



## Report to Cabinet

<b>Date:</b>	<b>12<sup>th</sup> December 2023</b>
<b>Title:</b>	<b>King George V House – Amersham</b>
<b>Cabinet Member(s):</b>	<b>John Chilver</b> – Cabinet Member for Accessible Housing and Resources
<b>Contact officer:</b>	<b>Sarah Murphy-Brookman/John Reed</b>
<b>Ward(s) affected:</b>	Abbey, Amersham and Chesham Bois, Aylesbury North, Aylesbury Northwest

### **Recommendations:**

**This report forms part of the Councils medium term financial planning and is required to meet the savings targets set out therein and in relation to the Estate Strategy £2.4M revenue savings and capital receipts of £6M.**

**Pursuant to the Cabinet Report in January 2023:**

- 1. Bring forward the closure of the Council Offices at King George V House, Amersham:***
  - a. Blocks A and B and the KGVH CAP+ to close – the last operating day will be 12 January 2024***
  - b. Block C to close upon the opening of Chesham Library touchdown.***
- 2. For King George V House staff to be relocated to Queen Victoria Road offices, Wycombe with exceptions where there is a business rationale for an alternative base.***
- 3. Refurbish Chesham Library ground floor and 1<sup>st</sup> floor to provide an enhanced library offer on the ground floor and Council Officer touchdown space for Adult Social Care, Children’s Services/Child Protection Conferencing and Communities in accordance with the plans (appendices 1 and 2).***
- 4. The revenue and capital costs of moving, all to be forward funded from the King George V House sale proceeds.***

5. ***To approve a budget supplementary change to the MTFP for forward funding the implementation costs set out in this report and the confidential appendix.***
6. ***Market King George V House for sale and seek conditional or unconditional offers for the freehold subject to contract noting that a further report will be brought to Cabinet in 2024 once marketing and agreement of Heads of Terms has been finalised.***
7. ***Move to two Council Access Points (CAP) + locations in Buckinghamshire, one in the north (Walton Street, Aylesbury) and one in the south (Queen Victoria Road, Wycombe)***

***The CAP+ sites continue to be managed by Customer Service staff in those locations as they are in main council buildings and CSC staff provide face to face service for the more complex customer enquiries.***

8. ***Create a Council Access Point (CAP) offering in Amersham Library, ready to operate from 15 January 2024.***

***Library CAP sites are managed by Library staff and provide a more general set of service enquiries, sign posting, self-service terminals and a telephone service which give access to a priority phone line into the customer service centre.***

9. ***To note that: The January 2023 Estates Strategy report considered the potential re-provision of a small footprint of offices than currently in Amersham. This will not now be provided as Council Access Points and alternative facilities will be provided at Chesham Library as set out in this report.***

10. **This report delivers savings and capital receipt linked to MFTP.**

#### **Reason for recommendation:**

The Council set out in its MTFP (Medium Term Financial Plan) a requirement to make £2.4m pa revenue savings from efficiencies in its operational estate as well as a £6m capital receipt. The proposals contained in this report will contribute towards these targets and are expected to meet the capital receipt targets set out in the confidential appendices to this report. In addition, at the 11<sup>th</sup> July 2023 Cabinet meeting it was agreed that in light of the worsening financial position that savings should be accelerated and that there should be a strategic property and finance review brought forward to manage in year budget pressures and to examine opportunities for additional savings, income or capital receipt. The accelerated closure of King George V House forms part of those savings, which if approved would contribute to the overall savings target, generating a revenue saving and a capital

receipt and by completely exiting the site will provide additional revenue savings and capital receipt. The financial assessment is set out in the confidential appendices.

