KCC services with MBC and partner services, it is useful to reiterate how the current KCC services operate within the Gateway.

8.3.5 Each of the identified KCC service helpdesks or clinics which are in the scope of this consultation are only in the Gateway on a part time basis. The Health Trainer service and Kent Supported Employment operate on a pre-booked appointment basis, with customers usually referred through the KCC contact point or from a GP respectively. This means it is less likely that customers who visit the Gateway for other services (for example housing or council tax payments) would be offered same day cross-referrals to the Health Trainer or Kent Supported Employment (KSE) service.

8.3.6 However, customers who do visit the Gateway for pre-booked visits with KSE or the Health Trainer service may be referred from these advisors to other partner services, such as Citizens Advice Maidstone or housing. If KCC decides to relocate its services from the Gateway, it will be important to look at how to maintain these service links going forward and ensure customer journeys do not get fragmented.

8.3.7 The other two KCC services in the Maidstone Gateway, Deaf Services and Age UK, operate on a drop-in basis and are in the Gateway half day per month and a half day per week respectively. If customers do come to the Gateway at other times and request these services face to face, they would be advised to return during the times of the above drop in sessions.

8.3.8 As noted above, customers who visit the Gateway for the Age UK helpdesk or Deaf Services clinic, may benefit from being cross-referred to the MBC or partner services which are present or being assisted with carrying out these transactions.

8.3.9 KCC service provision in Maidstone Gateway is low and, as a result, opportunities for customers to engage directly with KCC staff at the time of their visit is limited.
However, those who visit the Maidstone Gateway for KCC services do benefit from having other partner services located in the same building.

8.4 Theme 4 – Getting value for money from KCC Gateway investment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral/ Suggestions:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Why not expand the KCC service offer in the Gateway?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Can I suggest that you move the majority of your drop-in-type services to Maidstone Gateway (which is a most accessible, friendly place) and get up to 50% usage that way?”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There are many services which KCC offer which could be accessed from the gateway but are scattered around Maidstone.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

| **Negative:** |
| “Much money was spent on opening the Gateway network - it seems such a waste to actually start to close these.” |
| “A lot of money was spent on setting up the Gateways, and to pull out of it would be a retrograde step on behalf of KCC, I think.” |

8.4.1 The fourth theme discussed the initial investment made by KCC into the Maidstone Gateway and the feasibility of delivering a greater number of KCC services from this building to achieve value for money.

8.4.2 These comments were all submitted by individuals, except for one comment which came from a member of KCC or Gateway staff.

8.4.3 Prior to these proposals being developed a detailed scheme of work looked at the scope to expand the KCC service offer from Maidstone Gateway. The findings perceived there to be limited opportunity across KCC to increase service provision in the Gateway going forward. Representatives from Education services could see little scope to use the Gateway as their customers usually transact via their local school or directly with the small central KCC team. Specialist Children’s Services also saw little scope to use the Gateway other than signposting to Children’s Centres. Introducing Social Care assessments into the Gateway was deemed as unsuitable due to its open plan layout. Another KCC service, the Community Wardens, found that time was better spent working directly in the community. Whilst Gateway staff can advise customers on how to report a Highways Enquiry, the KCC Highways representative found limited use for Gateway interaction, other than to notify customers if any major road schemes were forthcoming.
8.5 Theme 4 – Service specific responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Positive:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Any locations for Age UK would be ok as long as they are in Maidstone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think it is a great idea for Deaf Services to move to Hi Kent as this will develop and maintain good positive links to get a better service.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think Deaf Services would be better at Hi-Kent as people will be able to communicate with them, and as its small - its more accessible”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Invicta House for Kent Supported Employment seems the best option. The reception service is very good and any new venue should meet this high level of standard.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.5.1 There have been a small number of service specific responses to the consultation, with positive feedback encouraging a relocation of the Deaf Services Maidstone Gateway helpdesk to the Hi Kent Head Office in Brewer Street. Another response suggested that a relocation option for Age UK would need to be near to the Maidstone town centre.

8.5.2 Further feedback suggested that Invicta House would be the best option for relocating Kent Supported Employment.

8.5.3 Other than one response which was submitted by a VCS organisation, these responses were all submitted by individuals.

