

Agenda Item No:

Report To: Cabinet

Date of Meeting: 28th September 2023

Report Title: Civic Centre Relocation

Report Author: Maria Stevens, Director of Customer, Technology and Finance
Job Title: Hannah Clayton-Peck, Project Manager (Commercial)

Portfolio Holder: Cllr. Ovenden – Prosperity & Resource
Portfolio Holder for: Cllr. Betty – Economic Growth and Investment



ASHFORD
BOROUGH COUNCIL

Summary:

This saving proposal is a unique opportunity for the Council to make significant cuts in expenditure without reducing the level of services to the Borough of Ashford. There are no redundancies as a result from this move and this is reflected in the saving stated.

This proposal looks at rationalising the Council's office space bringing forward significant savings in the region of £1.3m per annum, the Key areas of this report include:

- An annual saving of £1.3m, removing a pressure of £6.5m across the Medium Term Financial Plan (5 year plan). The proposed savings of £1.3m will need to be added as a pressure in the MTFP if this proposal doesn't move forward
- There are no cuts in services
- There are no proposed redundancies
- The future expansion or contraction of the Council will be easier to control at International House due to the size and layout of the building
- The Council has vacant office space within our property portfolio currently standing at 2234m²
- Staff and public consultation were well responded to and there were no areas of concern that couldn't be addressed or satisfied as appropriate through review and response.

Should this move not go ahead alternative savings will be required and the Council will be unable to generate this level of savings without stopping services. To achieve £1.3m of saving an average reduction in staffing would be around 32 full time equivalent staff from discretionary services, such as enforcement, town centre, economic development and areas where statutory services have been enhanced.

Key Decision: YES

Significantly Affected Wards: All

Recommendations: **The Cabinet is asked to recommend to Council to:-**

- I. Approve the relocation of the Civic Centre to International House including Phase 1 & Phase 2**
- II. Note Phase 3 which will include a future report to Cabinet detailing the future use of the Civic Centre**
- III. Authorise the Solicitor to the Council and Monitoring Officer to negotiate, finalise and complete all necessary legal agreements and other documents to give effect to the above.**

Policy Overview: This report brings forward a savings proposal, the relocation of the Civic Centre to International House, put forward by the last administration, following the reported budget gap that required a savings plan to be drawn up.

Following pressure on the MTFP and savings being identified this project would not only contribute to critical savings but also contributes to the following corporate objectives;

GP1 – reduce reliance on fossil fuels in line with our carbon neutral targets

CA1 – Homes and neighbourhoods in the borough meets the needs of local people of all ages, incomes and abilities to live sustainably and safely

TG1 – Increase productivity and job opportunities and the establishment of sustainable, knowledge based and creative industries in the borough.

Financial Implications: A move to International House will result in annual savings in the region of £1.3m. Revenue Budget savings already identified in the MTFP of £415,000 and revenue savings from debt costs due to capital works of £885,000 to bring the Civic Centre up to a reasonable standard.

Should this move not be approved costs of £1.3m per annum will be added to the MTFP and alternative savings proposals would need to come forward.

Although savings from bringing the Civic Centre up to a reasonable standard are included, works required for the decarbonisation agenda are not included as they are not yet fully known. Therefore, it should be noted that there are further savings that have not yet been quantified at this time.

Legal Implications: *Text agreed by Chief Solicitor and* The project will involve some variations and/or terminations of existing leases, contracts etc. and entering into new service and other agreements. This work is now being

*Monitoring Officer on
06/09/2023*

scoped and authority to enter into such new or revised arrangements is sought within the recommendations.

Staff contract terms and conditions will need to reflect new working locations.

**Equalities Impact
Assessment:**

See Attached at **Appendix C**

**Data Protection
Impact
Assessment:**

See Attached at **Appendix D**

**Risk Assessment
(Risk Appetite
Statement):**

There is a risk over how this project will be perceived by the public, this is a project which saves money and protects services that our residents rely on. This will need to be communicated effectively to the public.

This project will deliver a considerable saving for the Council and support our medium term financial plan. Failure to deliver this saving will have wide ranging consequences on the way the council operates.

**Sustainability
Implications:**

The Council will be working to bring International House up to new EPC standards over the next few years and this work would be required whether the Council relocate to International House or not.

The Civic Centre will require decarbonisation works but these will be addressed by the new owner (or the HRA) during the redevelopment of the building should the Council move forward with this proposal.

**Other Material
Implications:**

**Exempt from
Publication:**

No

**Background
Papers:**

None

Contact:

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Report Title: Civic Centre Relocation to International House

Introduction and Background

1. In February 2023 the previous administration agreed a programme of savings as part of the 2023/24 budget report totaling £1.4m, to reduce the contributions from reserves that are required to balance the annual budget. The programme was to be implemented over this financial year.
2. One of the savings was to explore relocating the Civic Centre to International House. Many businesses are downsizing their office space and looking for smaller modern office accommodation. Due to the financial risk to the Council in owning two large unmodernised office blocks the Council is looking to rationalise its office accommodation.
3. International House currently has around 3 floors of vacant space and the Civic Centre has over one floor of vacant space, totaling 2234m². The Council is therefore in a good position to decommission one building from office use, providing us with an opportunity to masterplan the repurposing of the Civic Center and the recently acquired Wool Growers site and make significant savings.
4. Whilst there are a number of vacancies within International House the office building is still positively contributing to the Council's budget, this year the Council are projecting a net income of £536,000 (budget for 2023/24 net income of £316,000).
5. The initial savings target was set at £300,000 however, based on our current data, as at 30 August 2023, the Council are working on annual budget savings of £415,000 (net of International House move costs), with that growing to £1.3m due to a reduced capital programme. This saving excludes the future decarbonisation costs for the Civic Centre as they are not currently available.
6. The net saving includes costs of moving to International House of £1.75m, these costs are detailed in **Appendix A**.
7. This is a unique opportunity for the Council to make significant savings without reducing the level of services to the Borough of Ashford as services will just be run from a different location. There are no redundancies as a result from this move and this is reflected in the savings presented below.

