

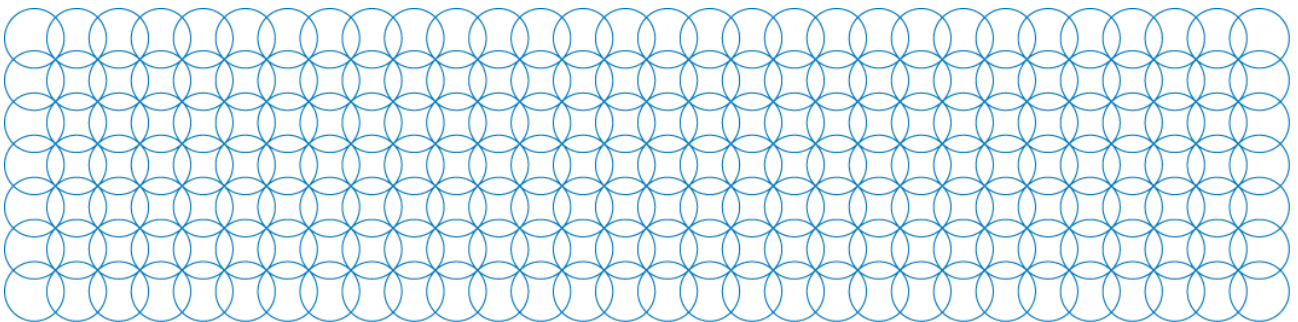


Ministry
of Justice

Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the South East region

This consultation begins on 16 July 2015

This consultation ends on 8 October 2015



[leave this page blank – back of cover]



**Ministry
of Justice**

Proposal on the provision of court and tribunal services in the South East region

A consultation produced by the Ministry of Justice. It is also available on the Ministry of Justice website at www.gov.uk/moj

About this consultation

To: The consultation is aimed at court users, magistracy, judiciary, and anyone else with an interest in the provision of local justice arrangements in the South East region.

Duration: From 16/07/2015 to 08/10/15

Enquiries (including requests for the paper in an alternative format) to: HMCTS Consultation
Ministry of Justice
Post point 1.13
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Tel: 0161 240 5021

Fax: 0870 761 7768

Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

How to respond: Please send your response by 8/10/15 to:

HMCTS Consultation
Ministry of Justice
Post point 1.13
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ

Fax: 0870 761 7768

Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Additional ways to feed in your views: If you cannot respond to this paper by means of e-mail or letter, please contact the Ministry of Justice using the details provided above.

Response paper: A response to this consultation exercise will be published at: www.gov.uk/moj

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction	4
The proposals	7
Questionnaire	71
About you	72
Contact details/How to respond	73
Impact Assessment	75
Consultation principles	76

[leave this page blank – back of contents page]

Foreword

HM Courts and Tribunals Service is committed to working with the judiciary to reform our services so they better meet the needs of the public in the modern age. Considerable investment will enable us to transform how justice is delivered, creating a modern, efficient service. Taking this opportunity, however, will require challenging decisions about the current system. One such decision relates to the courts and tribunals estate.

I am responsible for managing the operations of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in the South East region, and I have reviewed the court and tribunal estate against the estates principles set out in the national consultation. I have identified buildings where I believe our ability to deliver an efficient service has been compromised by poor facilities, where usage is low and where the building does not provide appropriate value for the public money spent on it.

I have carefully considered the impact of the proposed changes – both locally and across the South East. This consultation is an opportunity for the public to use their knowledge of their local areas to review and help us with our proposals.

Of course, staff would be affected by these proposed changes. Although the impact will be limited, I will make sure this is managed properly. Any transition to new arrangements will take place in a fair and transparent manner in consultation with the Departmental Trade Union.

I understand that these proposals could result in some people having longer journeys to the courts and tribunals. I am committed to working with rural communities to provide alternative ways for the public to access the justice system. These could include the use of civic or other public buildings for occasional hearings, video links or telephone or paper hearings to avoid travel altogether. It is vital we understand the demand for alternative provision as we plan services for the future.

I am keen to hear people's views on the different ways they would like to interact with their courts and tribunals, particularly from those in rural communities. It is important we understand the demand for these different methods as we plan provision for the future.

Thank you for considering this consultation.

Paul Harris

**Delivery Director
HM Courts & Tribunals Service South East**

Introduction

This consultation for the South East is part of a national consultation on the future of the court and tribunal estate in England and Wales. The national consultation document provides important information about the reform of courts and tribunals and how we have decided which buildings to consult on. It also includes a full list of the courts and tribunals we are consulting on and our other plans to integrate courts into existing buildings within a local area.