## **1. Executive summary**

- 1.1 The establishment of the unitary council created opportunities to rationalise the office accommodation inherited from the legacy councils. Furthermore, in common with other parts of the public and private sector, the organisational use of office accommodation has changed significantly post-Covid.
- 1.2 The closure of King George V House (henceforth referred to as KGVH) forms a component part of the Council's occupational estates strategy set out in the Cabinet paper of January 2023, which identified the potential closure. Data on operational usage of the Council's main buildings has been collected over a significant period of time post covid, and the occupancy data gained for KGVH shows that it is now the least occupied of the corporate buildings. Work has therefore been done to consider future options as set out in this report.
- 1.3 KGVH has the capacity to house over 526 desks on a daily basis. Data collected over a significant period of time post covid suggest it is now occupied at around 16% capacity. In addition to being significantly underutilised its closure will contribute to the carbon saving of the Council.
- 1.4 Staff consultation has occurred and the results of that consultation have been considered.
- 1.5 This initiative also considers how the Council will continue to respond and engage with the community and the proposals to extend the Council Access Points (henceforth referred to as CAPs) and also the transfer of activities currently undertaken at KGVH such as Planning Committee meetings.
- 1.6 Initiatives already completed to support the achievement of the required MTFP cost savings and improved efficiencies have included the closure of Capswood; commercial letting of Easton Street Offices and Wycombe Old Library, closure of floors at Walton Street Offices and the re-purposing of office space at The Gateway. As part of the estate's strategy, we are awaiting a decision from the Secretary of State regarding the certificate of immunity for the Council Offices at Walton Street. The closure of KGVH contributes to this programme and does not conflict with any of the work undertaken to date or planned moving forward.
- 1.7 The Council's Work Smart strategy has been designed to enable the organisation to maximise the benefits of flexible working, whilst ensuring that we meet the requirements of our residents and continue to drive improvements in productivity. Our desk-based teams in particular balance the benefits of working in the office and collaborating with colleagues in person, with the opportunity to work at home and

reduce commuting. These arrangements have become critical to the Council's ability to attract and retain staff within a competitive labour market. Our experience of this model of working over the past two years has provided us with a good dataset about the unitary council's need for office space, and we are now in a position to bring forward one of the proposals to reduce the size of the estate and the operational running costs.

- 1.8 Bringing forward the closure of KGVH offices from July 2024 to January 2024 means that we can increase our opportunities for savings in revenue and further our ability to rebalance the office estate with actual requirement.

## **2. Introduction**

- 2.1 As part of the Work Smart strategy, work has been taking place to develop the estates strategy, considering office buildings based on future need, occupancy and meeting room technology. This will facilitate collaboration and a greater desk: staff ratio.
- 2.2 The estates strategy has identified that as KGVH offices has the lowest proportion of occupancy, in year savings can be made by closing the building and providing touchdown space locally for services with clients who are based in the area. The savings plan is set out in the confidential appendices.

The site is as indicated in Appendix 4 and includes KGVH and the car park to the south-east of the building (above the law courts). The site is just over 2 acres in total.

- 2.3 In considering this plan, a staff consultation programme has been engaged; consideration has been given about community provision of services including the rolling out of additional CAPs as well as proposals for alternative space for Planning meetings, Community Boards and Licencing Committee meetings.
- 2.4 A programme comprising a short term and longer-term vacation of KGVH is proposed and set out below including the provision of an additional CAP at Amersham library.



## **KGVH**

### **Phase 1 – closure and relocation to QVR including new touchdown space at Chesham Library**

- 2.5 It is planned that staff who have KGVH as their contractual base will have a permanent change of location, which for the majority will be to Queen Victoria Road, High Wycombe (henceforth referred to as QVR), and this will take effect from 15 January 2024.
- 2.6 It is planned that KGVH, which has two sections, will close sequentially. Blocks A and B will be closed on 12 January 2024 and staff from this part of the building will move immediately to QVR offices, Wycombe.
- 2.7 Block C will close on or before 30 June 2024. Children’s and Adults Social Care staff who are based in Block C can continue to use KGVH until its final closure, after which they will move permanently to QVR offices. We are providing 18 touchdown spaces in the middle of the ground floor of Block C for other services needing to touchdown and access stored information between January and June 2024.
- 2.8 The Amersham CAP+ at KGVH will close on 12 January and the new Amersham CAP in Amersham Library will formally open on 15 January 2024. We know from visitor enquiry records that residents are already using Amersham Library as a CAP. To supplement QVR office and meeting space it is proposed that Chesham Library 1<sup>st</sup> floor is refurbished to provide touchdown space for Children’s and Adults Social Care, and conference rooms for Child Protection Conferencing, with storage for Environmental Services as highlighted by the Service as a requirement. It is intended that this becomes ready following a full internal refurbishment in June 2024, or earlier if the programme allows.