Current Position

8. The Council has been based at the Civic Centre for many years and up until the pandemic the building was used for Council operations with a few tenants. The Council has struggled to attract tenants to the Civic Centre in the past and there will be a need to invest in the space to encourage tenants into the building. The Council has recently lost its last private sector tenant, Chapel Down (August 2023).
9. Level 3 of the Civic Centre is currently closed and being used for storage only. To rent out this space the Council would need to refurbish the area to a high standard to attract and retain suitable tenants to the building.

10. Council Offices are operated over the remaining floors of the Civic Centre with two remaining public sector tenants, Public Health England and Driving Standards.
11. Desk capacity is currently set at around 60% (220 Desks) of staff contractually based at the Civic Centre, our current data (May 2023 – July 2023) demonstrates a consistent usage of around 55% (120 Desks) of the current desks within the Civic Centre. It should be noted that the usage fluctuates over the days of the week, with Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday being the most popular days in the office.
12. The Civic Centre has had minimal investment over the last 10 years and does require a significant amount of spend to bring it up to a reasonable standard. Based on quotes received in 2020, inflated to today's prices, costs will be in the region of £10.8m to achieve these standards. These costs are not currently built into the Medium Term Financial Plan however, should the move not take place the financing of this work would need be added. This would add a pressure of £885,000 per annum to the plan. In addition there would be a need for further decarbonisation work if the move does not take place. These costs are not yet known so not included in the savings.
13. International House also needs work to bring the building up to reasonable standards (estimated at £4.1m). These works and any decarbonisation works would need to be taken forward whether the Council makes the move to International House or not. The Council is looking to apply for decarbonisation funding to match fund the decarbonisation works.
14. International House is currently being operated as offices and contributes positively to the Council's finances. The Council has a number of larger secure tenants in the building including DWP, British Transport Police and Southeastern, therefore is it not proposed to dispose of International House.
15. International House does currently have around 2.6 vacant floors overall. This gives the Council an opportunity to consider options for its office space including rationalisation of the total estate to reduce the Council risk to the sector which is seeing a downturn in demand.

The Proposal

16. Officers have been working on bringing this project forward following approval of the Annual Budget by Council in March 2023 where this project formed part of a proposed savings plan to close the budget gap.
17. The current proposal is to transfer the whole of the Civic Centre to International House over two phases and phase 3 will be the disposal or redevelopment of the Civic Centre. The diagram below shows the proposal timescales.



Phase 1 – Office side relocation

18. The project team have been working on configuring the office spaces to enable the Council to work across whole sections/floors and not spread over the whole building in the current vacant areas. This work has led to floors 1, 3 and 4 being available to the Council. There are costs included to relocate tenants within **Appendix A**.
19. There was an initial concern that by moving to International House this would downsize the workable office and meeting space. To address this the Council is in discussion with a current tenant on floor 4 that is looking to move to another Council run office building. The proposed plans now include this area and whilst there is slight reduction in desk numbers this is now fairly minimum (220 to 204) and is sufficient based on the desk data, which shows a usage of around 120 desks per day. The number of meeting rooms have been increased and there have been some informal sound reducing pods introduced to the plans for small meetings.
20. The floors have been configured into service zones to allow service areas to be found easily. Some updates and adjustments to work areas have been made following advice directly from services and the project team to ensure service needs are accommodated and the Council has followed legislation set out in the workplace regulation act 1992 to result in the optimal layouts for the floors.
21. The Council is working with International House tenants to secure space within the reception to enable our customers to access face-to-face services, including incorporation of an accessible toilet, in the best way possible from the ground floor. This area is smaller than our current space and the Customer Services team will need to work differently. The project team are working closely with the Customer Services Managers to ensure the best solution is developed.
22. This work is progressing well and will continue to be updated up to the point that it goes out to tender. The current plans can be found at **Appendix B**.
23. The IT team have been working with the project team on desk and meeting room booking solutions. The team have found a product that integrates with Microsoft Teams and will manage all spaces efficiently, including freeing up areas that are not being used for other users. The system will enable services to book other spaces should their zone be fully utilised, which will ensure there will always be enough desks to meet capacity.

Phase 2 – Civic Suite, Elections & Ashford Monitoring Centre relocation

24. Although this is headed up as 'phase 2' work is currently ongoing to secure space within International House to accommodate the Council Chamber, Committee Rooms, the Monitoring Centre and the Elections team. There have been positive meetings with existing tenants with the aim of securing additional space. Although confidential at this stage it is believed that the Council will secure these areas well in advance of the moving period identified.
25. To benefit from the full annual saving as soon as possible phase 2 will be accelerated to run parallel with phase 1. This will allow us to apply for business rate relief for three months and submit detailed renovation plans to remove the Business Rate liability on the Civic Centre.
26. A working group will be formed to review the Civic Suite requirements which will include Member representation, Member Services and project officers. The focus will be on the best use of space to ensure the spaces are flexible and all hybrid compatible.

Phase 3 – Redevelopment of the Civic Centre

27. The 3rd phase of the project will be looking at the Civic Centre future plans. These are still in discussion and some of the options include redevelopment of the Civic Centre, sale of the Civic Centre, master planning the whole Woolgrounder and Civic site. Reports will come forward in due course.

Consultation

28. The initial plans for the relocation to International House have been shared with the staff through the formal staff consultation process and this has been through the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).
29. The Council has also consulted with the public through an online form and a physical form available within reception and also promoted online through social media and our website.

Staff Consultation

30. The level of engagement from staff was good, from the responses approximately 68% of staff indicated they were broadly happy with the proposals, and the balance of respondents highlighted some concerns.
31. Importantly there was no feedback from staff that suggested the move to International House should not happen. On this basis further work on the plans to address some of the concerns has been undertaken. The concerns mainly related to desk capacity, desk size, noise, number of meeting rooms and storage. Following this feedback revisions to, and clarification of, the proposals were undertaken and a revised set of proposed plans were presented to the Joint Consultative Committee (JCC).
32. The Joint Consultative Committee received the staff consultation report on 14th September 2023. The discussion at the committee was mainly focused on questions relating to desk capacity, the timing of the various phases, parking and staff room facilities. Overall, the JCC considered the proposals to be acceptable.