You should make sure you read the national consultation document alongside this.

The national consultation sets out:

- the requirement for changes to the estate;
- the utilisation levels across the estate;
- the accompanying Impact Assessment; and
- implications for local justice areas and listing changes.

Responses to questions in both the national consultation and this consultation are welcome but need not be duplicated.

HM Courts & Tribunals Service

HM Courts & Tribunals Service is an agency of the Ministry of Justice (MoJ). It is responsible for the administration of the criminal, civil and family courts and tribunals in England and Wales¹ and non-devolved tribunals in Scotland and Northern Ireland. It operates as a partnership between the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice and the Senior President of Tribunals.

In March 2014, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice of England and Wales and the Senior President of Tribunals announced details of a programme of reform for the courts and tribunals. This will improve the court and tribunal estate, deliver greater use of technology, modernise practices and processes, and improve services for our users.

At the heart of this programme are the use of technology and the principle of proportionality. Straightforward, transactional matters (such as the administration of probate or pleading guilty and paying a fine) can be dealt with using digital technology to make the processes as straightforward as filing a tax return, or renewing car tax online. Straightforward cases do not necessarily need face to face hearings; judges will be able to reserve the full proceedings of a court hearing for the more sensitive or complex cases. Modern technology can be used not just to make the justice system more accessible but also to reduce the costs of the whole justice system by not requiring extensive

¹ Some tribunals which are part of HM Courts & Tribunals Service in England are devolved to the Welsh Government in Wales.

transportation of prisoners for bail hearings, or the police to take full days off their priority work to sit in a court room.

Ahead of full implementation of the reform programme, we are seeking views on the closure of courts and tribunals which we believe do not meet our ideas of how best to deliver justice in the future.

Access to justice

We recognise that the public should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend hearings at courts and tribunals. We also know, however, that in an increasingly digital age, the public expect to be able to engage with any service through a variety of channels, and many prefer to do that digitally. They do not always want or need to attend hearings in person. Delivering effective access to justice does not necessarily mean providing access to a building. This challenges the assumption that there needs to be a court or tribunal in every local area.

We already have well established alternative ways that users can access the justice system. There are examples of this: enabling police officers to give evidence over a live link, processes to enable victims, witnesses and defendants to attend hearings over video link, and users in some jurisdictions having cases progressed or considered through telephone hearings or on papers, meaning that they do not need to attend a hearing in person at all. Where attendance at a hearing is needed other civic or public buildings could be used for hearings where security requirements are low.

These types of alternative provision could be particularly useful in rural communities and/or areas with limited public transport. We are very keen to hear views on alternative provision, for example video link in civic or other public buildings.

Deciding which courts to include in the proposals

In order to achieve a radical transformation of the justice system, any investment must be targeted and sequenced across all three key areas of ICT, estates and business processes to create the efficiencies that will allow HM Courts & Tribunals Service to modernise its current practices and to adopt more streamlined ways of working. We are therefore, as a first priority, addressing the current surplus capacity within the HM Courts & Tribunals Service estate. This will enable us to use the remaining estate more intelligently and flexibly, to reduce our running costs, to focus our investment on improving the estate we need for the future and to increase the multifunctional court space – allowing different court and tribunal jurisdictions to share locations. The intention is that capital receipts from the sale of any surplus assets would be reinvested as part of the funding for the reform programme.

To ensure we deliver business effectively and meet our future strategic requirements, HM Courts & Tribunals Service has applied a set of principles against which the proposals in this consultation were developed.

The principles are:

Ensuring Access to Justice

- To ensure continued access to justice when assessing the impact of possible closures on both professional and lay court and tribunal users, taking into account journey times for users, the challenges of rural access and any

mitigating action, including having facilities at local civic centres and other buildings to ensure local access, modern ICT and more flexible listing, when journeys will be significantly increased.

- To take into account the needs of users and in particular, victims, witnesses and those who are vulnerable.
- To support the requirements of other agencies such as the Crown Prosecution Service, Social Services, Police Forces and the Children and Family Court Advisory and Support Service. (CAFCASS).

Delivering Value for Money

- To reduce the current and future cost of running the estate.
- To maximise the capital receipts from surplus estate for reinvestment in HM Courts and Tribunals Service.

