

Bath & North East Somerset Council		
DECISION MAKER:	Cllr Paul Roper Cabinet Member for Economic and Cultural Sustainable Development	
DECISION DATE:	On or after 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2025	EXECUTIVE FORWARD PLAN REFERENCE:
		E3650
TITLE:	Estate Rationalisation - Bath	
WARD:	Kingsmead	
AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM		
<b>List of attachments to this report:</b> Appendix 1 – Summary of Proposed Relocations Appendix 2 – Equality Impact Assessment		

## 1 THE ISSUE

- 1.1 On 20th February 2024, the Council set out Lewis House in Bath as a proposed asset disposal for 2024/25 that will generate capital receipts to fund the Council's capital programme in section 5.8.2 of decision paper E3500: Budget and Council Tax 2024/25 and Financial Outlook.
- 1.2 As part of an initiative to rationalise corporate estate assets the Council services currently occupying Lewis House will need to relocate to other corporate properties ahead of disposal. Despite marketing the upper floors of Lewis house for rental, they are currently vacant so disposal of the property will reduce annual running costs.
- 1.3 Council services will also carry out sustainability improvements at Parkside. These enhancements are designed to meet B&NES 2030 Decarbonisation targets, contributing significantly to the Climate Emergency response.
- 1.4 Several operational services are proposed for relocation:
  - a) **Guildhall (Guild Area):** Housing Welfare & Advice Service, Safeguarding & Case Conferences, and Youth Justice.
  - b) **Parkside:** CCTV & Emergency Planning, Mailroom, and Environment Protection/Safety Standards.
  - c) **Pixash:** Taxi Licensing.

- 1.5 To maximise the use of retained corporate properties, refurbishment works are required. A capital budget of £2.5m has been allocated to support upgrades at both the Guildhall and Parkside. An initial feasibility study valued at £60k has already been completed to inform the planned works. In addition, £80k has been approved from the Inception Fund to progress the project to RIBA Stage 3 (Planning), and to undertake IT enabling works and necessary surveys.
- 1.6 An additional £50k has been approved for transfer from the Security Surveillance Hub Plan budget into the Estate Rationalisation project. This funding will be used to appoint specialist consultants to develop the detailed design for the new CCTV room at Parkside. Surveys have confirmed that the existing CCTV equipment is non-compliant and requires renewal and upgrade. Additionally, two radio antennas must be replaced to ensure continuous service for both the city centre and Police radio communication links. As these works involve the replacement of non-compliant infrastructure, they are considered Capital Improvements.

## **RECOMMENDATION**

### **Cabinet Member Approval Requested:**

- 1.7 The following relocations of operational services:
- a) Housing Welfare & Advice Service (HWAS), Safeguarding/ Case Conferences and Youth Justice relocation from Lewis House into the Guild Area of the Guildhall.
  - b) Mail Room, CCTV, Emergency Planning and Environment Protect/ Safety Standards relocation from Lewis House to Parkside.
  - c) Taxi Licensing, relocation from Lewis House to Pixash.
- 1.8 Capital Programme Adjustment - Approve an increase in the Asset Rationalisation capital programme from £60k to £2.69m to fund refurbishment works at the Guildhall and Parkside and includes an £140k repayment to the Project Initiation Fund and the £50k transfer from the Security Surveillance Hub Plan budget.

## **2 THE REPORT**

- 2.1 The rationalisation of B&NES corporate properties aims to improve efficiency and reduce costs. Disposing of Lewis House will reduce the number of properties in Bath city centre and lower annual running costs.
- 2.2 Operational services for relocation into the Guild Area of the Guildhall are Housing Welfare & Advice Service (HWAS), Safeguarding/ Case Conferences and Youth Justice.
- 2.3 Other services for relocation from Lewis House include CCTV/Emergency Planning, Environment Protection/Safety Standards, Taxi Licensing, and the Mailroom.
- 2.4 Disposal of Lewis House will generate capital receipts to support the capital programme. These funds will be used to improve and make better use of remaining corporate properties, including refurbishment of the Guildhall and Parkside for staff and customer use.

- 2.5 On 5 August, an initial purchase offer for Lewis House was received from an interested buyer. Richard Holden reported the offer to the Section 151 Officer. The proposed amount is closely aligned with the property's Red Book valuation—within £150k of the independently assessed market value. This offer represents a strong opportunity for asset disposal at a competitive price, aligning with the Council's strategic goals for property rationalisation and long-term financial sustainability.
- 2.6 The Police & Crime Commissioner (PCC) occupies part of the property. The PCC has acquired Plymouth House and is due to move into the building when their project works there are completed. As far as is known, this is sometime in early 2026 and lease arrangements are in place to facilitate their move out of Lewis House and returning possession of their occupation to the Council in 2026. With the relocation of the PCC and other Council services Lewis House will be a vacant building and ideally a timeous disposal would raise capital receipt and remove occupancy and liability costs with no rental income to allay holding costs other than some minor telecom mast income.
- 2.7 This rationalisation is coordinating with the programme: "Renewable Energy Development Fund" to ensure that carbon reduction is maximised at the Guildhall and Parkside.

### **3 STATUTORY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 Listed Building has been approved for the proposed refurbishment of the Guildhall.
- 3.2 A certificate of Lawfulness will need to be submitted for the proposed works at Parkside, a change of use is not required as it will remain as office use.
- 3.3 A Planning application will need to be submitted for the proposed sustainable improvement works at Parkside.
- 3.4 Building Control application will need to be submitted for both refurbishment schemes at the Guildhall and Parkside.

### **4 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCE, PROPERTY, PEOPLE)**

- 4.1 A high-level summary of the proposed relocations is detailed in Appendix 1.
- 4.2 The £2.69m Capital Programme for refurbishing corporate assets will be funded through capital receipts from the disposal of Lewis House, as part of the Estate Rationalisation budget. An initial £60k PID has been approved to support the development of design proposals for improvements to the Guildhall and Parkside in Bath. In addition, £80k has been allocated from the Inception Fund to progress the project to RIBA Stage 3 (Planning), and to carry out IT enabling works and essential surveys. A further £50k has been approved for transfer from the Security Surveillance Hub Plan budget to support the relocation of the CCTV hub. The remaining £2.5m is now being sought to fund the refurbishment of the Guildhall, Parkside, and space allocation at Pixash.
- 4.3 The disposal of Lewis House is estimated to save the Council £214k per year in running costs. This will be partially netted down by costs associated with the increased usage of the Guildhall, Pixash and Parkside, albeit the value of this increase is unquantified at present.

## **5 RISK MANAGEMENT**

- 5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision-making risk management guidance.

## **6 EQUALITIES**

- 6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed and is attached as Appendix 2. Services will be relocated to appropriate safe and accessible locations with adequate facilities and where necessary, suitable provision for members of the public to attend.

## **7 CLIMATE CHANGE**

- 7.1 More efficient buildings and equipment can reduce emissions, energy usage and costs. This asset rationalisation will coordinate with the programme: "Renewable Energy Development Fund" to ensure that carbon reduction is maximised.

## **8 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED**

- 8.1 Do nothing. However, the need for suitable office accommodation will remain, costs of running the Council corporate properties need to reduce and the Council needs to dispose of assets to fund the capital programme.

## **9 CONSULTATION**

- 9.1 Internal officer consultation, including with s151 Officer and Monitoring Officer.

<b>Contact person</b>	Richard Holden, Head of Corporate Estate 01225 477655
<b>Background papers</b>	None
<b>Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format</b>	