33. There will continue to be redesign work over the coming weeks, as plans develop, but the main detail will have to be finalised by end of September.

Joint Consultative Committee

34. The Joint Consultative Committee received the staff consultation report on 14th September 2023. The JCC considered the proposals to be acceptable and would advise cabinet that it be agreed.

Public Consultation

35. This consultation has been conducted based on Phase 1 and 2 of the proposal (relocating services to International House) so targeting those that visit the Civic Centre in-person. If the Council redevelops the Civic Centre (phase 3) this will be subject to consultation through the Planning process.
36. In developing the plans for the relocation of the council offices a public consultation was undertaken between 17th July and 18th September 2023. The consultation aimed to capture the views of residents that currently use the Civic Centre.
37. The consultation was held on the council's website and members of the public visiting the Civic Centre were invited to take part with both digital and paper formats being available. The consultation was supported by promotional materials in the reception area of the Civic Centre. It was also promoted through our social media channels.
38. The consultation sought to understand what services people currently visit the Civic Centre for. It also sought to understand how people travelled to the Civic Centre and provided respondents with the ability to provide comment or ask questions.
39. The consultation received 123 responses. 93% of responses were completed online through the council's website and 7% were completed in-person at the Civic Centre by visitors. 8% of respondents were under 30 years old, 62% were between 30 and 60 years old and 30% were over the age of 60. A majority of responses came from wards in central Ashford Town.
40. As part of our equalities monitoring process, respondents were asked whether they used a disabled bay when visiting the Civic Centre and whether they experienced mobility problems that made parking close by a necessity. 15% of respondents indicated that they used a disabled parking bay when visiting and 27% reported problems with mobility. A few respondents also left comments enquiring about the provision of disabled parking, access and facilities at International House.
41. Reasons given for visiting the Civic Centre was asked, the most common reasons for which respondents visited the Civic Centre were for general information and council meetings. 48% of respondents visited for general information about council services. Waste collection and benefits advice services were the least frequently quoted reasons for visitation.
42. 70% of respondents used a car when travelling to the Civic Centre, with 32% walking at least part of the way. 13% travelled at least part of the way by bus and 9% by bike. No respondents reported travelling by train. 10% of respondents indicated that they might travel differently if visiting International House. The majority of these were respondents who travelled by car indicating that they might instead walk, or vice versa.

43. The most common queries from respondents were about the future of the Civic Centre and what would become of the space. Respondents were also commonly concerned about parking availability and disabled access. Sentiment analysis of comments indicated that 30% were broadly positive about the move, 30% were broadly negative and 40% were neutral.

Financial Position

44. The table below is based on moving the whole organisation as per the current plan (phase 1 and 2). The table breaks down the current savings projected for both the move to International House and savings from future capital works on the Civic Centre. It should be noted that the capital works will need to commence as soon as possible should the Council wish to stay at the Civic Centre as these works are now required for the building to meet a reasonable standard.

Table 1	Civic Centre Total Cost	Saving Full Move	Comment
PREMISES	684,645	(684,645)	
SUPPLIES AND SERVICES	15,650	(15,650)	
TRANSPORT	6,240	(6,240)	
H-INCO	(84,383)	84,383	
Total Costs	622,152	(622,152)	
Cost of Capital works to Civic Centre	885,355	(885,355)	Costs of £10.9m - 20 year annuity, 5%
Cost of moving to international House	-	197,219	Costs of £1.75m - 12 year annuity, 5%
Total	1,507,507	(1,310,288)	

45. The estimated costs of relocating to International House of £1.75m are detailed in **Appendix A**. The current estimate is based on moving both phase 1 and 2, these figures are subject to change through value engineering, procurement and negotiations with tenants. If the costs change significantly this will be reported through the Financial Monitoring process.
46. The costs of refurbishment are included within our cost estimates. If the Council does not relocate a significant part of these cost would still be required to prepare the office space for letting.

Implications and Risk Assessment

47. There is a risk over how this project will be perceived by the public, this is a project which saves money and protects services that our residents rely on. This will need to be communicated effectively to the public.
48. There is also a reputational risk that if the Council does not make best use of our assets, the Council has an obligation to the residents of the borough to use its resources in the most efficient way. This project allows the Council to demonstrate this.
49. This also applies if the Council decides not to progress with the Civic Suite move, the perception from the Public could be that the Council is prioritising its own accommodation over service delivery to the residents of the Borough. The Civic Suite is currently underutilised with only around 12 meetings a year requiring a meeting room the size of the Council Chamber.
50. This project will deliver a considerable saving for the Council and support our medium-term financial plan. Failure to deliver this saving will have wide ranging consequences on the way the council operates. An annum pressure

of £1.3m will be added to the Medium Term Financial Plan and a savings programme will need to be drawn up.

51. Costs of the move could be more or less than estimated, for example, if costs come in at £100,000 more than budgeted the overall saving would reduce by £11,000 per annum. This £11,238 is the financing of the additional £100,000.
52. The project costs will be value engineered before moving forward on procuring a contract and during the procurement process. The costs will be monitored and managed throughout the implementation process.
53. Retaining large amounts of office space could have a negative impact in the Council's budgets due to works required to bring the buildings up to a reasonable standard. Whereas reducing office space within the Ashford Borough could have a positive impact on other office buildings in the borough, as supply decrease.
54. The timetable will be kept as short as possible but there will be a small period of disruption for each department as it moves to International House. The timetable will be put in place and services will be kept informed throughout the process.
55. Should Council operations stay based at the Civic Centre, areas that are currently void will need a significant amount of investment to bring them up to letting standards. Due to the current demand for office space this would sit outside of our current financial risk appetite.
56. Future growth would be easier to control through expansion at International House. Based on empty spaces being let out, both at the Civic Centre and International House, as International House is significantly bigger and is likely to have more divert tenants, the Council can contract and expand more easily should it need to.
57. The table below includes the costs of bringing both International House and the Civic Centre up to a reasonable standard. International House costs less to bring up to a reasonable standard in comparison to the Civic Centre due to a number of contributing factors. These include the works already in train to replace the roof at International House, the infrastructure and plant at International House being more cohesive and in better condition and the building itself being in better condition. This is due, in part, to the contributions from the service charge and the tenanted areas being regularly refurbished which means the building as a whole needs less work to bring it up to a reasonable standard.

