BABERGH DISTRICT COUNCIL

From: Communities and Public Access	Report Number: **S63**
To: Council	Date of meeting: 20 September 2016

FUTURE MODEL FOR PUBLIC ACCESS INCLUDING ACCOMMODATION

1.   Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to set out options and a strategy to deliver a future Public Access operating model for the councils. This encompasses a new Public Access Strategy and options for future accommodation for the councils and outlines options for the existing office sites in Hadleigh and Needham Market, should either or both be vacated.

The Public Access Strategy takes a whole system approach and supports collaborative work with partners in order to enable communities to do more for themselves, where they can or as they may do already, generating less demand on public services. Together with developing self-service options, this will mean we can focus more attention on those that really need our help.

2.   Recommendations

2.1   To agree the principles of the emerging Public Access Strategy as set out in Section One page 8 to 18.

2.2   To agree one of the four accommodation options available as set out below for the co-location of the Councils headquarters. The options and the detailed business case of each are set out in Section Two page 19 to 28

(a)   Option 1 – Locate to Hadleigh offices, or

(b)   Option 2 – Locate to Needham Market offices, or

(c)   Option 3 – Share accommodation in Endeavour House with Suffolk County Council and other public sector partners, or

(d)   Option 4 – Build a new building for the councils.

2.3   To consider and note the key information available including the indicative timetable relating to the development of the Hadleigh site, contained in Part II of Paper S63.

2.4   That the Strategic Director, in conjunction with the Leaders of the councils, be authorised to make any minor changes to the recommendations as set out above as may be necessary.

3.   Financial Implications

3.1   The overall aims of the Public Access Strategy are to transform our services to be more efficient and reduce cost to both councils and the public, through delivering effective self-service options. Where up-front investment is needed this will be on an invest-to-save basis as identified in our Medium Term Financial Strategy. The costs and savings associated with the Public Access Strategy (both revenue and capital) will be refined over the coming weeks and included in the proposed budgets for 2017/18 and beyond. However, the largest spend associated with the delivery of the strategy is likely to be ICT, of which a substantial proportion has already been incorporated and approved in the Capital Programme.

3.2   The full financial implications in relation to the accommodation options are explained in detail in Section Two of this report.

3.3   The financial implications in relation to the site options are explained, partly in Section Three of this report and partly in the Part II confidential paper, where commercially sensitive information is contained.

4.   Legal Implications

4.1   The Council has the legal powers to carry out and give effect to the recommendations as set out in this report.

4.2   The General Power of Competence (GPC) was introduced by the Localism Act 2011 (the Act), and took effect in February 2012. In simple terms, it gives Councils the power to do anything an individual can do provided it is not prohibited by other legislation.

4.3   The scope and some limitations of the General Power are set out in sections 1 to 6 of the Localism Act 2011. In summary, the GPC enables Councils to do things -

(a) an individual may generally do

(b) anywhere in the UK or elsewhere

(c) for a commercial purpose or otherwise, for a charge or without a charge

(d) without the need to demonstrate that it will benefit the authority, its area or persons resident or present in its area (although in practice councils will want to realise such benefits)

But there are some limitations on the General Power, either because they are not things which an individual can do or because they are excluded by the Act.

The GPC will not:

(a) provide councils with new powers to raise tax or precepts or to borrow

(b) enable councils to set charges for mandatory services, impose fines or create offences or byelaws, over and above existing powers to do so and

(c) override existing legislation in place before the Localism act 2011.

4.4   Where using the GPC for charging or trading purposes, the recipient should agree to the service being provided, the income from charges should not exceed the cost of provision and, where things are done for commercial purposes, this must be done through a specified type of company.

4.5   Notwithstanding the limitations outlined above, the GPC remains a broad power.

7.6   The Local Government Act 1972 (the Act), allows Councils to dispose (or acquire land if necessary) of land held by them in any manner they wish.

7.7   However, subject to section 123 of the Act states that except with the consent of the Secretary of State, a Council shall not dispose of land under this section, otherwise than by way of a short tenancy, for a consideration less than the best that can reasonably be obtained.

7.8   Accordingly, it is considered best practice not to dispose of land without an independent valuation.

5.   The Decision

5.1   Work has been ongoing since 2013 on the Public Access and Accommodation Strategies. As part of this activity seven options have been rationalised to four and a full options appraisal for those four options have been worked up and are presented in this report.

5.2   Members should be mindful of the aims and objectives of the Joint Strategic Plan, the Medium Term Financial Strategy and the future sustainability of both councils in taking their decision today.

5.3   Therefore in taking its decision on the matters in this report there will be an opportunity for all members to debate the principles of the emerging Public Access Strategy and the options available for the headquarters Accommodation. However, there will not be an opportunity to move amendments (other than minor typographical or corrective changes) to the options available for the Headquarters Accommodation for the reasons said above.

6.   Risk Management

6.1   This report is most closely linked with the following Councils' Corporate / Significant Business Risks as detailed below from the Corporate Risk register.

Risk details	Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact	Score
Public Access Strategy: Section One				
2a: Failure to understand our local businesses and their needs and failure to engage and support them to thrive	Open for Business approach/programme; Networking with Chambers of Commerce and Local Enterprise Partnership; Research into local businesses; Connect businesses to Growth Hub	2	3	6

Risk details	Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact	Score
5a: Failure to develop our use of technology to enable us to be efficient and cost effective in everything we do.	Strategic ICT resource from SCC now part of Senior Leadership Team / Consolidating mobile and telephone technology to enable staff to work more flexibly / Continuing to integrate applications to allow systems and procedures to be consolidated to make joint teams more efficient and resilient / Alignment of strategy with SCC to make investment under 4 key themes of the cloud, mobile working, big data and social and collaboration tools.	2	3	6
5b: Failure to convert our data into accurate, up to date and easy to interrogate insights, evidence and intelligence that supports delivery of the strategic priorities and failure to adequately protect the data that we hold	Data mapping exercise to provide a register of information and their attributes / Internal Audit to undertake periodical Information Assurance Audit compliance / New information sharing intranet launched / Work with Suffolk partners to join up information held	3	3	9
5g: Failure to implement more efficient and effective public access arrangements	MITIGATION: Development of a new public access model / Maximising use of digital technology / Self-service capabilities supplemented with supported assistance / Understand customer base / Introduction of customer relationship officers / Complement "open for business" approach / Involvement of customers in design	2	3	6
Accommodation and Site Options				
4c: Failure to make best use of land	Map public sector estate and share with partners; Take	3	3	9

Risk details	Mitigation	Likelihood	Impact	Score
and buildings across Suffolk System	opportunities to co-locate with others; Develop for delivery of homes and jobs			
5f: Failure of the Councils to become financially sustainable in response to funding changes	MITIGATION: Continued development of the strands within the Medium Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) / Alignment of resources to priorities / Use of one-off funding to change the business model and support functions during change / Early identification of initiatives for the 2017/18 budget / Engagement of councillors to understand options / Modelling and analysis to understand impact	2	4	8

6.2   Other key risks associated with accommodation options are set out below in Section Two at page 19.

7.   Consultations

7.1   Our consultation and communications plan is detailed below. It includes all service users and local communities using our services; all councillors; communities in Hadleigh and Needham Market through their respective town councils, and our workforce.