8.6 Theme 5 – Lack of knowledge about current Gateway services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral/Observations:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“If you ask the general public if they know that some KCC services are available in Maidstone Gateway, I bet that no more than 1 in 100 will know you are there.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“You cannot complain if you do not get enough callers at the Gateway if you do not advertise it well!!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Services aren’t advertised - especially for the elderly. The come in to pay council tax and might not know what else is available. Even CAB is not used/ people don’t know what it is for.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t think many people know KCC is in that building.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“KCC services do not particularly advertise that residents can access KCC services”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
8.6.1 Consultation feedback has raised the issue of the lack of public awareness regarding KCC’s services and involvement in the Maidstone Gateway.

8.6.2 Three of these comments were received from individuals, whilst the remaining two came from Gateway staff members or volunteers.

8.6.3 It is possible that this is a contributing factor towards KCC’s low customer throughput in the Gateway, although this may also be due to fact that there are only a small number of KCC services who operate from the Gateway. The Gateway operating agreement stipulates that advertising of the Gateway services will be primarily through word of mouth and from visibility to passing foot traffic.

8.6.4 It will be necessary to notify customers if any changes are made, to ensure they are aware of the new location of KCC services. It is important to consider using a number of modes of communication.

8.7 Theme 6 – Parking concerns of new locations

Example Comments

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Negative:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Parking may be an issue”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“An aging population a lot of people struggle to use the internet and get around.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very little parking and being away from the centre of town KHLC would not be reasonably accessible.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There is no car park NEAR the new library or County Hall.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.7.1 We recognise that the Maidstone Gateway benefits from having a car park behind it and take on board the feedback about this. All of this feedback was submitted by individuals. There is parking at each of the suggested locations, which is set about below:

8.7.2 Kent History and Library Centre, Maidstone

There are 27 Pay and Display parking spaces by the riverside near the library on James Whatman Way and three free designated parking spaces for Blue Badge holders at the front of the building. Further short term Pay & Display spaces are across the road in the White Rabbit car park, or the nearest long term car park is Fremlin’s Walk.

8.7.3 Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone (general enquiries only)
There are a number of meter parking spaces on County Road to the right of the County Hall offices, including three designated parking spaces for Blue Badge holders. The Maidstone East Station Car Park is located opposite Sessions House and offers long term parking. This Car Park does get busy. There are also a number of car parks in the town centre including Fremlin’s Walk.

8.7.4 Invicta House, County Hall, Maidstone
As with Sessions House, there are a number of meter parking spaces on County Road to the right of the County Hall offices, including three designated parking spaces for Blue Badge holders. The Maidstone East Station Car Park is located opposite Invicta House and offers long term parking. There are also a number of car parks in the town centre including Fremlin’s Walk.

8.7.5 Maidstone Adult Education Centre
The Fremlin Walk multi-storey car park is located near to the Maidstone Adult Education Centre. There is no designated disabled parking at St Faiths Street, but the Adult Education Centre can arrange a drop off for customers.

8.7.6 Allington Library
There are a number of free parking spaces within the site boundary. Currently none of these spaces meet the necessary specifications of disabled parking spaces.

8.7.7 Coxheath Library
There are a number of free parking spaces within the site boundary. Currently none of these spaces meet the necessary specifications of disabled parking spaces.

8.8 Theme 7 – Value of maintaining face to face services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Example Comments</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Neutral:</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“My parents are 78 and 80 and do not know how to use the internet.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel it is important to maintain access to KCC services face to face in Maidstone due to the size of the population and the high percentage of elderly people who live there”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not phone or website suits everyone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“[Face to face service provision] is important for people who are unable to communicate with Local Govern meant [Sic] in any other ways”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8.8.1 These comments were all submitted by individuals. This consultation is not about changing or discontinuing the face to face services we provide from the Gateway – we understand these are important services to many people.
8.8.2 Whilst a number of other KCC services are accessed in alternative ways, such as through the telephone or internet, we recognise that the KCC services currently in the Maidstone Gateway are delivered face to face because this is most appropriate for their customers.

8.8.3 Whether the Key Decision is taken to keep these KCC services in the Maidstone Gateway or move these other locations in Maidstone in the future, following this consultation, customers will still be able to access these services face to face.