### ***Chesham Library touchdown space and hot desking at South Buckinghamshire Golf Club***

- 2.9 Library services in Chesham are currently delivered from the ground and first floor of the library. A re-modelling of the ground floor will be undertaken as part of the building refurbishment project to enable all library services to be delivered from the ground floor.
- 2.10 The new layout will provide a more accessible library service offer and the existing library CAP will be enhanced with the introduction of a private phone booth and private meeting space.
- 2.11 Chesham Library 1<sup>st</sup> floor will be refurbished to provide 18 desks for touchdown space for Children’s and Adults Social Care. There will be two conference rooms for Child Protection Conferencing including a small reception area. Staff welfare space

and storage for Environmental Health Services are also included within the floor plans.

- 2.12 For staff the first floor is accessible by a separate entrance and there is a lift for anyone requiring disability access. There will be security provided on site.

In addition to Chesham hot desking space for staff working in the south of the county will also be provided by repurposing an existing meeting room at the South Buckinghamshire Golf Course in Farnham Royal. This can be created at no additional cost using existing office furniture and IT connections to provide for up to six people at a time, noting that it would only be available during the opening hours for the course and that any external commercial bookings would continue to be honoured to maintain income (bookings/availability can be managed by uploading to the existing desk booking system). Since likely uptake is unknown, this is proposed as a trial with a review after six months. This hot desking space is part of public space (no swipe card entry) so staff will need to be mindful of data protection when using this space.

- 2.13 Once Chesham Library's refurbishment is complete, Children's and Adults Social Care will fully relocate to QVR offices, alongside using Chesham Library as touchdown and conferencing space.

2.14 ***Rates Mitigation***

Our financial assumptions assume that when vacant KGVH will attract 3 months rates free. In part because of the rating assessment of the building some of these will be achieved in this financial year and some in the next. The rating assessment is divided for the property which is somewhat unusual. We are consulting with specialist rating advisors regarding the potential to expand the rates free period for 12 months, this would be the subject of a separate report if it is possible.

2.15 ***Car Parking***

Currently the car park to the rear of KGVH and to the left-hand end of KGVH are public car parks. The value of the site would be maximised by incorporating the car park areas into the development footprint of the disposal. Currently the car park has two functions, one as longer stay which generates approximately £30k pa rising to £45k pa. The assessment from the car parking team is that this demand will move to the multi-story car park and is unlikely to materialise in a significant decrease in car park income. The other factor is that the car park has a 30-minute drop off free of charge which is used by parents to drop off their children at the day care in the leisure centre, the proposal is that the Council would look to provide this provision

outside the leisure centre.

## 2.16 **Unions Responses**

Responses have been received from Unison and AEP. A meeting has been held with Unison to discuss the issues they raised and a meeting with AEP has been offered. UNISON's issues centred around concerns that the proposal did not feature a future presence for staff in Amersham as indicated in the original Cabinet report; QVR not being a reasonable location for some staff; recommended approach to car parking at QVR and the sharing of the office plans for QVR, all of which the Council have covered in the close of consultation report and briefing. UNISON also requested a review of travel costs in terms of both monetary cost and time lost, it was explained that travel costs would be re-imbursed in line with staff's terms and conditions of employment. AEP's response centred around concerns about storage and staff travel time which are being addressed as part of the consultation process.