7.2   The plan in place supports the delivery of the Public Access and Accommodation Strategy by providing appropriate messages to those impacted or that need to be involved in the decisions about future delivery. This plan covers all stakeholders; residents, businesses, staff and communities. A summary of the plan is given below and covers ways in which we have and will continue to communicate our Public Access and Accommodation Strategy and its developments. It covers activities leading up to the decisions contained in this paper and the subsequent activities including developing and designing new digital services for, and with the public.

7.3   **Objectives of communications and consultations**

(a) To support the Public Access Programme through timely, interactive, internal and external communications.

(b) Ensure consistency by establishing the key messages and ensuring all information is the same throughout each communication.

(c) Ensure all communications are jargon-free and in plain English.

(d) Stakeholder mapping to identify key stakeholders, both internal and external.

(e) Set principal channels of communications for each audience.

(f) Highlight elements of the Public Access Programme that will impact specific stakeholder groups.

(g) Provide opportunities for two-way communications – where necessary to give key stakeholders and audiences the opportunity to ask questions and receive answers.

(h) Identify key milestones for communications activities.

7.4 **Components of the Communications Strategy and Plan**

(a) Key audiences and stakeholder groups

(b) Key messages

(c) Internal and external channels

(d) Approach and timescales

(e) Governance

(f) Monitoring, measurement and feedback mechanisms

7.5 **Communications Activity**

Communication and consultation has been ongoing throughout the life of the development of the Public Access Strategy and the accommodation review, for approximately the past three years.

Recently there have been a number of communications via face-to-face meetings including the monthly Employee Forums, joint Union and HR meetings, staff briefings by the Leaders of the Councils on 24 July and 3 August, and presentations to all Members through their political groups. Public Access and Accommodation items have been added as 'standing items' to the agenda for every meeting of the Senior Leadership Team, Extended Leadership Team and Corporate Managers' Network.

Updates have also been provided regularly through our established internal communications channels of the 'Working Together' fortnightly email update and the CONNECT intranet site. Information also featured in the August edition of the 'Town and Parish Council Newsletter'.

A "post-decision" timetable of activity has been drawn up to support the second phase of the programme from 26 September until the end of October, again to ensure all stakeholders are kept informed through all available channels. During this period, a detailed programme of communications for the subsequent phases will be produced, focusing on continued information-sharing, greater engagement and wider involvement.

8.   Equality Analysis

8.1   The initial Equality Impact Assessment that has been carried out is at Appendix A. It examines which protected classes might be affected by the implementation of the Public Access Strategy and decisions about future headquarters accommodation.

8.2   The initial assessment highlights that all protected classes may be affected and recommends that a further assessment is carried out alongside future work on the Public Access Strategy implementation plan, and to support any accommodation moves, to make sure any negative impacts are identified and sufficiently mitigated.

9.   Shared Service / Partnership Implications

9.1   This strategy is supporting the ambitions and objectives of the Transformation Challenge Award (TCA), developing collaborative working with partners across the whole Suffolk System on new Public Access arrangements and reducing the public sector estate across the county.

10.   Links to Joint Strategic Plan

10.1   The Public Access vision is to create cohesive, sustainable and empowered communities that can thrive and become more resilient. It therefore encompasses, how we work with our communities, the tools we need to support us, the changes we need to make to services to enable this and where we will locate our services.

10.2   The aim of the Public Access Strategy is to support us to deliver the outcomes in the Joint Strategic Plan and support us to be enabled, efficient, flexible, agile, innovative, collaborative and accessible. It takes a whole system approach and supports collaborative work with partners in order to enable communities to do more for themselves, generating less demand on public services. Together with developing self-service options, this will mean we can focus more attention on those that really need our help.

10.3   This report supports the delivery of the following specific Joint Strategic Plan aims:

(a) More efficient public access arrangements

(b) Digital by design

(c) Making best use of land and buildings across the Suffolk system

(d) Community led solutions to deliver services and manage assets

This Public Access Strategy and the accommodation options are fundamental to supporting the delivery of the Joint Strategic Plan. Both will support the creation of an enabled and efficient, customer focused organisation that works in and with its communities.

11.   Section One: Public Access Strategy

11.1   **Part 1: Vision for Public Access and the case for change**

The world of government and the public service sector is being transformed by technology, new ways of working, a severely constricting financial environment and public expectations.

We cannot stand still. We have to enable our communities to become more resilient and to rely less heavily on public sector services and resources. To do this we must develop our communities and use new technologies, such as SMS text messaging and new call centre technology, to establish improved ways of working that are better for our residents, simpler for our staff and cheaper for the councils.

Our vision is for the councils to have much improved public access arrangements, making it easy for anyone to do business with the Councils through channels that:

(a) Are effortless to navigate

(b) Promote individual and community self service

(c) Are available when the customer requires them

(d) Make work more straightforward and enjoyable for our staff

(e) Reduce confusion for the public about who does what across the Suffolk System

This new Public Access Strategy devolves control and responsibility. It fosters community resilience and will enable us to learn from each interaction. It is customer focused, and promotes an evidenced understanding of the bespoke requirements of individuals, a culture of collaboration and continuous refinement of the way we do business.

11.2   **Part 2: Current Position**

The current ways the public access the councils' services are antiquated, confusing, difficult and bureaucratic. To achieve the Councils' Joint Strategic Plan ambitions, these must be transformed and resources refocused in line with public demand, need and vulnerability.

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils currently have many different ways for the public to make contact. There are face to face service points in the council buildings at Needham Market and Hadleigh and in Sudbury at the Sudbury Advice Centre. These deal with the very low volumes of unannounced walk-in demands to make payments, or with enquires about any council services. This is supplemented by individual services who may visit residents or businesses, have duty rotas or make appointments for customers to come and see them, for example, to seek planning advice.