9. **Equality Impact Assessment Summary**

9.1. Table 4 of the full EqIA (Appendix B) shows a summary of the consultation responses according to the protected characteristics. This takes into account both feedback from the questionnaire “About You” closed questions, and any additional equalities feedback received in the open questions and is shown below.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Details of Individuals Responding</th>
<th>Consultation response and potential impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Age**                         | - 25% of respondents who completed this question indicated their age was 65 and over (13 people).  
- Older people may be more reliant on face to face service provision and less able to use the internet  
- Older people may be disadvantaged services are relocated to buildings which are not on bus routes or near to the town centre  
- Older people may be disadvantaged from having to make more than one trip to access council services if KCC services relocate from the Gateway |
| **Disability**                  | - 28% of respondents who completed this question said they had a disability (15 people). Of the respondents who said they had a disability 36% (5 people) had a physical disability, 36% had a sensory impairment, whilst the remainder had another type of disability.  
- Wheelchair users may be disadvantaged if proposed locations are not fully accessible  
- As there is a hearing loop in the Gateway, it will be beneficial if alternative locations could be hearing loop equipped to promote inclusiveness to deaf people.  
- Disabled people may be disadvantaged if there are insufficient numbers of disabled parking bays near to proposed locations |
<p>| <strong>Pregnancy/ Maternity</strong>        | - N/A |
| <strong>Race</strong>                        | - 84% of respondents (42 people) classified themselves as White English, 4% classified themselves as White (Other), 4% were Chinese. The remainder identified with other ethnic groups. |
| <strong>Gender</strong>                      | - 53 responses were received to this question. Of those 49% were male, 47% female and 4% preferred not to say. |
| <strong>Gender Identity</strong>             | - N/A |
| <strong>Religion</strong>                    | - 46% of respondents who completed this question indicated that they were religious (25 people). Of the respondents who said they belonged to a religion or belief, 83% were Christians, 8% were Buddhists and 8% were Jewish; the remaining 2% identified with other religions. |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sexual Orientation</th>
<th>- 53 responses were received to this question. Of those, 83% (45 people) described themselves as Heterosexual/Straight, 6% preferred not to say, 2% identified as gay men and 2% identified as another sexual orientation not listed.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Carers</td>
<td>- N/A</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9.2. Table 5 of the EqIA sets out an action plan relating to the identified issues. The key actions are as follows:

- Ensure locations are accessible
- Look at feasibility of introducing hearing loop
- Look at feasibility of introducing baby changing facilities to alternative site
- Raise awareness of bus and transport routes to alternative locations
- Consideration of additional disabled parking
- Consideration of reducing crossing hazards at KHLC

9.3. There was also an open question inviting customers to add comments to the Equality Impact Assessment. The consultation responses have reiterated the importance of considering centrally located future service locations, so that customers who are less able to walk long distances are still able to access KCC services. As one respondent noted “buildings need to be close to the town centre or on bus routes.” All the suggested locations are either near to the town centre or are located on bus routes, however it will may be helpful to raise awareness of the public transport routes to these locations.

9.4. The second equality implication which has been noted from the consultation responses is that future locations should have disabled access for wheelchair users. The consultation document outlined the accessibility of proposed locations. If a decision is made to relocate KCC services to other buildings in Maidstone, any location used will need to be accessible to wheelchair users, as noted in the EqIA.

10. Next Steps

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

10.2. If KCC decides to relocate the KCC services in the Gateway, any changes will be in place from October 2016.
Appendix A - Maidstone Gateway Questionnaire

Q1. Are you completing this questionnaire on behalf of:

Please select one box.

☐ Yourself (as an individual)
☐ Yourself as a member of KCC or Gateway staff
☐ A Voluntary or Community Sector Organisation (VCS)
☐ A Service partially or fully funded by KCC
☐ A District/Town/Parish Council
☐ A Business
☐ Other, please specify: ____________________________________

Q1a. If you are responding on behalf of a VCS organisation/Council/Service/Business, please tell us the name of the organisation:

If you are responding as an Individual or as a member of KCC staff please continue to answer questions 2, 3 and 4. If you are responding on behalf of an Organisation please go straight to question 5.

Q2. What is your postcode? ________________________________

Q3. How often do you visit Maidstone Gateway?

Please select one box.

☐ More than once a week
☐ Weekly
☐ Once or twice a month
☐ More than once a year
☐ Once a year or less
☐ Never
Q4. Do you visit Maidstone Gateway for any Kent County Council (KCC) services, or those services partially or fully funded by KCC?

Please select all boxes that apply.