Table 2	£'000	Annual cost/saving of financing £'000
CIVIC CENTRE		
Works (reasonable standard)	10,775	
INTERNATIONAL HOUSE		
Works (reasonable standard)	4,122	
Costs of retaining both the CC & IH	14,897	1,105
Savings - no longer occupying Civic Centre*		1,310
Loss -no longer occupying International House**		(205)

* The Civic Centre savings include costs of running the building, income generated from the building, as well as costs of moving to International House.

** The International House loss includes costs of running the building and income generated from the building.

58. Both the Civic Centre and International House would generate a capital receipt. These have not been captured in the calculations above.

59. In summary the decision to move to International House enables the Council to deliver the same services whilst reducing overall costs. The move will reduce the Council's exposure to financial risk by disposing or redeveloping the Civic Centre.

Equalities Impact Assessment

60. Members are referred to the attached Assessment at **Appendix C**. The key issues arising are a significant number of visitors to the Civic Centre have mobility problems and use disabled parking. The move to International House will have a positive impact for people with mobility problem as the building is move accessible inside and outside. Please refer to the EIA for details.

Options Considered

61. Disposing of International House was ruled out early due to the net return. If International House was sold the Council would benefit from a capital receipt (one-off) however there would be a loss of annual income, net projected income this year of £536,000.

62. Retaining just the civic suite has been considered, the project was initially split over two phases to give us the time to consider this option. There are a number of concerns raised with retaining the Civic Suite as it is:

- a. The Customer Service Team need to be located close to the Housing Team. The Housing Team regularly have face to face appointments and are required to attend reception throughout the day to deal with visitors including in relation to homelessness from vulnerable individuals and families. If Customer Services were not relocated to

International House some departments in Housing would need to co-locate at the Civic Centre which is not ideal.

- b. The access at International House is better for the visitors to reception. The access is level and disabled parking is at the front of the building.
 - c. The current Council Chamber is a large space that is underutilised with Full Council (around 6 per annum) and the occasional committee meeting requiring a space of that size, such as Planning. International House could offer an opportunity to use the spaces more flexibly and still retain a Council Chamber that is of a similar size. This opportunity enables the Council to reduce spend of Public funds on large, underutilised meeting spaces.
 - d. If the Civic Suite remains operational larger meeting rooms for staff would remain at the Civic Centre site, as to provide these at both locations would be costly. This poses issues for access for officers and the IT and facilities teams would need to regularly attend both sites which would increase staffing requirements adding additional costs.
 - e. As well as being operationally challenging the process to isolate the Civic Suite will be resource intensive.
 - f. The costs of retaining the Civic Suite are detailed below, the capital costs would be £255,000 with an annual cost of £186,000 (not including additional staffing costs).
63. Retain both buildings and rent out vacant space. This was considered however, due to the costs of modernising the Civic Centre to a high standard (expected by most tenants currently) this is prohibitive.
64. Reduce the office space further by moving to International House. This was considered but there is a strong message from staff and Members that they want to keep a strong presence in the office. It has therefore been decided to closely match what is currently provided within the Civic Centre. International House will enable the Council to expand or contract more easily in the future.

Reasons for Supporting Option Recommended

65. The Council has a significant pressure coming forward in its financial plan based predominately on the uncertainty around future funding streams, such as Business Rates. This project is currently estimated to reduce the Council's future annual spend by £1.3m. Should this move not go ahead alternative savings will be required and the Council will be unable to generate this level of savings without stopping services. To achieve £1.3m of saving an average reduction in staffing would be around 32 full time equivalents from discretionary services, such as enforcement, town centre, economic development and areas where statutory services have been enhanced.
66. No service delivery will be reduced following the move, therefore a relatively easy win for reducing costs for the Council and its residents.
67. International House is a larger office building which will offer more flexibility around growth and hybrid working longer term should the Council want to expand or contract. This advantage is there due to the nature of the building and its tenants. The Civic Centre is more likely to attract a Public Sector tenant on a longer term lease so will limit expansion for the Council.

68. The Council/ General Fund will receive a capital receipt/reduce borrowing from disposing of the Civic Centre. Although this will not fund long term revenue for the Council it could be used to fund decarbonisation works across the Council's property portfolio.
69. There is an opportunity for a creative piece of placemaking. This would allow for a mixed tenure development over the Civic Centre alongside the Woolgrowers site that is already in the Council's ownership.

Next Steps in Process

70. A detailed project plan to be developed to ensure works progress as soon as possible.
71. Project teams will be reviewed and updated to deliver the move to International House.
72. Officers are currently finalising plans, working with tenants in International House for additional space to accommodate the whole Council and working with International House tenants on the use of the reception area and other shared spaces.
73. Once approved by Council Officers will work on the procurement to secure a works contract and other contracts that will be required, such as moving company and temperature control solutions.

Conclusion

74. To ensure the Council can deliver an affordable Medium Term Financial Plan the move to International House is a sound commercial decision. The costs saved (£1.3m) from this move will not have a negative impact on the residents of Ashford and there will not be any reductions in services delivered.

Portfolio Holder's Views

Cllr Noel Ovenden

75. I welcome this proposal, that without cutting services to the residents of Ashford, the Council will save £1.3m per annum. I am also pleased that no staff redundancies are necessary to achieve this.