Alongside this face to face provision the public can make contact via telephone, although we know that often it can be difficult to get an answer and / or to get to the right person to answer an inquiry. There are many numbers publicised and some arrangements that appear confusing from the outside. There are two switchboards,

as well as call centre at Hadleigh that takes calls for services including benefits, council tax and housing repairs for Babergh. Calls about housing repairs for Mid Suffolk are taken elsewhere. For waste collection questions a customer needs to call the depot in Stowmarket. For planning, building control and other services separate numbers are published for the individual departments. This arrangement is inefficient, unproductive and presents a muddled picture from a customer perspective. Public enquires are often misdirected creating dissatisfaction, for customers, frustration for staff and additional call volumes.

There are generic email boxes that are managed by some service teams to answer electronic enquires. Some services have developed online electronic services, for example, an online benefits application. However, there is not a consistent approach. Additionally, online services are not integrated with the back office and are difficult to locate on the current websites. The websites do not support access via mobile technology despite approximately 40% of users accessing our sites in this way.

As we have no Customer Relationship Management (CRM), system we cannot be insight and intelligence led because we do not currently have data to help us fully understand the customer contact landscape. However, the current levels of contact that are measured across various channels are as follows:

Channel	Total contacts / users (1st June – 31st July)	Average contacts per day (in line with opening hours)
Face to Face (at Needham and Hadleigh receptions)	1,206	28
Telephone Calls (to Call Centre)	22,263	518
Website Sessions	155,456	2,548

Our current operating model relies heavily on customers contacting us. This can create inequality as arrangements are not tailored or designed around those in need who may struggle to make contact or come to us.

In summary, current arrangements for public access are expensive, confusing, complex and frustrating for residents, businesses, staff and councillors. We do not systematically collect or collate detailed customer based information nor do we have data and insight about how often individuals contact us, or what they contact us for. Neither do we have data that supports understanding and designing services around individual residents' needs.

11.3 **Part 3: Future Arrangements**

The traditional model of public sector service delivery is obsolete. The Joint Strategic Plan recognises this and contains a commitment to deliver more efficient Public Access arrangements. The aim of the Public Access Strategy is to support

us to deliver these outcomes in the Joint Strategic Plan and to become enabled, efficient, flexible, agile, innovative, collaborative and accessible. It takes a whole system approach and supports collaborative work with partners in order to enable communities to do more for themselves, generating less demand on public services. Together with developing self-service options this will mean we can focus more attention on those that really need our help.

The Joint Strategic Plan sets out a new understanding of our purpose in the community, of how and where we can add most value. It states that:

(a) We will introduce customer relationship officers who will ensure our customers and residents receive the appropriate support for their needs.

(b) We will undertake work to understand our customer base to maximise lower-cost digital access and to make sure that the ways our customers can access us are the most efficient and effective from both perspectives.

(c) We are providing an 'Open for Business' approach to our business customers to make sure they get the right support.

Our proposed Public Access Strategy builds from this and from an understanding that our purpose is to:

(a) Support individuals and communities to become self-serving wherever possible

(b) Better target our resources by providing tailored support to people that need it and not to those that don't

(c) Be consistently easy to do business with looking to make it easier still.

The diagram below illustrates the proposed operating model.

Public Access – What it will look like
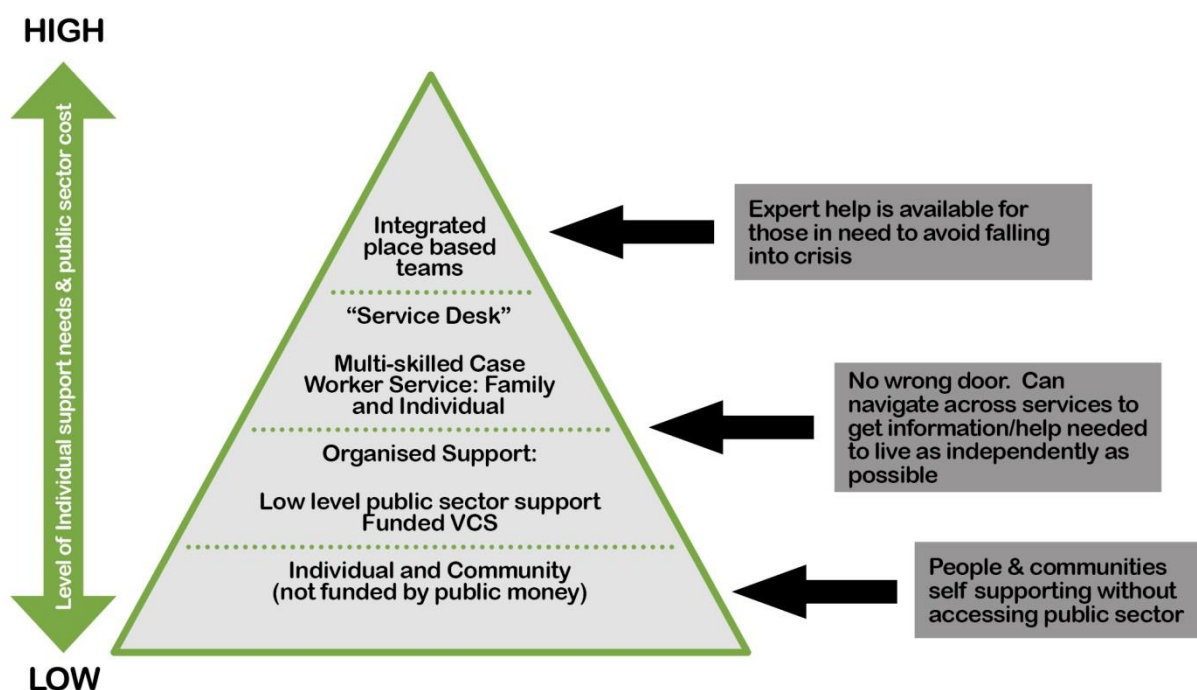
(Joint Strategic Plan, page 23)

Successful operation of this model will require us to get better at understanding:

(a) Our different customer segments and how we can tailor our offer to give people what they value (which will vary according to segment) and how we focus resources towards those in need and the vulnerable.

(b) What we mean by a customer focussed culture and how we use this to drive efficiency and productivity.

(c) How we make things easy for our customers and staff. Easier is cheaper and better.

(d) What the public value from us and what is not important.

(e) The power of data, technology and insight through closer collaboration with our ICT partners at Suffolk County Council.