## 2.17 **QVR Office Space**

Using occupancy data QVR has space to be able to accommodate all KGHV staff based on both buildings' current occupancy and relocated staff will be accommodated as follows:

Service Area	KGVH Floor	QVR Floor
Children's	Block C Ground Floor	Ground Floor
Adults	Block C Ground Floor	2 <sup>nd</sup> Floor
Waste	Block A/B Ground Floor	1 <sup>st</sup> Floor
Environmental Health	Block A/B Ground Floor	Ground Floor
Planning Policy & Compliance	Block A/B Ground Floor	Ground Floor
Planning & Development	Block A/B Ground Floor	Ground Floor
Democratic Services	Block A/B Ground Floor	1 <sup>st</sup> Floor

Licensing	Block A/B Ground Floor	Ground Floor
Legal Services	Block A/B Ground Floor	1 <sup>st</sup> Floor
Corporate Business Support	Block A/B Ground Floor	Various
Housing	Block A/B Ground Floor	1 <sup>st</sup> Floor

2.18 QVR occupancy will continue to be monitored to ensure we use the space efficiently. All QVR staff have been informed about the proposed changes and been given the opportunity to provide input and feedback.

### **KGVB – Phase 2 – disposal**

- 2.19 A report will come to Members to Cabinet in the first quarter 2024 about the proposed disposal. It is envisaged that the best capital receipt complying with the terms of S123 of the Local Government Act 1972 will be on a subject to Planning basis.
- 2.20 During the planning period it is anticipated that the building will be shut down but with arrangements in place to comply with insurance and security. A rates mitigation strategy will be applied to reduce running costs. It is anticipated that final disposal will be in March 2025. Financial assumptions and planning are set out in the confidential appendices.
- 2.21 During the time the majority of the building is empty, it is anticipated secure car parking will be provided for car parking teams and waste teams (approximately 10 vehicles) until alternative provision is found. The parking team will remain in the Lodge until at least June 2024 and until alternative arrangements are found.



## **Council Access Points**

### **Introduction**

- 2.22 As part of the arrangements for the new unitary council a commitment was made to residents to provide local access to Council services through a network of CAPs primarily based in Council libraries. These 11 Library CAPs are supplemented by 3 CAP+ which are located in our 3 main offices.
- 2.23 This proposal will reduce our CAP+ provision down to two – one in the North of the County in Walton Street, Aylesbury and one in the south of the county in QVR, High Wycombe and will increase our library CAPs to 10 with the addition of Amersham library in the Chilterns Lifestyle Centre.
- 2.24 As part of this proposal there will be a communications plan both locally in the Amersham and Chesham areas but also across the County to promote CAPs – as well as other ways to contact the council – as the original launch campaign was stood down due to Covid.

### **Amersham CAP+ closure.**

- 2.25 As part of the KGVH review Officers have considered whether council owned properties or partner properties in the area could be utilised as a CAP+. The key issue is that if a CAP+ presence was to be maintained in Amersham, separate to the KGV building, it would require an investment such as rent, refurbishment, relocating staff to manage the space, security provision and technology installation and maintenance, all of which would reduce the estate saving and potentially require capital investment.
- 2.26 A detailed review of the Amersham CAP+ usage has been undertaken, the details are set out below, and the conclusion is that with a targeted communications campaign that the majority of resident enquiries can be dealt with either at Amersham Library CAP, or Chesham library CAP.
- 2.27 Relocation of the face-to-face service in Amersham from the KGVH office to the library will ensure a continued presence in Amersham with general and signposting services. The new Amersham Library CAP will have an enclosed phone booth to enable customers to access specialist support from Customer Service Agents from a private space.
- 2.28 Taken together the proposal is therefore to move to two CAP+ sites in Walton Street and Wycombe and create a CAP offering in the Amersham Library (in the Chiltern Lifestyle Centre opposite KGVH).