Enabling Efficiency in the longer term

- To reduce the reliance on buildings with poor facilities and to remove from the estate buildings that are difficult and expensive either to improve or to upgrade.
- To move towards an estate with buildings which are larger and facilitate the more efficient and flexible listing of court and tribunal business whilst also giving users more certainty when their cases will be heard.
- To increase the ability to use the estate flexibly across the criminal jurisdiction and separately across the Civil, Family and Tribunal (CFT) jurisdictions.
- To move towards an estate that provides dedicated hearing centres, seeking opportunities to concentrate back office function where they can be carried out most efficiently.
- To improve the efficient use of the estate by seeking to improve whole system efficiency, taking advantage of modernised communication methods (wi-fi and video links) and adopting business processes to increase efficiency and effectiveness.
- To increase the efficient use of the estate wherever possible irrespective of current administrative boundaries.

Responding to the consultation

We are keen to obtain views on the proposals to change the provision of court and tribunal estate and how we can make sure the public can still access the justice system. We have committed to consider each response. The responses will help us make sure that the courts and tribunals are based where the work is and that communities can access the justice system and that cases are heard in buildings with suitable facilities.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Consultation Principles issued by the Cabinet Office. It will run for 12 weeks.

This consultation and the consultation stage Impact Assessment are also available at www.gov.uk/moj.

The proposals

This consultation proposes the closure of the following courts² and tribunals:

- Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
- Basildon Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (Acorn House)
- Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court
- Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court
- Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St. Edmunds Crown Court
- Chichester Combined Court (Crown and County)
- Chichester Magistrates' Court
- Colchester County Court and Family Court
- Colchester County Court Offices
- Dartford Magistrates' Court
- Dover Magistrates' Court
- Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
- Harlow Magistrates' Court
- Kings Lynn County and Family Court
- Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court
- Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court
- St Albans County Court
- Tunbridge Wells County and Family Court

² Reference in this document to magistrates' courts, county courts, crown courts and combined courts refers to buildings (a singular structure providing the physical hearing rooms for criminal, civil, family and tribunal cases) which house that activity in a particular location. Strictly, legislation provides that there is a singular crown court, county court and family court.

- Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court
- West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court

In addition, there are six integrations set out below.

Travel times

As part of our work to assess the impact of these proposals on the public, we have included information on the distance by road between the court proposed for closure and the court where the work would transfer. There are also details of public transport costs and journey times which are provided as a guide only and are subject to change. This information does not illustrate the potential impact on travel times for the public in the catchment area of the court. We have developed a model to analyse this.

The model analyses the current catchment area of the court and the population within it, calculated to the smallest geographical area available with current national statistics (known as a Lower Super Output Area or LSOA). The model then calculates the travel time from the centre of each LSOA to the current court separately by car and public transport and then calculates the proportion of the population who could travel to court in set time bands. The model then calculates new journey times based on the location of the court where the work would be heard should the court close. These travel times are displayed in a table format within each site proposal

Due to the nature of the rural areas of the South East, we are and will continue to be flexible where people have trouble attending a court or tribunal for a particular time due to the availability of transport. By their nature, such requests would be considered through representations made on a case-by-case basis.

Integrations

To provide users with an overview of all proposed change to the estate, the consultation also includes information on where we plan to integrate courts within the same town or city. Local stakeholders will be notified of these changes when they take place.

An integration is when HM Courts & Tribunals Service moves work to allow jurisdictions to operate from fewer locations in a local area. This allows the closure of a building or buildings while retaining local jurisdictions, with a limited impact on service provision. Integrations are managed by HM Courts & Tribunals Service operational leads as part of the normal running of the business. These have been identified using the principles set out in the 'Introduction.' The proposals for closures in the region should be considered in the context of these integrations.

In addition to the proposed closures in this consultation the following integrations will be taking place or are already underway in the South East region:

Aylesbury Crown Court to be integrated within Aylesbury Magistrates' and County Court and Family Court Building

The centralisation of workload and court hearings in one location in Aylesbury would provide increased flexibility and make better use of the court and tribunal estate. These changes will have minimal impact on users as both court buildings are located near to each other.

Bury St Edmunds Employment Tribunal (Government Buildings) to be integrated within Bury St Edmunds County Court

This integration project has recently been completed.

Cambridge Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (Eastbrook House) – to be integrated within Cambridge Civil Justice centre and Cambridge Magistrates’ Court

This integration project has recently been completed.

Cambridge Residential Property Tribunal Service (Quern House) to be integrated within Cambridge Civil Justice Centre

This integration will enable the improved utilisation of the court and tribunal estate. The impact on court users will be minimal as the Cambridge Civil Justice Centre is located in the town centre.

Norwich Employment Tribunal (Eliot House) integrated within Norwich Magistrates’ Court

This integration project was completed in March 2015.