(f) The importance of driving compliance and consistency in the way we work, requiring a move away from old ways of working to a new operating model.

(g) Identifying efficiencies and improvements by developing and using a consistent change methodology that supports agile.

(h) How we can eliminate avoidable contact, failure demand and change customer behaviour to reduce contact and costs.

(i) How system wide interventions across the public sector can reduce costs.

12. Our Five Key Access Channels

Our strategy is based around five main access channels. Each of these will remain available for the full term of this strategy. However, through deepening our insight into customer capability and behaviour, and supporting communities to support themselves we will promote a shift towards more productive channels by stimulating customer interest in easier ways of doing business with us. All channels will be developed based on the whole Suffolk System so that over time complexity about 'who does what' for the customer is reduced.

12.1 Face to Face

Our current offices aren't easily accessible to those people located some distance from the offices or in locations not well connected to either Hadleigh or Needham Market. However, the Councils must maintain a face to face service option. It is recommended that we provide one access point in each district and that opportunities to share this with other public sector partners, for example the Job Centre and town councils are identified to maximise the use of the public sector estate and minimise the Councils' costs. These access points are separate from locations in the districts where place based teams described below might be located.

The service points should provide facilities for staff or members to meet the public by appointment and have the facilities to use Skype and other technology to connect to officers at the Headquarters building to improve access and reduce

travel costs and time. We might need to supplement this with a mobile visiting offer for those people that need it. Our profiling work would help us identify these residents initially and over time as individual requirements change.

The advantages of developing digital services as detailed below, will reduce reliance on face to face access points as anyone should be able to access services from anywhere. The face to face points will play an important role in supporting people to get online and use digital services. Although in low bandwidth areas this is not always possible, and not everyone has access to a computer, it does mean that residents can use libraries or be supported by their friends and family to use online services. At the moment between 10% to 15% of all online benefits and council tax reduction applications are completed on the claimants, friends or family member's computer.

12.2 Telephone

In the short to medium term, the most common access channel will continue to be the phone. In order to reduce the confusion created by the plethora of current numbers and to make sure the cost of calling the council is only charged at local call rate it is recommended that the Councils move to one phone number which is an '03' number and channelled exclusively through our customer contact centre, which will probably be located at one of our satellite offices.

The contact centre will be supported by new telephone technology and MS Dynamics CRM that will enable us to create and build a single view of each customer making each interaction an opportunity to learn more about that customer.

The councils' main number will be supported by IVR (interactive voice response) technology that will give options to connect directly to teams or people with the expertise to answer the enquiry. Over time, we can develop the skills and knowledge base of our customer services team in order to deal with a broader range of transactions and in more depth, potentially removing the need for the IVR options.

Centralising telephone contact in one call centre will give us an understanding of call handling times, abandonment rates, types of enquiry and the effectiveness of transfers to other parts of the business. It will also enable us to develop a suite of management reports that illustrate the overall contact landscape.

Directing telephone contact through one number opens up our ability to provide flexible working options for all staff.

12.3 Email

We will create and promote a single email address for the councils. Emails to this address will be received in our contact centre and blended into all the transactions to be handled by our contact centre agents through our CRM system. Handling all email contact in this way will enable us to improve the service we offer by enabling us to produce management information on contact received and response times and quality.

Again, by managing emails through one address we can consider increasing our hours of operation to offer and enhance our ability to provide flexible options for staff.

12.4 **Online - Digital Services**

A large proportion of residents will already be conducting much of their household business online, for example, banking, paying bills or shopping. People prefer to do business this way because organisations have made it the easiest, most effortless option. It can also deliver significant savings as illustrated below freeing up resources to devote to those with complex needs.

Socitm (Society of IT Managers) Insight March 2012 Cost per contact channel for enquiry

Access Channel	Average Cost per enquiry
Face to Face	£8.62
Telephone	£2.83
Self Service – Website	£0.15

We know that our digital services will need to be developed to take account of the low broadband speed in some parts of the districts. We can do this, for example, by having a low bandwidth website without pictures or functions that would require faster broadband speeds to work effectively.

We will develop the use of CRM to support the development of tailored digital services. This will enable residents or businesses to log into our website and see only the information they have selected is relevant to them.

In summary we will evolve our two current websites firstly into one clearer, simpler site that improves access from mobile and tablets to the existing online services and information that the Councils' have. This site will then continue to evolve as other supporting IT projects reach completion, for example new arrangements to view and comment on planning applications will be available when that project is completed. Development will then continue with the use of CRM to allow people to log in and see their information and only what they want to view. We will always be working with our public to develop services, and be open to new advances in technology and trends, for example developing a Babergh and Mid Suffolk app if needed.

12.5 **Webchat and SMS**

Webchat is a system that allows organisations to chat to web users, whilst they are using digital services in order to support them to complete their transaction digitally, rather than give up and use the telephone. It therefore provides a rich source of information about how people interact with our digital services, for example, what they are finding difficult to locate which can be used to redesign services to make them more user friendly.

We will make webchat available via our website during normal office hours. Webchat contacts will again be blended into all other transactions handled by our

contact centre. Over time we could seek to develop our capacity to offer webchat 24/7 by utilising artificial intelligence to understand common enquiries and responses.

SMS text messaging is almost universally used to remind people that they have appointments or keep them informed if something goes wrong, like a power cut. Through our CRM system we will develop the capability to use text messaging to support service delivery in ways that are now expected of modern services.

12.6 **Integrated Place based teams**

Our objective is to become digital by design not digital only. Our plan is to complement the five main access channels with services that are designed for those who are the most in need or vulnerable supported by integrated place based teams. For example, the Sudbury Connect Project which focuses on keeping people healthy, independent and safe in their own homes through improved access to local support networks and integrated solutions to health, care and wellbeing issues.

Our approach mirrors the integrated neighbourhood health, social care, community healthcare and mental health teams where practitioners are co-located in order to provide better support for patients. These arrangements promote stronger local neighbourhood networks improving community resilience. They make it easier to support the wider public and voluntary sector network and enable people who do not meet the thresholds for formal interventions to access support (from family, friends or within the community) reducing demand on public services.

12.7 **Delivering the Public Access Strategy**

12.8 The section below details connections and elements that underpin the delivery of the Public Access Strategy.

12.9 Organisational culture drives behaviours, decisions and choices about where people place effort. It determines what people pay attention to (and what to ignore) in powerful ways that affect qualitative and quantitative performance.