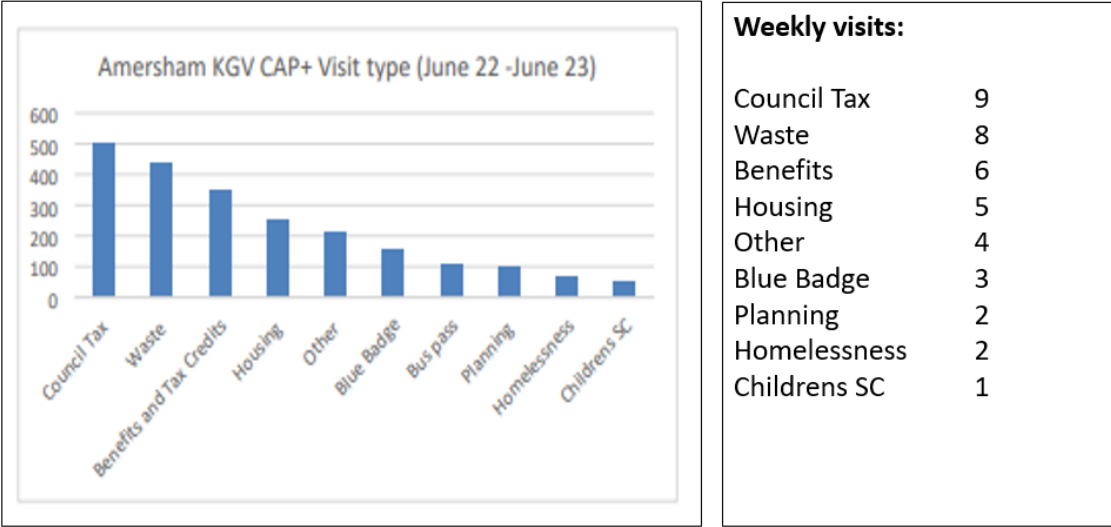
- 2.29 A review of the KGVH cap usage – set out further detail below – has been undertaken to understand why residents are accessing Council services and on the basis of this analysis we are confident that these proposals, supplemented by a communications campaign, will provide suitable albeit different service provision.
- 2.30 Communication in the run up to the closure will be key and customers will be made aware by Customer Service agents, through a set of new leaflets; face to face briefing and help and a broader communications campaign before closure that Chesham Library CAP will be able to assist with general and signposting services along with Amersham Library CAP. The communications campaign will also explain how services can be accessed online where customers are digitally able.
- 2.31 It is also proposed that we move to a new naming convention to reduce the confusion of what takes place between a CAP+ and a CAP. All CAPs based in libraries will be known as a ‘Library Council Access Point’ and the enhanced offering at office locations will continue to be known as CAP+.
- 2.32 During the closure and refurbishment of the Chesham Library building It will be necessary to provide an interim Library CAP service from a temporary site. Informal and confidential discussions have already taken place and several community venue sites in close proximity to the library have expressed an interest in accommodating an interim Library CAP at low or no cost to the council. Arrangements will be formalised once decision to proceed is made.

### **Current KGVH CAP+ usage and alternative service provision**

- 2.33 The Amersham CAP+ is situated in the reception area of the building, resourced by Customer Service Agents on a rota basis. The offer of face-to-face services is a central part of our customer contact strategy, in particular to ensure that vulnerable residents or customers who do not have access to digital services at home are offered a supported service or use of council digital equipment.
- 2.34 KGVH CAP+ received 2501 recorded visits over the last 12 months (June 22-June 23). KGVH is the least visited CAP+ with High Wycombe and Aylesbury CAP+ receiving more visits in that time, along with Aylesbury and High Wycombe library CAPs. High Wycombe is the most visited Library CAP with 5048 recorded visits.

The graph below shows the top 10 reasons for customer visits during that time and these have generally been for simple enquiries and CSAs have confirmed that most visitors are picking up equipment (such as waste bags), dropping off documents or making payments.