Cllr Simon Betty

76. The relocation and disposal of the Civic Centre, whether through sale or redevelopment will rationalise the office space owned, reducing the financial risk and provide more flexibility for the Council to change its accommodation requirements over time.

Contact and Email

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Estimated costs of moving to International House

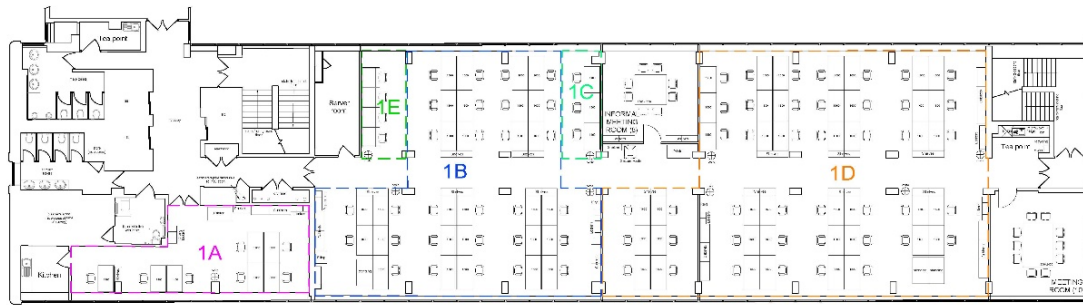
Item Description	Cost	Notes
Cost Order estimate	1,133,000	Works to Internimate House
Relocation of tenants/lost income of future spaces	500,000	This is an estimate based on costs to fit out move on offices and lost income for future office space (for Civic Suite)
Moving equipment	5,000	Moving costs including large Print room devices.
IT requirements	44,000	Cabling, networking, wifi, circiuts
Hybrid equipment for meeting	40,000	10 meeting spaces requiring equiment estimated at £4k each
Resource booking solution (desk and meeting room booking)	8,000	
Air conditioning	18,000	Units before decarbonisation works for air cooling system
TOTAL	1,748,000	

It should be noted much of the space that the Council will be occupying will require refurbishment to attract tenants to the building therefore a significant proportion of the works to International House would be required if the Council retained both buildings.

APPENDIX B



LEVEL 1



- 1A: Customer Services - 7 desks
- 1B: Accountancy, Revs & Biers, Procurement - 30 desks
- 1C: All Departments - 3 hot desks
- 1D: Housing - 45 desks
- 1E: All Departments - 4 mini hot desks

BOOKABLE MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 10 person
- Level 3: 1 x 10 person
- Level 4: 1 x 20 person or 2 x 10 person
- 1 x 15 person
- 1 x 10 person
- 1 x 8 person

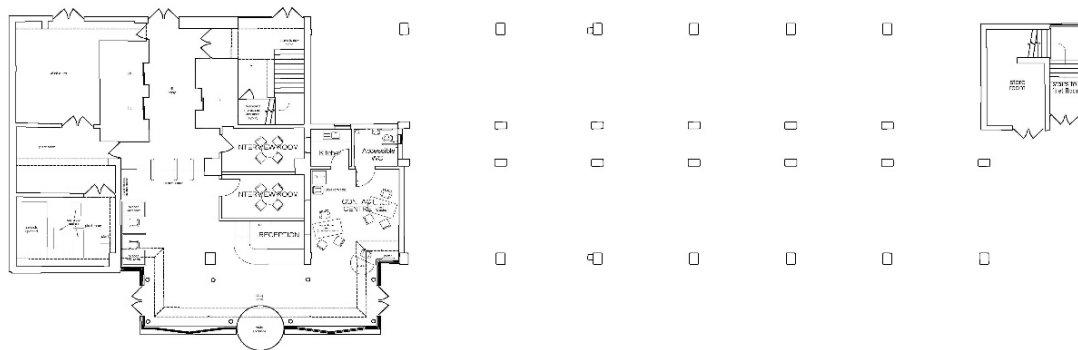
INFORMAL MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 8 person
- Level 3: 4 x 4 person pods
- 3 x 2 person Director's offices

FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT

- 1400mm desks to have single standard or large (32") monitor
- 1600mm desks to have single large (32") monitor or two standard monitors
- 1400mm desks to be designated as hot desks where possible
- Permanent desks to have under-desk pedestal where possible
- Tall ventilated lockers for drying clothes to be provided on level 1

LEVEL 0

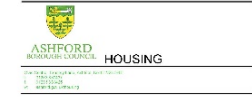


1	Project Manager	11
2	Project Engineer	10
3	Project Engineer	10
4	Project Engineer	10
5	Project Engineer	10

Civic Centre Relocation to International House

Floor Plans as Proposed - Level 0 & Level 1

NO.	REV.	DATE	BY
INTH01-0003	P8	1:100@GA1	Jun23



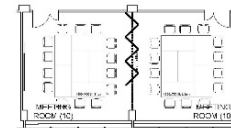
PRELIMINARY



LEVEL 4



- 4A: HR - 8 desks
- 4B: Legal & Democracy - 8 desks
- 4C: Executives Office & Senior Leadership Team - 10 desks
- 4D: IT - 11 desks



ALTERNATIVE MEETING ROOM LAYOUT

LEVEL 3



- 3A: CEOs - 2 desks
- 3B: Economic Development, Property Building Services & Facilities, Environment & Contracts, Estates, Projects, Comms, Policy & Performance & Member Services - 30 desks
- 3C: Community Safety & Wellbeing, Port Health - 18 desks
- 3D: Planning & Building Control - 30 desks

BOOKABLE MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 10 person
- Level 3: 1 x 10 person
- Level 4: 1 x 20 person or 2 x 10 person
- 1 x 16 person
- 1 x 10 person
- 1 x 8 person

INFORMAL MEETING ROOMS

- Level 1: 1 x 8 person
- Level 3: 4 x 4 person pods
- 3 x 2 person Director's offices

FURNITURE & EQUIPMENT:

- 1400mm desks to have single standard or large (32") monitor
- 1800mm desks to have single large (32") monitor or two standard monitors
- 1400mm desks to be designated as hot desks where possible
- Permanent desks to have under-desk pedestal where possible
- Tall ventilated lockers for drying clothes to be provided on level 1

NO.	DESCRIPTION	DATE
1	ISSUED FOR INFORMATION	15/06/23
2	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
3	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
4	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
5	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
6	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
7	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
8	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
9	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23
10	REVISED TO REFLECT COMMENTS	20/06/23

Civic Centre Relocation to International House

Floor Plans as Proposed - Level 3 & Level 4

PROJ	INTH01-0004	REV	P6	DATE	1:1000@A1	ISSUED	JUN23
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PRELIMINARY

Equality Impact Assessment

1. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is a document that summarises how the council has had due regard to the public sector equality duty (Equality Act 2010) in its decision-making. Although there is no legal duty to produce an EIA, the Council must have **due regard** to the equality duty and an EIA is recognised as the best method of fulfilling that duty. It can assist the Council in making a judgment as to whether a policy or other decision will have unintended negative consequences for certain people and help maximise the positive impacts of policy change. An EIA can lead to one of four consequences:
2. No major change – the policy or other decision is robust with no potential for discrimination or adverse impact. Opportunities to promote equality have been taken;
3. Adjust the policy or decision to remove barriers or better promote equality as identified in the EIA;
4. Continue the policy – if the EIA identifies potential for adverse impact, set out compelling justification for continuing;
5. Stop and remove the policy where actual or potential unlawful discrimination is identified.

Public sector equality duty

6. The Equality Act 2010 places a duty on the council, when exercising public functions, to have due regard to the need to:
 7. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation;
 8. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it;
 9. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it (ie tackling prejudice and promoting understanding between people from different groups).
10. These are known as the three aims of the general equality duty.

Protected characteristics

11. The Equality Act 2010 sets out nine protected characteristics for the purpose of the equality duty:
 - Age
 - Disability
 - Gender reassignment
 - Marriage and civil partnership*
 - Pregnancy and maternity
 - Race
 - Religion or belief
 - Sex
 - Sexual orientation

*For marriage and civil partnership, only the first aim of the duty applies in relation to employment.

Due regard

12. Having 'due regard' is about using good equality information and analysis at the right time as part of decision-making procedures.

13. To 'have due regard' means that in making decisions and in its other day-to-day activities the council must consciously consider the need to do the things set out in the general equality duty: eliminate discrimination, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations. This can involve:
- removing or minimising disadvantages suffered by people due to their protected characteristics.
 - taking steps to meet the needs of people with certain protected characteristics when these are different from the needs of other people.
 - encouraging people with certain protected characteristics to participate in public life or in other activities where it is disproportionately low.
14. How much regard is 'due' will depend on the circumstances. The greater the potential impact, the higher the regard required by the duty. Examples of functions and decisions likely to engage the duty include: policy decisions, budget decisions, public appointments, service provision, statutory discretion, decisions on individuals, employing staff and procurement of goods and services.
15. In terms of timing:
- Having 'due regard' should be considered at the inception of any decision or proposed policy or service development or change.
 - Due regard should be considered throughout development of a decision. Notes shall be taken and kept on file as to how due regard has been had to the equality duty in research, meetings, project teams, consultations etc.
 - The completion of the EIA is a way of effectively summarising this and it should inform final decision-making.

Armed Forces Community

16. As part of the council's commitment to the Armed Forces Community made through the signing of the Armed Forces Covenant the council's Cabinet agreed in November 2017 that potential impacts on the Armed Forces Community should be considered as part of the Equality Impact Assessment process.
17. Accordingly, due regard should also be had throughout the decision making process to potential impacts on the groups covered by the Armed Forces Covenant:
- Current serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - Former serving members of the Armed Forces (both Regular and Reserve)
 - The families of current and former Armed Forces personnel.

Case law principles

18. A number of principles have been established by the courts in relation to the equality duty and due regard:
- Decision-makers in public authorities must be aware of their duty to have 'due regard' to the equality duty and so EIA's must be attached to any relevant committee reports.
 - Due regard is fulfilled before and at the time a particular policy is under consideration as well as at the time a decision is taken. Due regard involves a conscious approach and state of mind.

- A public authority cannot satisfy the duty by justifying a decision after it has been taken.
- The duty must be exercised in substance, with rigour and with an open mind in such a way that it influences the final decision.
- The duty is a non-delegable one. The duty will always remain the responsibility of the public authority.
- The duty is a continuing one so that it needs to be considered not only when a policy, for example, is being developed and agreed but also when it is implemented.
- It is good practice for those exercising public functions to keep an accurate record showing that they have actually considered the general duty and pondered relevant questions. Proper record keeping encourages transparency and will discipline those carrying out the relevant function to undertake the duty conscientiously.
- A public authority will need to consider whether it has sufficient information to assess the effects of the policy, or the way a function is being carried out, on the aims set out in the general equality duty.
- A public authority cannot avoid complying with the duty by claiming that it does not have enough resources to do so.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Lead officer:	Hannah Clayton-Peck
Decision maker:	Maria Stevens
Decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Policy, project, service, contract • Review, change, new, stop 	Change of location for the Civic Centre
Date of decision: The date when the final decision is made. The EIA must be complete before this point and inform the final decision.	19/10/2023
Summary of the proposed decision: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aims and objectives • Key actions • Expected outcomes • Who will be affected and how? • How many people will be affected? 	Aim: Relocate Ashford Borough Council offices from the Civic Centre to International House. Objectives: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved financial position for the Council • Successful demobilisation of the Civic Centre • Reduced carbon footprint