12.10 There is strong evidenced correlation between culture and performance. The Councils' focus on developing a modern, networked organisation over the past 5 years echoes the research that InLoGov has done on 21st century public organisations. The approach of using Organisational Development has already involved analysing, understanding and using a mixture of 'levers' to shift the organisation. Areas such as developing leadership, organisational design, ICT infrastructure, networked projects and working, agile project management are already becoming well established within the organisation

12.11 Developing a high performing customer focussed culture will be key to delivering the public access strategy. Developing and designing digital services means we need to focus more on what our residents and communities need and ask for, not less. We will support and develop our staff as part of our organisational development plan to put residents, businesses and community needs at the centre of everything that the Councils' do.

12.12 **Service redesign using Insight**

12.13 Technology provides us with real opportunities to transform the way we work. By harnessing the power of technology and data we can gain a much better understanding of our public demand and where our resources should be targeted. It will open up opportunities to create improved ways of working moving away from a one size fits all approach to a model that responds to the actual requirements of individual residents, businesses and communities.

12.14 The key aims of all service redesign work will be to have services that:

(a) Are better for residents, businesses and communities and simpler for staff and cheaper for the Councils.

(b) Focus on people and their communities.

(c) Modernise how we work using technology.

(d) Enable digital services.

(e) Reduce unnecessary contact and demand caused by service failures.

(f) Take advantage of improving superfast Broadband access.

(g) Reduce reliance on paper documents and records.

(h) Supports channel shift and demand reduction to reduce our costs.

(i) Use insight to understand our communities and segment service provision based on need.

Over time, we will continue to identify ongoing improvement in our ways of working using research, data management and analysis.

12.15 **Digital by Design**

12.16 Digital by default is a national government programme which is underpinned by the digital service standard. Its aims are to develop digital government services and support citizens to use them, as default. For example the only way of applying for Universal Credit is online.

12.17 However our joint strategic plan sets out that we will be digital by design, not digital by default, recognising the difficulties we currently have in Suffolk with broadband coverage. It states that we will develop our use of technology to enable us to be efficient and cost-effective in everything we do.

12.18 We are developing and implementing the countywide Digital Suffolk initiative, to improve access to information and the ability to make transactions digitally. This includes:

12.19 The Cloud – providing secure, resilient, and agile data infrastructure. This means that staff can access what they need to work, from anywhere at anytime and similarly for public facing digital services.

12.20 Mobile ways of working technologies – supporting new ways of working from anywhere and role-based workstyles for example we are currently piloting tablets for environmental health rather than laptops.

12.21 Big data – enabling service modelling and analysis by turning data into intelligence in order to understand and segment customers based on need and vulnerability. This element of the strategy is central to providing services with the knowledge they need in order to target services to those that need them.

12.22 Social and collaboration tools – driving business and social productivity. This element of the strategy is to provide the council with many new technologies such as Webchat, SMS and tools to support the use of Social Media such as Facebook and Twitter to support different ways of working. This includes telephony technology in order to improve call centre management and resourcing and customer relationship management in order to manage all customer transactions through one technological platform.

12.23 Our IT strategy provided by Suffolk County Council will underpin all our efforts to transform services delivering key enablers. These include the computers staff need to do their job, Customer relationship management (CRM) to gain understanding and knowledge about why the public contact us, new call centre technology enabling a more targeted and efficient service, and mobile telephones and technology so that where ever staff are they can be contacted and connected to a resident.

12.24 **Public Access: Summary**

12.25 The public access vision is to create cohesive, sustainable and empowered communities that can thrive and become more resilient. It therefore encompasses, how we work with our communities, the tools we need to support us, the changes we need to make to services to enable this and where we will locate our services. It will require the councils to change the way things work now for the benefit of the public. The following examples illustrate where we are now and where we will be in one year's time.

Phone Enquiries:

Now – If you call us now for an enquiry the first challenge is knowing which number to use. We have many published external telephone numbers. As a consequence many of the current enquiries go through to the wrong area causing delays and frustration.

If you call the contact centre and all of our lines are busy, your call keeps ringing and our system doesn't inform us that you are waiting. So at peak times several of our calls go unanswered.

The future – we will publish a single contact number for the two councils. This will lead to an automated answering system which will allow you to choose the service you require. For those things which can be self-served, such as ordering a brown bin or paying for a service, these will be handled automatically.

Other enquiries will go to a new call centre with a modern phone system to allow us to answer your call quickly and efficiently.

Website Enquiry:

Now - Currently if you have a general enquiry and try to find an answer on our websites it is not easy to find what you are looking for. We have too many pages, much of the information is out of date and the search facility is poor.

The Future – We will have a single shared website for the two councils. The website will be designed to make it much easier for you to carry out your transactions with us. Clear up to date information, with easy to access transactions for paying or requesting services. To account for the variable internet speeds across the two districts the website will have simple icons which use very little band width and we will make the site as easy as possible to navigate and access even in slow broadband speed areas.

Benefits Claimants:

Now - As a benefits claimant living in Claydon or Freston and working part-time in Ipswich – if you visit the Shared Revenues Partnership office in the centre of Ipswich to provide evidence or ask a question – you are currently asked to travel out to Needham Market or Hadleigh to handle your enquiry.

The Future – You can submit your evidence online and most issues will be resolved on a self-serve basis via the web or an automated phone system. If you do need to see an advisor you will be able to in Ipswich, or our customer access points in the districts. For some complex cases we will provide extensive support via telephone, video link or a personal visit.

Planning Enquiry:

Now – Most planning applications are completed online via the planning portal. If necessary, you can have an appointment with a duty planner in Needham Market or Hadleigh and you have to travel to us.

The Future – We will have a single joint website, which will be kept fully up to date and easier to navigate so that more people will be able to self-serve and complete their planning enquiries online. At the customer access points in the districts appointments can be made to meet or video conference a planning officer. If you are based away from these – there will be the potential (if needed) for the planning officer to arrange to meet you at the site as they can work flexibly from one of our locally shared offices across the Public Sector.

Building Control:

Now - You can call in for an inspection and you can visit the office to talk with a Building Control Officer.

The Future – We will continue to maintain our commercial viability and competitive edge by being flexible and sensitive to all our customers. You will be able to book an inspection appointment by phone, online and if you need to see an officer, you can also do this at our customer access points. Alternatively, you could make an arrangement for them to see you nearer to home, or on-site. If you have a general enquiry you will be able to access the latest guidance and information on our new website.