## KGVH CAP+ visits and volumes – annual and weekly



**Weekly visits:**

Council Tax	9
Waste	8
Benefits	6
Housing	5
Other	4
Blue Badge	3
Planning	2
Homelessness	2
Childrens SC	1

- 2.35 Further data from July to September 2023, shows that there were 26 enquiries classified as homelessness presentations at KGV CAP+, 89 at Walton St and 166 in QVR. Those 26 at KGVH were typically younger customers who were at risk of becoming homeless, or who want to apply for housing, rather than actually being homeless.
- 2.36 The current process at KGV is that the CAP+ staff help them log into our system so that they can make a homelessness application and once that has been completed the customer is able to leave and wait to hear from the Housing Team as per normal procedures. Where someone is not able to complete our forms using our self-service terminals then the Customer Service Agent would assist them in calling the Housing team to assist them with their application over the phone. The Amersham or Chesham Library team would provide the same support were there to be any such cases presenting at the library CAP.

## Other enquiry types

2.37

Enquiry	Proposed solution
Collection of bin bags, bin boxes/caddies by residents	Align the service with the rest of the county: all orders to be placed online/via phone and sent direct to customers' homes.
Paying council tax	This ceased in April 2023. Customers are now helped to either sign up for Direct Debit or to pay at a Post Office.
Document drop off – some customers drop items into the office post box to pass to the back-office service	At Library CAP sites customers can be assisted to scan in documents to email to council service areas however libraries do not take documents for internal transfer.
Litter picking equipment collection and storage	The North also offer this service from Pembroke Road but do not require customers to return the equipment.  Recommendation to align the services and inform residents that they should retain the items.

### Library CAP staff – refresher training

2.38 To support Library CAP staff at Amersham and Chesham, refresher training will be provided. Customer Services at KGV, who currently run the CAP+, will provide detailed training and hand-over sessions with staff in the Amersham and Chesham library to discuss the customers who tend to visit, types of enquiries and advice on how to manage these enquiries and how to refer enquiries into the Customer Contact Centre or to the CAP+ at Wycombe or Aylesbury.

### CAP Communication Plan

2.39 A communications campaign, including flyers and posters to be situated in KGV, is being prepared to ensure that all customers who regularly visit the CAP+ are aware of the planned move and the alternative provisions on offer to them.

## Other information

### 2.40 Office Occupancy

Data on operational usage of the Council's main buildings has been collected manually over a significant period of time post covid, and this occupancy data gained for King George V House shows that it is the least occupied of the corporate buildings, as outlined below:

*A review of the usage of the main legacy offices provided the following data:*

Capacity and Occupancy Rates			
	Total number of desks	Average Daily Occupancy Jan 23 – July 23	Percentage Occupancy
Gateway (Aylesbury)	374	123	33%
Walton Street (Aylesbury)	1,114	437	39%
QVR (High Wycombe)	327	71	21%
KGVB (Amersham)	526	88	16%

### 2.41 The timeline for the closure of King George V House is as below:

25 <sup>th</sup> September 2023	Consultation launched with staff
31 <sup>st</sup> October 2023	End of staff consultation
12 <sup>th</sup> January 2024	KGVB Blocks A&B close
15 January 2024	Staff move to Queen Victoria Road, Wycombe
Jan to June 2024	Block C ground floor occupied by Children's and Adults Services; hotdesking space for all Services provided
By June 2024	Chesham Library 1 <sup>st</sup> floor becomes available for Children's and Adults Services, along with storage for Environmental Health
By June 2024	Children's and Adults Services move to Queen Victoria Road, Wycombe
By June 2025	Retention Schedule completed and heritage assets moved to Wycombe or Aylesbury
30 <sup>th</sup> June 2024	KGVB Block C closes
June 2024 – June 2025	Disposal timescale and mitigation of costs subject to Planning.

## 3. Other options considered

3.1 Letting as offices – in the current challenging climate, the market for letting has been severely affected and is insufficiently robust to proceed with this option. Occupiers are seeking quality accommodation and the building would need significant capital expenditure to make it attractive to an office occupier.

