

APPENDIX 4

TITLE
PROPERTY REVIEW: OPERATIONAL PROPERTIES.
DATE
26 February 2025
LEAD OFFICER.
David England: Head of Valuation & Asset Management.
1 Summary description of the proposed change
What is the change to policy / service / new project that is being proposed? How does it compare with the current situation?
<p>The review of the Council's operational property portfolio has been concluded and it is being recommended to Cabinet that:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> Various operational properties where services are delivered from are declared surplus and disposed of these are: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Hopewell Drive Business Centre. St George's Centre. Offices 17 High Street Rochester. Strood Cemetery Lodge, Cuxton Road Strood. The Brook Multi Storey Car Park, Chatham. Britton Farm, Car Park, Gillingham. Upper Mount Car Park, Chatham. Lower Stoke Car Park, Cuckolds Green Road. Car Park 240-244 High Street Rochester. Car Park Albatross Avenue, Strood. Consultation takes place about the future of the following properties with the results of this consultation being brought to a future Cabinet meeting, so that Cabinet can then decide the way forward: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Upnor Castle, High Street Upnor (this is not Council owned.) Public Toilets, Rainham Shopping Centre. Public Toilets, Cooling Village Hall (these are not Council owned.) Public Toilets, The Street, High Halstow (Leasehold.)
2 Summary of evidence used to support this assessment.
E.g. Feedback from consultation, performance information, service user. E.g. Comparison of service user profile with Medway Community Profile
In order to make it more financially sustainable, the Council needs to make savings and the Chartered Institute of Public Finance and Accountancy (CIPFA) in its report dated January 2024, amongst other things recommended that the Council should carry out a property review to identify surplus non-operational property assets, which can be disposed of to reduce debt, and that the Council should also identify other property assets, including operational properties, which are attractive to the market and where their sale could

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contribute to Medway's longer-term financial sustainability. The aim of this review is to generate £20M from capital receipts over the next 5 years. The Council's: Service Managers, Corporate Landlord Board, Corporate Management Team, Children & Adults' and Regeneration, Culture, Community & Transformation's Management teams have all been consulted and have no objections to these proposals.

Commentary on the Properties:

- Hopewell Drive Business Centre is a well-used business centre with individual units which are let to small businesses, these premises will be sold subject to the occupying businesses ongoing occupation.
- The St George's Centre is mainly used for hiring, for functions and as a Council Chamber for meetings, the latter use will be relocated to Gun Wharf, and it will be up to the new owner to decide if they still want to continue hiring out the building for functions. Relocation of the Council Chamber to Gun Wharf will make it easier for people to attend Council meetings in person.
- The offices at 17 High Street Rochester are not open to the public and are used as office space in connection with the adjoining museum. The offices are not at all accessible to anyone that has a disability. The seven staff based here will be relocated to other Council premises.
- Strood Cemetery Lodge will not be disposed of until the existing occupier moves out.
- Britton Farm, Car Park, the net income generated from it is low. There are only 2 disabled spaces in this car park and there are other car parks available nearby. Also, on road parking is permitted for those with disabled parking permits.
- The Brook Multistorey Car Park is in poor condition and the net income generated from it is low. There are only 2 disabled spaces in this car park and there are other car parks available nearby (including the adjacent Soloman's Road disabled car park which has 19 spaces.) Also, on road parking is permitted for those with disabled parking permits.
- Upper Mount Car Park is not well used and the net income generated from it is low. There are no disabled spaces in this car park, there are other car parks available nearby and the car park is well away from amenities and the town centre. Also, on road parking is permitted for those with disabled parking permits.
- Lower Stoke Car Park, Cuckolds Green Road, is let to the Parish Council. There is only 1 disabled space in this car park on road parking is permitted for those with disabled parking permits.
- The Car Park at 240-244 High Street Rochester is not well used and the net income generated from it is low. There is only 1 disabled space in this car park and there are other car parks available nearby. Also, on road parking is permitted for those with disabled parking permits.
- The Car Park Albatross Avenue, Strood, is not well used and there are no disabled parking spaces within it. On road parking is permitted for those with disabled parking permits.