Housing Repairs:

Now – housing repairs are currently handled by a contractor in Babergh and an in-house repairs team in Mid Suffolk. Contacts are mainly by phone and in Babergh these go via the call centre. In Mid Suffolk some pass through the switch board, some via the call centre, some direct to the administrators in the team and others to the work supervisors. This confusion can cause delay and frustration. Jobs are then booked with either the contractor or the repairs team.

The future – both councils have already decided to bring responsive repairs in-house through a new In-house Repairs and Maintenance service we aim to review what we repair and the service standards for this to have a common, decent homes approach in both councils. Requests will be either on-line or via a single contact number routed through the call centre. We aim to reduce the number and length of calls taken by the team freeing up resource to be able to book jobs in a more efficient manner with the most efficient routes and to monitor delivery performance to help improve productivity.

Meeting Expectations:

Now – many of our customers expect to be able to do what they want to do with us at the times that work for them. They are familiar with the service other organisations provide which enables them to order products and pay bills online or on the phone at any time of the day or night.. We only offer this facility for some services such as making planning applications.

The future - To meet the expectations of most of our residents we will provide the same simple, self-service 24hr facility.

12.26 **Public Access Strategy Key next steps**

(a)	Begin service transformation with services	Aug – Oct 2016
(b)	Development and delivery of a detailed Public Access Implementation plan including EQIA	end Sept onwards
(c)	Develop detailed plan for new face to face arrangements	Oct – Dec 2016
(d)	Develop customer insight needed to create call centre	Oct – Dec 2016
(e)	Launch new joint website	Oct – Dec 2016
(f)	New tablets, laptops and mobile phones for staff	Oct – March 2017
(g)	New call centre technology	Jan – March 2017
(h)	New paperless ways of working	Jan – March 2017
(i)	Develop CRM and start implementation	April – June 2017
(j)	New face to face arrangements in place	April - June 2017
(k)	Next iteration of joint website	Oct – Dec 2017

13. **Section Two: Headquarter Accommodation Options Appraisal**

Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils have been considering their headquarters accommodation options since the integration of the Councils two staff teams into one fully integrated workforce in 2013.

As a result of our emerging Public Access Strategy work, and as recognised by Strategy and Executive Committees in 2014, we now have an opportunity to reconsider the location for the headquarters as discussed in the accommodation review. In reports to Executive (X/51/14) and Strategy (P63), it was recognised and recommended that:

(a) The integration process was well advanced, but that there was a need to deal with a number of practical issues such as ICT and organisational development, and that an Accommodation Strategy was essential in dealing with these issues

(b) The status quo was not an option for accommodation and that the occupation of both buildings resulted in inefficiencies and costs; and was a block to full integration, and collaboration

(c) Future savings and costs were important factors, but more important was the quality of the arrangements for the public, staff, Members and partners.

(d) Future accommodation must be able to support agile working, team working and collaborative working – in essence the fourth priority of *Smaller, Smarter, Swifter*. There was a strong desire to move on from a traditional local government management style.

There are now four options which this report will consider. They are:

Option 1: Locate to Hadleigh Offices or

Option 2: Locate to Needham Market Offices or

Option 3: Share accommodation in Endeavour House with Suffolk County Council

   and other public sector partners or

Option 4: Build a new building for the Councils

14. **Strategic Context**

The historic headquarters of the Councils, in Hadleigh and Needham Market, both continue to be used to provide accommodation for staff and deliver services to communities. The two buildings offer traditional, inflexible, segmented working space and the Councils are incurring avoidable revenue and capital costs as a result of maintaining two separate office headquarters. With the likelihood of reduced traditional funding arrangements continuing and the Councils finances being stretched for the foreseeable future, it is essential that we develop an accommodation strategy and use our existing property assets to contribute towards our aim to be financially sustainable Councils.

Our current traditional approach to office accommodation provision does not support the Councils with their aims and objectives around collaboration, rationalising the public sector estate and integration of the two councils. It should be noted that Public Sector Hubs have been created in the West at West Suffolk House and in the East at Riverside to support collaboration.

15.   Options Appraisal

An options appraisal has been undertaken for each of the four options. The appraisal includes; the financial viability, benefits, disadvantages and risks. Each appraisal should be compared against the baseline case below which sets out the current shared running costs under the existing accommodation arrangements.

Description	Costs
Annual cost of current provision at Needham Market and Hadleigh combined	£1,083,885

In a table for each option presented below, information is provided about costs, where costs are estimated they are shown marked (E).

In addition there is a narrative which sets out; benefits and disadvantages. The narrative also provides additional qualitative information where it is appropriate to the options appraisal.

15.1   **Costs and Risks applicable to all options**

There will be a range of costs which apply to all options. These have not been included in the tables but are outlined below.

(a) Removal costs

(b) Costs associated with transitional arrangements, i.e. overlap of lease costs and existing arrangements or costs associated with decanting whilst building maintenance occurs.

(c) Increase in staff journey times. We will be working with staff to look at how flexible working arrangements can be used to support working from home and across the districts to mitigate the impact of additional travel to work.

(d) Provision of Green Travel plan

Risk Description	Mitigation Measures
The cost of upgrading ICT Infrastructure where not already provided for, will significantly impact on capital borrowing.	To make financial provision for these costs if Options 1 or 4
Opportunities to work with Public Sector colleagues collaboratively and in a whole system way will be more difficult	Make provision for the additional travel and resources required to work collaboratively.
If current buildings are retained, the Councils have a liable for current catch-up repairs and the ongoing repairs and improvements to any buildings in their ownership.	To make financial provision in revenue and capital programme.

The cost of re-modelling the existing building will require capital investment.	Provision will have to be made in the capital programme for the remodelling
The Councils are unable to maintain their identities if they share accommodation in a public service village.	Branding and identity will be prioritised as part of negotiations with Suffolk County Council
A suitable site may not be available immediately, applicable to option 4	Make additional financial provision and return to the options appraisal
Construction could be delayed or costs could increase, applicable to option 4	Make additional financial provision
Vacating either or both existing Headquarter sites has a socio-economic impact in Needham Market and Hadleigh	Awareness and understanding of likely impact (see section 18 below) and ensure sites are redeveloped

16.   Socio and Economic Impact

16.1   It is difficult to ascertain the exact social and economic impact on Hadleigh and Needham Market in the event that a decision is made to vacate one or both the current office sites. There are many variable factors to consider and we do not have access to how much the workforce spends in the local high streets. However, we should assume that there will be an impact through any decision that removes the HQs and the workforce from either or both locations. There has been a gradual reduction in impact on both Hadleigh and Needham Market over the last three years as both offices are not fully occupied.