- 3.2 Closing of QVR offices – we need a corporate presence in the south of the county, and a base for direct services to meet the needs of the public. QVR offices was more recently refurbished than KGVH and has sufficient space to accommodate the staff transferring to this office. QVR is also generating income as we have tenants in occupation.
- 3.3 Moving operations to one of the Aylesbury offices – as above a corporate presence is needed in the south of the county to serve the public.
- 3.4 Do nothing – this is not the recommended option. The Council set out an ambition in the Unitary Business Case to achieve operational savings from its estate. The estate is under utilised and not undertaking these proposals will continue to see space being provided that is not needed to assist the organisation.

#### **4. Legal and financial implications**

- 4.1 Local authorities are given powers under the Local Government Act 1972 to dispose of land in any manner they wish, including sale of their freehold land. The main constraint is that the disposal must be for the best consideration reasonably obtainable pursuant to section 123(1) of the Local Government Act 1972.
- 4.2 The Council's Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) already includes revenue savings of £2.4m from the operational estate, and a net capital receipts target of £6m from KGVH. If these savings are not delivered, the Council will need to identify alternative savings in order to deliver a balanced budget, as set out in the Unitary Business Case.
- 4.3 **Implementation costs** Set out in confidential Appendix 3
- 4.4 **Revenue Savings:** The Revenue Savings which are projected are set out in the Confidential appendices and will contribute towards the Councils Medium Term Financial targets.

#### **Director of Legal & Democratic Services comment (Nick Graham)**

- 4.5 Service Director, Legal has read and noted report.

#### **Section 151 Officer comment**

- 4.6 The Revenue savings and net Capital Receipt from the Closure are projected to be in line with the MTFP target. The costs of the move can be funded from the expected

capital receipt from the sale of the site, and this paper includes the Cabinet Recommendations to include this in the MTFP.

## **5. Corporate implications**

### **5.1 HR**

A formal consultation has been held with employees whose contractual location is currently KGVH and employees who have a contractual location elsewhere but choose to work from Amersham for business or personal reasons have also been consulted with. Employees have been invited to comment on the proposals and 1-1 meetings have been held with their Head of Service where the employee has requested it.

All requests to relocate to an office other than QVR have been considered in consultation with Heads of Service and decisions have been based on business needs to ensure consistency. The outcome is that a relatively small number of employees will be accommodated in offices in Aylesbury. This is largely due to them already working from an Aylesbury office with other members of their team.

All employees have a mobility clause in their contract of employment which allows the Council to require them to relocate to other offices following appropriate consultation. Pending Cabinet approval, each employee will be issued with a variation to contract letter informing them of their new contractual location.

### **5.2 Climate change**

King George V House has the second highest electrical and gas use of the Council's occupied office portfolio. NCO in Walton Street is the highest by virtue of being the largest occupied building.



## Carbon efficiency usage

	kWhs Building Total	£'s per annum Building Total	TCO2e per annum Building Total	Carbon Emission Contribution (1 = highest; 4 = lowest)	Occupancy (Apr '21-Mar '22)	TCO2e per annum per occupant	Carbon Emission Contribution per occupant (1 = highest; 4 = lowest)
King George V House	1,322,176	£ 271,714.00	268	3	19,927	0.0134275	2
The Gateway	1,061,422	£ 317,837.00	232	2	21,317	0.0108772	3
Queen Victoria Road	924,743	£ 204,932.81	190	4	12,296	0.0154368	1
Walton Street	3,040,464	£ 490,935.00	593	1	76,912	0.007705	4

### 5.3 IT

There is a data centre in the basement of KGVH that will need to be decommissioned, and IT colleagues are aware of this requirement. The decommissioning will take place by December 2024, as contracts are in place until that time.

With staff moving from KGVH to QVR, Wycombe, a review of what IT equipment needs to be provided at QVR is being carried out. With staff using different legacy laptops and screens the offices will need to be set up correctly. Revised floorplans will identify the exact requirements and IT will be responsible for ensuring the relevant equipment is set up.