Southend County Court and Family Court to be integrated within Southend Crown and Magistrates’ Court

The centralisation of workload and court hearings in one location in Southend would provide increased flexibility and make better use of the court and tribunal estate. These changes will have minimal impact on users as the court buildings are located near to each other.

Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is a multi-jurisdictional courthouse which deals with criminal, civil, public and private law and divorce work. The courtrooms are not fully utilised. Two of the three courtrooms are used three days per week, one courtroom is used one day per week and the courtrooms are not used at all on one day per week.

Aylesbury Magistrates Court, County Court and Family Court is one of three magistrates', county and family court hearing centres in Buckinghamshire with the others being located in Milton Keynes and High Wycombe.

Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is poorly utilised and the current work can be accommodated elsewhere in the county.

It is proposed that Aylesbury Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is closed and the magistrates' workload moved to High Wycombe Magistrates' Court and Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court. The civil workload would be transferred to Milton Keynes County Court. The existing family workload would be issued and allocated in accordance with the principles of the Single Family Court to family court hearing centres which are based in High Wycombe and Milton Keynes.

Should Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court close it would enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can then be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court and Family Court Hearing Centre, Milton Keynes County Court and Family Court and High Wycombe Magistrates' Court County Court and Family Court offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court was utilised for approximately 14% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is a purpose built courthouse and has three courtrooms and one hearing room. Two of the courtrooms have secure docks with secure access to the custody suite. The third courtroom is informal and is used for Family Courts and for Family, Drug and Alcohol Courts. There is a hearing room on the first floor that is used for civil work. There are adequate waiting facilities with interview and consultation rooms. The courthouse also has a separate and purpose built witness suite on site with two interview rooms and separate waiting facilities. There is a separate entrance to ensure that vulnerable victims and witnesses are separated from other court users. There is a video link facility that can be used internally within the building.

High Wycombe Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family is a recently refurbished courthouse with five courtrooms and three hearing rooms Two of the courtrooms have a

Prison to Court Video Link .There are bespoke facilities for the exclusive use of the Witness Service including an office and two waiting rooms. There are good waiting facilities and consultation rooms are available.

Milton Keynes Magistrates' Court and Family Court has seven court rooms. There are good waiting facilities, consultation rooms and on site catering facilities for members of the public. The court is located on the same road as Milton Keynes County Court and Family Court. Milton Keynes County Court and Family Hearing Centre has two courtrooms and four hearing rooms. There are good waiting facilities and interview rooms available.

Location

Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is situated near the town centre.

Aylesbury is 17 miles from High Wycombe and the journey by car is approximately 30 minutes.

There is no direct train service between Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The travel time by rail is approximately 40 minutes with one change at Prince Risborough. The cost of a return train ticket is £9.10. High Wycombe Magistrates' Court is located near the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between Aylesbury and High Wycombe. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour. The cost of a return bus ticket is £6.00

Aylesbury is 23 miles from Milton Keynes and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is no direct train service between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. The travel time by rail is approximately 2 hours 30 minutes with a change at London. The cost of a return train ticket is £71.30. Milton Keynes Magistrates' and Family Court and Milton Keynes County Court and Family Court are a 15 minute walk from the train station

There is a regular bus service between Aylesbury and Milton Keynes. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour and ten minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £6.00

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	97%	By Car	0-30min	24%
	30-60min	3%		30-60min	76%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	38%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	17%
	60-120min	19%		60-120min	70%
	>120min	0%		>120min	11%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	94%	By Car	0-30min	23%
	30-60min	6%		30-60min	77%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	37%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	39%		30-60min	17%
	60-120min	23%		60-120min	70%
	>120min	0%		>120min	11%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There are 13 staff based permanently Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court.

Other information

Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for the financial year 2014/15 for Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court were approximately £237,000.

The building will be used to relocate Aylesbury Crown Court which is currently in a leasehold Grade II listed building which is not fit for purpose as a crown court. It is

expected that all work will be removed from Aylesbury Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court before crown court work starts to be heard there.

Basildon Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (Acorn House)

Proposal

Basildon Tribunal is a hearing venue for Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (SSCS) work and is one of five SSCS hearing venues in the County of Essex with the others being located in Basildon (Combined Court), Southend, Colchester and Harlow (please see separate proposals for Colchester County Court and Harlow Magistrates' Court).

It is proposed that Basildon Tribunal is closed and the SSCS workload is transferred to Basildon Combined Court (there is already an existing SSCS hearing venue based in the courthouse), and Southend Magistrates' Court and Family Court. The workload will be allocated to the appropriate hearing venue based on where the appellant resides. There will be some enabling works required at Southend Magistrates' Court and Family Court to create additional hearing room capacity.