16.2   There are mitigation measures that will come through from the redevelopment of either or both sites. Carter Jonas were asked to provide an overview of the social and economic impact of redevelopment of the current sites which is summarised in Appendix B.

17.   Option 1 – Locate to Hadleigh Offices

17.1   Description of the Hadleigh Offices

The Hadleigh property comprises a number of inter-linked (and listed) buildings. The accommodation is inefficient in planning terms with a significant amount of irregularly shaped space, poor circulation routes and cellularisation caused by structural walls. The specification is low, with single-glazed windows and perimeter trunking. The building was refurbished in the 1980s and has been well-maintained since. However, the inefficiency of the internal layout, combined with the Listing of the space, makes the building unsuitable in many ways for meeting key organisational objectives. Circulation throughout the buildings is poor with many restricted corridors, pinch points and changes in level.

A scheme to extend and connect the listed properties including the construction of a central, showcase, tiered council chamber was recognised with an architectural award in the 1980's for the intuitive and sympathetic manner in which the listed buildings were incorporated into a holistic scheme.

The listed building elements generally comprise a solid masonry structure with timber floors and tile covered pitched roofs. Windows throughout comprise single glazed, timber framed units.

The accommodation is heavily cellularised which is influenced by the configuration of the listed buildings. In addition, where the buildings have been extended, the structure of the extension, via a timber frame with supplemental steel tensioning, significantly constrains the internal layout which is uneconomic.

Power and data distribution is generally by perimeter trunking; air conditioning is provided to a number of isolated rooms by local units with remote external condensers.

Source LSH Report

The Hadleigh building will require substantial alteration to provide modern open plan working space, which supports an agile, networked culture. ICT infrastructure will require significant upgrade to meet the Councils IT Strategy requirements. The building will accommodate approximately 295 desks but this will mean utilising all of the available floor space, leaving very little capacity for meeting rooms and breakout space.

17.2 **Financial Viability**

Description	Costs (Revenue)	Costs (Capital)
Annual Running Costs	£470,608	
Catch- Up repairs		£365,000
ICT upgrade Costs		£500,000 (E)
Re-modelling existing building to modern standards		£1,700,000 (E)
Capital Cost of 1 Satellite Office		£100,751
Annual Running Cost of Satellite Office	£87,642	
Totals	£588,250	£2,663,751
Source LSH and Carter Jonas Reports		

17.3 **Benefits**

(a) The Hadleigh office has a fully functioning Council Chamber.

(b) Annual revenue running costs are low.

(c) Costs for one satellite office only will be required to support this option.

(d) The Councils will have a workforce in the Babergh District.

17.4 **Disadvantages**

(a) The ICT infrastructure requires significant upgrade to support the requirements of the whole workforce. The cost of upgrade has been estimated at £500,000.

(b) Changes to the way the workplace is used, headcount numbers and service delivery mean that the buildings are no longer fit for purpose. This building is inefficient, oversized, costly and in the wrong locations for service delivery.

(c) There is insufficient car parking on site for the full integrated staff team.

(d) There will be significant capital costs to re-model the existing building to a standard which supports delivery of services in an agile, networked organisation. Detailed costs are not available. However a broad estimate has been provided using an industry standard office fit out methodology.

(e) The Councils would have an ongoing financial liability for repairs and improvements to the buildings and site, to ensure they are maintained in good condition. There will also be cost implications to ensure that the working environment remains in-line and up-to-date with standards expected of office buildings as these evolve.

(f) Capital value to be achieved from the redevelopment of the site will be lost.

(g) Efficiencies, whole system working and collaborative opportunities across Suffolk would be more difficult.

(h) Public transport services to Hadleigh are limited.

(i) There will be an impact on the local economy in Needham Market through staff moving to Hadleigh.

18.   Option 2 – Locate to Needham Market

18.1 **Description of the Needham Market Office**

The property comprises a four storey listed building, (Hurstlea House) which dates from the mid 1800's and has been extended to the rear over two storeys; the Mid Suffolk Council Chamber is located within the first floor of the 1960's extension. Annexed to the listed building is a substantial, two storey office building of steel framed construction which dates from the early 1980's.

The listed building element forms office accommodation which is heavily cellularised reflecting the layout of the original dwelling house – it is therefore inefficient in terms of use and occupation. Circulation is via principal and secondary staircases and that building has no lift. The building is constructed of solid masonry, with single glazed, timber sash windows, timber doors and a slate covered pitched roof. Internally, the building is provided with carpet tile floor finishes to timber floors and surface mounted light fittings to plastered ceilings. Power and data installations are accommodated within perimeter trunking. The incoming gas supply for the whole building is located within the basement. There is no air conditioning within the building.

The 1980's element of the building is constructed via a steel frame with cavity masonry cladding; windows comprise single glazed, aluminum framed units with a

tile covered pitched roof. Internally, the building is provided with carpet tile floor finishes to concrete floors. Ceilings comprise suspended ceilings with recessed modular light units, the majority of the lighting was changed in 2012 to LED fittings. Power and data installations are accommodated within perimeter trunking and power poles. There is a central lift within the building. The incoming water and electrical supplies are located within the ground floor. There are a number of wall mounted air conditioning units located within isolated cellular rooms.

The site sprawls over a large site incorporating many separate external areas. The main entrance to the site is via the High Street and the reception is suited to this function. Visitors arriving by car use a further entrance to the rear of the property. There are substantial grounds which incorporate sections of the original, stone boundary to the settlement which falls within the listing.

There are two further, single storey, timber framed outbuildings which comprise a generator housing and external sports store.

Source LSH Report

The Needham Market building will require substantial alteration to provide modern open plan working space, which supports an agile, networked culture. The building has a significant backlog of catch up repairs. The building will accommodate approximately 295 desks but this will require utilisation of all the available floor space with limited capacity remaining for meeting rooms and breakout space.

18.2 **Financial Viability**

Description	Costs (Revenue)	Costs (Capital)
Annual Running Costs	£613,277	
Catch- Up repairs		£1,778,000
Re-modelling existing building to modern standards		£1,700,000 (E)
Capital Cost of 1 Satellite Office		£100,751
Annual Running Cost of Satellite Office	£87,642	
Totals	£700,919	£3,578,751
Source LSH and Carter Jonas Reports		

18.3 **Benefits**

(a) ICT infrastructure is in place.

(b) The site is geographically central for both Council districts and would minimise travel costs for visiting officers.

(c) Needham Market has rail and bus links.

(d) Costs for one satellite office only will be required to support this option.