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No action will be taken in respect of the following properties until further consultation has been carried out including more work on this DIA and Cabinet has decided the way forward in respect of the properties:

- Upnor Castle, High Street Upnor (this is not Council owned, but is managed by the Council under a Local Management Agreement with English Heritage.)
- Public Toilets, Rainham Shopping Centre. There is a disabled toilet in this facility and if this property is disposed of it is likely to be sold with the adjacent Council owned and let shopping centre, which has already been declared surplus. The owners of the shopping centre are likely to want to retain toilets including facilities for disabled people at the shopping centre and could work with occupiers of the retail units to provide these. If it is agreed that this property can be disposed of then more DIA work will be carried out in respect of this property, depending on what the buyer's proposals are for the property and whether they intend to keep the facility open or provide alternative toilet facilities including disabled facilities.
- Public Toilets, Cooling Village Hall (not Council owned.) There is no disabled toilet in this facility.
- Public Toilets, The Street, High Halstow (Leasehold.) There is no disabled toilet in this facility.

3 What is the likely impact of the proposed change?

Is it likely to:

Adversely impact on one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Advance equality of opportunity for one or more of the protected characteristic groups

Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

(insert Yes when there is an impact or No when there isn't)

Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Age	No	No	N/A
Disability	No	No	N/A
Gender reassignment	N/A	N/A	N/A
Marriage/civil partnership	N/A	N/A	N/A
Pregnancy/maternity	No	No	N/A
Race	N/A	N/A	N/A

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Protected characteristic groups (Equality Act 2010)	Adverse impact	Advance equality	Foster good relations
Religion/belief	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sex	N/A	N/A	N/A
Sexual orientation	N/A	N/A	N/A
Care experience	N/A	N/A	N/A
Other (e.g. low-income groups)	N/A	N/A	N/A

4 Summary of the likely impacts

Who will be affected?

How will they be affected?

See section 3 above, the disposal of the properties that are recommended for disposal in section 1.1 above will not have a differential impact on any of the groups with Protected Characteristics.
Further consultation will take place before disposal is considered in respect of the properties listed in section 1.2 above and DIA's will be carried out in respect of these properties.

5 What actions can be taken to mitigate likely adverse impacts, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations?

What alternative ways can the Council provide the service?

Are there alternative providers?

Can demand for services be managed differently?

Full Consultation will take place prior to any decisions being made concerning the operational facilities listed in section 1.2 above.

6 Action plan

Actions to mitigate adverse impact, improve equality of opportunity or foster good relations and/or obtain new evidence

Action	Lead	Deadline or review date
See 1 and 2 above. No decisions in respect of the future of the individual properties listed in section 1.2 above will be made until consultation has been carried out and individual DIA's have been prepared.	Corporate Landlord Board (CLB.)	Review 30 November 2025.

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Action	Lead	Deadline or review date

7 Recommendation

It is recommended that Cabinet agrees to:

- Declare surplus the properties listed in section 1.1 above.
- Delegate authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Corporate Landlord Board (CLB) to dispose of the properties and agree the method of disposal for each, in order to obtain the best consideration reasonably obtainable. In the case of Upper Mount Car park, Cabinet will also be asked to delegate authority to the Director of Place in consultation with the Corporate Landlord Board (CLB) to appropriate the property as it might be developed as Council Housing using the Council's Housing Revenue Account.
- Authorise the Council's legal department to conclude the resultant contracts of sale.
- Ask officers to undertake consultation concerning the future of the properties listed in section 1.2 above, with the results of this consultation being brought to a future Cabinet meeting, so that Cabinet can then decide the way forward.

8 Authorisation

The authorising officer is consenting that the recommendation can be implemented, sufficient evidence has been obtained and appropriate mitigation is planned, the Action Plan will be incorporated into the relevant Service Plan and monitored

Assistant Director:

Sunny Ee

Date of authorisation

6 February 2025