	<p>Key Actions: Successful mobilisation of International House</p> <p>Users affected: visitors to the Civic Centre and council staff.</p> <p>Expected Outcomes: The project supports the council's savings targets following significant pressure on the MTFP. Benefits are expected within 12 months and savings will be made across 10 years.</p>
<p>Information and research:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Outline the information and research that has informed the decision. • Include sources and key findings. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Analysis of the finances for both International House and the Civic Centre have been undertaken and show that savings in excess of £500,000 can be made by relocating. • Analysis of meeting rooms and desk usage indicates that the overprovision of space at the Civic Centre has rendered the office accommodation unsuitable. This has presented an opportunity for income generation for redevelopment of the Civic site.
<p>Consultation:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What specific consultation has occurred on this decision? • What were the results of the consultation? • Did the consultation analysis reveal any difference in views across the protected characteristics? • What conclusions can be drawn from the analysis on how the decision will affect people with different protected characteristics? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A staff consultation has been undertaken and informed the designs and some of the decisions around the details of the relocation. Individual questions and queries were addressed in a response provided on the council's Smarthub. • A public consultation took place to understand the impact on customers and ensure that those are taken into consideration. The consultation was held between July and September 2023 and a

	<p>summary of the analysis is provided in the report.</p> <p>30% of people reported that they had mobility problems that meant parking close to the building was important.</p> <p>15% of people said that they used a disabled parking bay when visiting the Civic Centre.</p> <p>The decision to relocate from the Civic Centre to International House will not result in less provision of disabled parking and will be located directly outside International House.</p> <p>International House is by design more accessible for people with mobility issues and therefore a neutral/positive impact is expected for visitors through the move. There is level access throughout the building. The area outside of International House is more level than at the Civic Centre. International House is closer to public transport than the Civic Centre. There would be no change to public toilet provision.</p>
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Assess the relevance of the decision to people with different protected characteristics and assess the impact of the decision on people with different protected characteristics.

When assessing relevance and impact, make it clear who the assessment applies to within the protected characteristic category. For example, a decision may have high relevance for young people but low relevance for older people; it may have a positive impact on women but a neutral impact on men.

Protected characteristic	Relevance to Decision High/Medium/Low/None	Impact of Decision Positive (Major/Minor) Negative (Major/Minor) Neutral
<u>AGE</u> Elderly	Medium	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
Middle age	Low	Positive (Minor)

Young adult	Low	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
Children	Low	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
<u>DISABILITY</u> Physical	Medium	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport
Mental	Medium	Negative (Minor) A change in the location and the environment could be difficult.
Sensory	Medium	Negative (Minor) A change in the location and the environment could be difficult.
<u>GENDER RE-ASSIGNMENT</u>	Medium	Neutral
<u>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>PREGNANCY/MATERNITY</u>	Medium	Positive (Minor) Better access to the building from public transport and better access within the building
<u>RACE</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>RELIGION OR BELIEF</u>	Low	Neutral
<u>SEX</u> Men	Low	Neutral
Women	Low	Neutral
<u>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</u>	Low	Neutral

<u>ARMED FORCES COMMUNITY</u> Regular/Reserve personnel	Low	Neutral
Former service personnel	Low	Neutral
Service families	Low	Neutral

<p>Mitigating negative impact:</p> <p>Where any negative impact has been identified, outline the measures taken to mitigate against it.</p>	<p>Negative impact has been identified for sensory and mental in that the change in location could be challenging for those who fall into those protected characteristics. However prior notice, regular communication and signage will be used to ensure that this is mitigated as much as possible.</p>
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<p>Is the decision relevant to the aims of the equality duty?</p> <p>Guidance on the aims can be found in the EHRC's Essential Guide, alongside fuller PSED Technical Guidance.</p>	
Aim	Yes / No / N/A
1. Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation	Yes
2. Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes
3. Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it	Yes

<p>Conclusion:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Consider how due regard has been had to the equality duty, from start to finish. There should be no unlawful discrimination arising from the decision (see guidance above). Advise on whether the proposal meets the aims of the equality duty or whether adjustments have been made or need to be 	<p>The move from the Civic Centre to International House is intended to provide services in the same way from a different building.</p> <p>Two consultations have been held on the proposed move which sought views on how it could impact both staff and the public that use the Civic Centre.</p> <p>Questions and individual requirements raised during the consultation have</p>
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<p>made or whether any residual impacts are justified.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How will monitoring of the policy, procedure or decision and its implementation be undertaken and reported? 	<p>been addressed. There is an appendix summarising key questions from the public and answers are provided. Staff were also provided with answers to queries and questions raised.</p> <p>The public consultation results showed that a high percentage of visitors to the Civic Centre have mobility problems. The move to International House should have a positive impact on these groups.</p> <p>There will be ongoing monitoring of how International House is used by staff and members of the public. For example, visitor times throughout the day and desk/meeting room booking.</p>
<p>EIA completion date:</p>	<p>Throughout the project and finalised on 18 September 2023.</p>

The Equality and Human Rights Commission has produced helpful guidance on “Meeting the Equality Duty in Policy and Decision-Making” (October 2014). It is available on the following link and report authors should read and follow this when developing or reporting on proposals for policy or service development or change and other decisions likely to engage the equality duty. [Equality Duty in decision-making](#)

Ashford Borough Council

Data Protection Impact Assessment

Data Protection Impact Assessment Template

Project Name: Relocation Project	Approved by: T. Swain
Author:	Date: 25 th August 2023

Data protection impact assessments (DPIAs) are tools which can help Ashford Borough Council (ABC) identify the most effective way to comply with its data protection obligations and meet individuals' expectations of privacy. An effective DPIA will allow ABC to identify and fix problems at an early stage, reducing the associated costs and damage to reputation which might otherwise occur. DPIAs are an integral part of taking a privacy by design approach, and are a legal requirement under the UK General Data Protection Regulation (UK GDPR) whenever a 'process is likely to result in a high risk to the rights and freedoms of the natural persons'.

Overview**Aim:**

Relocate Ashford Borough Council offices from the Civic Centre to International House.