☐ General Enquiries (including Blue Badge applications, Highways services, and Kent Support and Assistance services)
☐ Kent Deaf Services helpdesk
☐ Kent Supported Employment clinic
☐ Age UK helpdesk
☐ Health Trainers service

☐ Other, please specify: ____________________________________________

Q5. The Consultation Document provides details of the possible options for accessing KCC services in future. Do you have any comments on these proposals?
Q6. We have drafted an Equality Impact Assessment on the relocation options. An EqIA is a tool to assess the impact any policies or strategies would have on race, age, disability, gender, gender reassignment, sexual orientation, religion or belief and carer’s responsibilities. **We welcome your views.**

To view the document, go to [kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway](http://kent.gov.uk/maidstonegateway) or ask a member of staff at the Maidstone Gateway.

Please add comments below:

Q7. Do you have any other comments you would like to make on our proposals?
Future Engagement and Communication

If you would like to receive feedback on the outcome of the consultation please provide your contact details below. Our preferred method of communication is by email, however if you do not have an email address then please provide your postal address.

Name: ____________________________________________

Email: ____________________________________________

Postal address: ____________________________________

__________________________________________________

You only need to answer these questions if you have responded as an Individual or as a member of KCC staff. It is not necessary to answer these questions if you are responding on behalf of an Organisation.

About You

We want to make sure that everyone is treated fairly and equally, and that no one gets left out. That’s why we’re asking you these questions.

We won’t share the information you give us with anyone else. We’ll use it only to help us make decisions, and improve our services.

If you would rather not answer any of these questions, you don’t have to.

Q8. Are you…..?

Please select one box.

☐ Male

☐ Female

☐ I prefer not to say
Q9. Which of these age groups applies to you?

Please select one box.

☐ 0 - 15  ☐ 25-34  ☐ 50-59  ☐ 65-74  ☐ 85 + over
☐ 16-24  ☐ 35-49  ☐ 60-64  ☐ 75-84  ☐ I prefer not to say

Q10. To which of these ethnic groups do you feel you belong? (Source: 2011 census)

Please select one box.

☐ White English  ☐ Asian or Asian British Indian
☐ White Scottish  ☐ Asian or Asian British Pakistani
☐ White Welsh  ☐ Asian or Asian British Bangladeshi
☐ White Northern Irish  ☐ Asian or Asian British other*
☐ White Irish  ☐ Black or Black British Caribbean
☐ White Gypsy/Roma  ☐ Black or Black British African
☐ White Irish Traveller  ☐ Black or Black British other*
☐ White other*  ☐ Arab
☐ Mixed White and Black Caribbean  ☐ Chinese
☐ Mixed White and Black African  ☐ I prefer not to say
☐ Mixed White and Asian
☐ Mixed other*
☐ Other ethnic group*

*If you ethnic groups is not specified in the list, please describe it here:
The Equality Act 2010 describes a person as disabled if they have a longstanding physical or mental condition that has lasted, or is likely to last, at least 12 months; and this condition has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. People with some conditions (cancer, multiple sclerosis and HIV/AIDS, for example) are considered to be disabled from the point that they are diagnosed.

**Q11. Do you consider yourself to be disabled as set out in the Equality Act 2010?**

Please select **one** box.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I prefer not to say

**Q11a. If you answered Yes to Q11, please tell us the type of impairment that applies to you. You may have more than one type of impairment, so please select all that apply. If none of these apply to you, please select Other, and give brief details of the impairment you have.**

- [ ] Physical impairment.
- [ ] Sensory impairment (hearing, sight or both).
- [ ] Longstanding illness or health condition, such as cancer, HIV/AIDS, heart disease, diabetes or epilepsy.
- [ ] Mental health condition.
- [ ] Learning disability.
- [ ] I prefer not to say.
- [ ] Other*

*If Other, please specify: __________________________________________________________

**Q12. Do you regard yourself to belonging to any particular religion or belief?**

Please select **one** box.

- [ ] Yes
- [ ] No
- [ ] I prefer not to say
Q12a. If you answered Yes to Q12, which one applies to you?

Please select one box.

☐ Christian  ☐ Hindu  ☐ Muslim
☐ Buddhist  ☐ Jewish  ☐ Sikh
☐ Any other religion, please specify: __________________________

Q13. Are you...?

Please select one box.

☐ Heterosexual/Straight  ☐ Gay woman/Lesbian  ☐ Other
☐ Bi/Bisexual  ☐ Gay man  ☐ I prefer not to say
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