### 5.4 Value for money

The proposals in this report also support the ambitions of our Corporate Plan to be “realistic and focus on greater efficiency and value for money” and that “we will manage our assets to create long term benefits and additional income reducing our dependency on the taxpayer and protecting front line services.”

### 5.5 Equalities Impact Assessment


There is a current equalities impact assessment which has been developed for the estate’s strategy (see appendix 5)



## **6. Local councillors & community boards consultation & views**

- 6.1 Cabinet Member is supportive of the Direction of Travel.
- 6.2 The Member support group are supportive of the disposal of KGVH. Members and Local Members have been briefed on this proposal and feedback provided.
- 6.3 The Community Board Manager confirmed that no meetings for the board take place at KGVH and therefore there are no relocation requirements; the board Chairman and members were informed about the proposals as part of the member briefings.
- 6.4 Planning meetings will be moved to QVR as will any in person Licencing meetings.

## **7. Communication, engagement & further consultation**

- 7.1 In addition to the consultation with staff contractually located to KGVH, noted above, a briefing about the proposals and likely changes to office layout was given to staff based at the QVR offices. Any issues or concerns raised have been included in the overall staff feedback.
  - 7.2 Two briefings were held with members prior to the start of the consultation with staff – the first was with members local to Amersham and the second with all members.
  - 7.3 The proposal to relocate committees currently run from KGVH was discussed with committee chairmen and no adverse feedback was received.
  - 7.4 Key partners written to in confidence about the proposal to close the office were: Thames Valley Police; Bucks Fire and Rescue Service; SCAS; Community Impact Bucks; Citizens Advice; BOB ICB; BMKALC; Chesham Town Council and Amersham Town Council.
  - 7.5 Comments were received from Thames Valley Police and Bucks Fire and Rescue Service, both of whom said that closure of KGVH would not present them with any operational issues.
  - 7.6 Due consideration was given to a consultation with residents about the closure of KGVH. The decision not to consult with residents as part of a formal public consultation was based on two premises:
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- a. A Library CAP would be re-provided in Amersham at an alternative location, as detailed above, with other mitigations put in place for services not provided by a library access point and considered as part of the EqIA (appendix 5).
- b. The Gunning Principle (the principles that determine legitimate consultation) around “intelligent consideration” states that information “must relate to the consultation and must be available, accessible, and easily interpretable for consultees to provide an informed response”. Given that the driver for the closure of the office base is financial, with a requirement to make savings, residents would need to be presented with a wide range of financial information in order to suggest legitimate alternatives for finding the savings.

## **8. Next steps and review**

- 8.1 Work with the KGV closure project team and communications team to create a single communications plan to ensure that all stakeholders are informed of the change in service delivery and location of alternative offerings.
- 8.2 Agree where the litter picking equipment is to be stored.
- 8.3 Agree if Post Box at Amersham and Chesham Library CAPs can be included in the collection schedule and install boxes.
- 8.4 Progress the refurbishment of Chesham Library. Property Services have engaged with affected services, including Communities, on this project and appointed consultants to work on plans. These are close to being signed off and following this and agreement of costs, the refurbishment of the space will be underway.
- 8.5 Facilitate the move of staff contracts from the base of KGVH to QVR, Wycombe. HR are engaging with colleagues on this and will continue to do so post consultation.
- 8.6 Facilitate the move of staff and equipment in line with the proposals and following engagement with Directors and Heads of Service. This is already underway.

### **Your questions and views (for key decisions)**

If you have any questions about the matters contained in this report, please get in touch with the author of this report. If you have any views that you would like the cabinet member to consider, please inform the democratic services team. This can be done by email to [democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk](mailto:democracy@buckinghamshire.gov.uk).

# Appendix 1

Chesham Library Floor Plan, Ground Floor - Non confidential

# Appendix 2

Chesham Library Floor Plan – First Floor - Non confidential

# Appendix 3

Implementation Costs - **Confidential**

# Appendix 4

KGVH Site Plan – Non confidential

# Appendix 5

Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) – Non confidential