Objectives:

- Improved financial position for the Council
- Successful demobilisation of the Civic Centre
- Reduced carbon footprint
- Successful mobilisation of International House

Step 1. Data Protection Impact Assessment Screening Questions

These questions are intended to help ABC decide whether a full DPIA is required. If the answer is yes to any of the questions a DPIA will be required.

Will the project involve the collection of new data about individuals?	No
Will the project compel individuals to provide data about themselves?	No
Will data about individuals be disclosed to other organisations not previously privy to the data?	No
Will data about the individuals be used for purposes it is not currently used for?	No

Does the project involve new technology that might be perceived as being privacy intrusive?	No
Will the project result in making decisions or taking action against individuals in ways which could have a significant impact on them?	No
Is the data about individuals of a kind particularly likely to raise concerns e.g. health records, criminal records - which may be considered private?	No
Will the project require contact to individuals in ways they may find intrusive?	No

If yes has been answered to any of the questions above – the below full DPIA below requires completing.

Although the screening questions would normally indicate that, a DPIA is not required, with no new processing activities or additional data being collected. Due to the scale of the project, involving the relocation of all council services, personnel and equipment and the speed under which the project is hoped to be completed, data protection needs to be considered as a central pillar to the project.

Step 2. Describe the processing

Describe the nature of the processing: how will you collect, use, store and delete data? What is the source of the data? Will you be sharing data with anyone? You might find it useful to refer to a flow diagram or other way of describing data flows. What types of processing identified as likely high risk are involved?

Ashford Borough Council processes personal data to enable it to provide a range of services to local people and businesses; as such we do collect and process personal data where necessary to:

deliver public services

contact our residents by post, email or telephone

understand the needs of our residents

obtain their opinion about our services

update our customer records

process financial transactions

prevent and detect fraud and corruption in the use of public funds

allow us to undertake statutory functions efficiently and effectively

make sure we meet our statutory obligations including those related to diversity and equalities

and other reasons

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment, with this assessment covering only the relocation of the office.

Describe the scope of the processing: what is the nature of the data, and does it include special category or criminal offence data? How much data will you be collecting and using? How often? How long will you keep it? How many individuals are affected? What geographical area does it cover?

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment.

N/A

Describe the context of the processing: what is the nature of your relationship with the individuals? How much control will they have? Would they expect you to use their data in this way? Do they include children or other vulnerable groups? Are there prior concerns over this type of processing or security flaws? Is it novel, or utilises untested systems or software in any way? What is the current state of technology in this area? Are there any current issues of public concern that you should factor in?

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment.

N/A

Describe the purposes of the processing: what do you want to achieve? What is the intended effect on individuals? What are the benefits of the processing – for you, and more broadly?

Individual processing activities are not being considered in this assessment.

N/A

Step 3. Consultation Process

Consider how to consult with relevant stakeholders: describe when and how you will seek individuals' views – or justify why it's not appropriate to do so. Who

else do you need to involve within the Council? (Data Protection Team/ Legal/IT/Etc.) Do you need to ask your data processors to assist?

A comprehensive team has been identified and consulted with, a staff representative group has been formed and a staff consultation and a public consultation have taken place which has impacted delivery plans for the project. Legal, IT and officers relevant to operational delivery are engaged on relevant areas to ensure process is followed.

Step 4. Assess Necessity and Proportionality

Describe compliance and proportionality measures, in particular: what is your lawful basis for processing? Does the processing actually achieve your purpose? Is there another way to achieve the same outcome? How will you prevent function creep? How will you ensure data quality and data minimisation? What information will you give individuals? How will you help to support their rights? What measures do you take to ensure processors comply? How do you safeguard any international transfers?

N/A

Step 5. Identify and assess risks

Describe source of risk and nature of potential impact on individuals. Include associated compliance and corporate risks as necessary. Along with identified measures to mitigate the associated risk.

Risk 1 – Potential loss of current data protection measures

Ensuring the data protection arrangements currently in place at the Civic Suite remain the same or are strengthened following the relocation:

- Physical access controls to the new office building, (fob entry or similar) possibly multiple fob entry required doors to access the most sensitive areas.
- Visitor arrangements.
- Office layout – with those service areas processing the most personal data located furthest away from entry points.
- Considerations to screen positioning to minimise overlook.
- Adequate areas for confidential meeting to take place.
- Access to locked storage facilities for the securing of physical documents.
- Clear desk policies.
- Confidential waste bins.
- Follow-me-printing

Risk 2 – Data protection vulnerabilities during the moving process

Ensuring data protection and security is considered during the actual activity of the move:

- Ensuring that both locations remain secure during the transition with adequate restricted access to both sites.
- Prior to moving create an inventory of the files/boxes which are to be moved.
- That sensitive data is appropriately labelled – secured and sealed and accompanied to its new location.
- That any contractors utilised within the moving process are trusted, and understand the importance of confidentiality.
- That a process is in place to ensure nothing is left behind.

The relocation is likely to offer a good opportunity to determine what physical documents are held, which need to be kept and which need to be destroyed. If confidential/personal data needs to be destroyed, ensure that it is disposed of in the correct manner.

- Ensure that appropriate confidential waste bins are available.

Risk 3 – Loss or interruption of data and or services

Ensuring loss or interruption to services is kept to minimum during the office move:

- Appropriate number of customer facing officers available at all times.
- Staggered move, minimising any downtime.
- Consideration given to time of day and service demand.

It is understood that the relocation of the server room (potentially to the cloud) along with the contents of the strong room are considered outside of this initial project scope.

Step 6 Sign off

Item	Name/position/date	Notes
Measures approved by:	Tom Swain 25/08/23	<i>Integrate actions back into project plan, with date and responsibility for completion</i>
Residual risks approved by:	Tom Swain 25/08/23	<i>If accepting any residual high risk, consult the ICO before going ahead</i>
<p>Summary of DPO advice:</p> <p>Adequate measures are being actioned and continued consideration of data protection is being considered throughout the project.</p>		
DPO advice accepted or overruled by:	Accepted – Maria Stevens / Hannah Clayton-Peck	If overruled, you must explain your reasons