(e) The Councils will maintain a workforce in the Mid Suffolk District.

18.4 **Disadvantages**

(a) Changes to the way the workplace is used, headcount numbers and service delivery mean that the buildings are no longer fit for purpose. This building is inefficient, oversized, costly and in the wrong locations for service delivery.

(b) There is insufficient car parking on site for the full integrated staff team.

(c) There will be significant capital costs to re-model the existing building to a standard which supports delivery of services in an agile, networked organisation. Detailed costs are not available. However a broad estimate has been provided using an industry standard office fit out methodology.

(d) The Councils would have an ongoing financial liability for repairs and improvements to the buildings and site, to ensure they are maintained in good condition. There will also be cost implications to ensure that the working environment remains in-line and up-to-date with standards expected of office buildings as these evolve.

(e) Capital value to be achieved from the redevelopment of the site will be lost.

(f) Efficiencies, whole system working and collaborative opportunities across Suffolk would be more difficult.

(g) There will be an impact on the local economy in Hadleigh through staff moving to Needham Market.

(h) A high level of costs relating to catch up repairs to achieve a thermal insulation standard which is acceptable is required.

19. **Option 3 – Share accommodation in Endeavour House with SCC and other public sector partners**

19.1 **Description of the Endeavour House Option**

The property consists of five floors and was built in 2003 it is located in central Ipswich alongside Ipswich Borough Council. The accommodation provides a modern open space working environment which is occupied by a range of Suffolk County Council services and other Public Sector Partners. The building has a fully functioning Council Chamber.

The Councils could lease office space in Endeavour House. The proposed lease provides for 295 desks on one floor, use of meeting rooms and facilities. In addition the Councils will have use of SCC buildings throughout the County for meetings and touch down points for officers to meet and work.

19.2 **Financial Viability**

Description	Revenue Costs	Capital Costs
Annual Running Costs inc. Lease Costs (295 desks)	£633,000	
Fit out costs		£50,000 (E)
Capital Cost of 2 Satellite Offices		£201,502
Annual Running Cost of Satellite Offices	£175,284	
Totals	£808,284	£251,502
Source LSH and Carter Jonas Reports		

19.3 **Benefits**

(a) The proposed lease agreement will enable the Councils to be flexible about the space, number of desks and facilities required over time.

(b) There will not be any financial liability for repairs and improvements to buildings or upgrade of environment to meet changing working environments.

(c) The ICT services and infrastructure are in place through existing working arrangements with Suffolk County Council.

(d) Capital value from the redevelopment of both sites can be achieved.

(e) Provides 'turn-key' access to office environment for new ways of agile 21st Century working – open plan, quiet office space with breakout areas, on site facilities

(f) The Councils will be able to access all SCC Buildings across Suffolk for workspace and meetings. This will enable staff to work across a range of places, in a flexible way.

(g) Babergh and Mid Suffolk District Councils will be located within a 'Public Sector Village' enabling a collaborative approach to service delivery

(h) Endeavour House has very good public transport links for visitors.

19.4 **Disadvantages**

(a) The Councils headquarters will not be located in their districts.

(b) Revenue costs are higher than Options 1 & 2 in terms of running costs, but the capital financing costs associated with having to refurbish the Hadleigh or Needham Market offices would not be incurred.

(c) There are costs of setting up and running two satellite offices.

20.   Option 4 – Build a new building for the Councils

20.1 **Description of the new build Option**

This option describes the costs associated with building a new headquarters for the councils. It is assumed that the site would be on the Ipswich fringe, as recommended by Lambert Smith Hampton and therefore includes the cost of setting up and running two satellite offices. The costs given below are estimated as clearly it would not be until further work commenced that a more accurate cost estimate could be provided. The costs also do not include the purchase of a site or second phase fit out.

20.2 **Financial Viability**

Description	Revenue Costs	Capital Costs
Construction Build Costs (not including land or fit out)		£7,300,000
Annual Running Costs	£500,000	
Capital Cost of 2 Satellite Office		£201,502
Annual Running Cost of Satellite Office	£175,284	
Totals	£675,284	£7,501,502
Source LSH and Carter Jonas Reports		

20.3 **Benefits**

(a) The Councils could build in any chosen location subject to land availability.

(b) The design of any new building can be tailored to aspirations to provide an environment for new ways of working – open plan, quiet office space with breakout areas, on site facilities subject to viability.

(c) Revenue running costs and repair costs will be lower.

(d) Capital value from the redevelopment of both existing sites will be achieved.

20.4 **Disadvantages**

(a) The building could take several years to complete. A site will be required, planning approval and construction could lead to a timeframe which is two to four years from point of decision.

(b) A broad estimate of costs using an industry standard office fit out methodology, which assumes a cost of approximately £4,000.00 per person. Using the benchmark of 295 desks this could be in the region of £1,7M should be added to the build costs.

(c) The capital costs for a new build will be high. Borrowing will be required to fund the capital costs. Interest and minimum revenue provision (MRP) charges have not been included in the revenue costs.

(d) The £7.5M is an estimate for build costs only and does not include the cost of land and associated development costs e.g. surveys, planning permission etc.

21. Summary table of Options 1 – 4

Option	Revenue Costs	Capital Costs
1 Locate to Hadleigh Offices	£588,250	£2,663,751
2 Locate to Needham Market Offices	£700,919	£3,578,751
3 Share accommodation with Suffolk County Council in Endeavour House	£808,284	£251,502
4 Build a new building	£675,284	£7,501,502

22. SECTION THREE: SITE OPTIONS

22.1 The attached Part II confidential report outlines the site assessment of the options for each of the current office sites at Corks Lane, Hadleigh and High Street, Needham Market, should either or both be vacated. It outlines current thinking, makes recommendations on how to take proposals forward if required, and starts to consider the potential of each site. This work will be developed fully as part of the Assets and Investments framework. Due to the commercially sensitive nature of the information this is a Part II report.

23. CONCLUSIONS

23.1 This report has presented the Public Access Strategy for the councils and four options for re-location of the Councils' headquarters building. Council is asked to:

(a) approve the emerging Public Access Strategy

(b) Choose one of the four accommodation options

(c) Note the information relating to site options contained above and in the Part II confidential report.

24. Appendices

Title	Location
(a) Equality Impact Assessment	Attached as Appendix A
(b) Socio and Economic Impact	Attached as Appendix B

25. Background Documents

Executive October 2014 X/51/14 and Strategy P63

Executive September 2015 X/36/15 and Strategy R44

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Public Access Transformation

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