

# District Council's Potential Office Relocation

# Background

Considering our office location – why now?

1. Increasingly moving council services online
  - Way of serving customers has changed
  - Accessible services 24/7 – Customer Access Strategy
  - Investment in technology, e.g. My Account
  - Less travel demands needed to visit the civic centre
  
2. Climate emergency motion
  - Strategic commitment to reduce carbon footprint
  - Current civic facility is ageing, not carbon neutral and will require increasing levels of maintenance investment

# Background

## 3. Impact of the pandemic

- Customer services are effectively being delivered remotely
- Agile working reduces need for large amounts of office space
- Fewer travel to work miles needed
- Travel to and for work cost savings to both the employee and employer

## 4. Civic facilities can be drivers of positive change

- Direct footfall
- Assist with regeneration activities – focal point
- Accessible to support those at risk of digital exclusion
- Provide confidence to the investment market

# Climate Emergency

- Council resolution (24 July 2019) included the clear strategic intent to:

***“Commit to reduce Folkestone and Hythe District Council’s estate and operations to zero net carbon by 2030.”***

- Research undertaken by Laser, commissioned in 2020 by the Environment Working Group, has demonstrated that:

***There are opportunities to reduce the Council’s carbon footprint by making changes to its own estate and operations***

- A Carbon Action Plan is currently in development – there are significant opportunities now to demonstrate brave bold leadership

# Proposal to Explore...

- 1. Establish a customer access point within Folkestone Town Centre:**
  - to provide access to services and to support the regeneration of the town
  - to support those who cannot access services on-line / remotely
  - to utilise public transport and reduce necessity for car travel for council services
  
- 2. Relocate the district council 'civic suite' to a facility that:**
  - shows leadership on the green agenda
  - reduces our operational carbon footprint
  - is more representative of current and future working practices
  - embraces agile and flexible working as the norm
  - supports the devolution agenda and positions the new facility distinctly as district-wide
  - creates a long term sustainable asset

# Next steps...

Support from cabinet members for further work to be undertaken

Resources to be used to:

- Work through the detail to scope out our needs – please give us your views at this early stage
- Consider potential location options at a strategic level
- Explore opportunities for a joint approach with partners
- Prepare a high level feasibility study then, if supported, a more detail business case which includes disposal of the current civic centre

Proposed budget & timescales:

- Feasibility considered for a decision in principle – by January 2021
- Up to £250k needed for work undertaken through 20/21 and 21/22
- Operational access point in Folkestone Town Centre – 2021/22
- Occupy a new carbon efficient building by 2023/24

# Your input

## Your views are sought on:

- Is the principle of exploring a relocation supported ?
- Do you agree we should explore two distinct elements ?
- What access should we consider offering from a new town centre facility ?
- Should we approach other partners to join us? If so, which ones?
- How important is connectivity to public transport ? What else should we prioritise in the location search?
- What facilities and location considerations should be included in any proposed civic facility ?
- The potential to consider Otterpool Park for the district-wide civic facility.
  
- Any other views / comments at this early stage to help us scope out the work? What else should we consider ?

# Views?