Basildon Tribunal is located within a shared building and hearings are on the fourth floor which is inappropriate for users that attend SSCS hearings. There are some security issues as there is no CCTV and emergency departure routes are also a concern for this location.

Should Basildon Tribunal close it will enable the receiving courts and tribunals to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can then be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Basildon Combined Court and Southend Magistrates' Court and Family Court offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

Basildon Tribunal has a low level of utilisation, and during the 2014/15 financial year was used at approximately 42% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Basildon Tribunal has three informal hearing rooms.

The accommodation is not suitable for dealing with the type of hearings held at this site as it is on the fourth floor, with unreliable lifts. The accommodation has only one interview room available for private consultation. The accommodation is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Basildon Combined Court is a purpose built courthouse and has five courtrooms and two hearing rooms. The hearing rooms are appropriate for tribunal hearings. It has good facilities for courts and tribunals users with larger waiting areas and nine interview rooms. If the interview rooms are being used there is plenty of space within the courthouse for private conversations.

Southend Magistrates' Court and Family Court is a purpose built courthouse with nine courtrooms, one of which is on the ground floor and provides better access for people with disabilities. It has good facilities for courts and tribunals users including waiting rooms for witnesses and parties in hearings and eight interview rooms available for private

consultation. It also has on site catering facilities. The courthouse has waiting rooms for parties and witnesses and eight interview rooms available for private consultation.

Location

Basildon Tribunal is situated in the town centre, and a two minute walk from Basildon Combined Court.

Basildon is 14 miles from Southend and the journey by car is approximately 25 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Basildon and Southend. The travel time by rail is approximately 20 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £7.60. Southend Magistrates' Court and Family Court is located in the town centre and near the train station.

There is a regular bus service from Basildon to Southend but it does not take a direct route and the travel time by bus is approximately one hour and 30 minutes.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	25%	By Car	0-30min	25%
	30-60min	40%		30-60min	40%
	60-120min	34%		60 - 120min	34%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	3%	By Public Transport	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	9%		30-60min	9%
	60-120min	24%		60-120min	24%
	>120min	64%		>120min	64%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Basildon Tribunal.

Other information

The building has been leased since April 2011, under a memorandum of Terms of Occupation (MOTO) with the Department for Works and Pensions. The lease is due to expire in March 2018.

The operating costs for financial year 2014/15 for Basildon Tribunal were approximately £166,000.

Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court are co-located at the Shire Hall in Bedford, and is one of two magistrates', county and family courts in the County of Bedfordshire. The other courts are located in two separate buildings in Luton; Luton Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Luton County Court and Family Court.

It currently has up to three courtrooms listed daily dealing with civil and family work. There is also currently one day per month when local authority, civil and criminal non-custody work is heard in two courtrooms.

The Bedfordshire Justices' Issues Group (JIG) jointly with HM Courts & Tribunals Service launched a consultation on proposals to change listing arrangements in Bedfordshire, on the HM Courts & Tribunals Service website, on 11 November 2013 inviting responses by 20 December 2013. The review included a proposal to centralise criminal work at Luton Magistrates' Court and to use Bedford for family work and as a live link facility for victims and witnesses to give evidence. The JIG considered the responses and concluded that criminal work should primarily be listed at Luton with arrangement made at Bedford for family work, witness live links for trials to Luton and local authority prosecutions if workloads justified a regular dedicated court. The listing arrangements agreed by the JIG came in to effect in June 2014.

The successor body of the JIG, the Bedfordshire and Hertfordshire Judicial Business Group (JBG) reviewed the impact of the changes at its meetings in 2014 and in November 2014 invited evidence of the impact of the changes. The JBG reviewed listing arrangements when it met in January 2015 and concluded that the arrangements previously made by the JIG for the listing of criminal work, subject to a proposed revision better to accommodate work from the local authorities, remained the most appropriate to provide a good balance between accessibility, timeliness and effectiveness of hearings within available criminal justice resources.

It is proposed that Bedford and Mid Bed Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court are closed. Should they do so the local authority, civil and criminal non-custody work would be moved to Luton Magistrates' Court. The work can be accommodated without any enabling works being required and the existing civil and family hearings would be moved to Bedford Employment Tribunal. There would be some enabling works at Bedford Employment Tribunal to create additional hearing room capacity and for judicial security. The criminal non-custody work can be accommodated at Luton Magistrates' Court without any enabling works being required.

Should Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court, and Bedford County Court and Family Court close, this would enable the work to be moved to existing venues and allow the court and tribunal to be responsive and flexible with the listing of civil cases meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service could be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Luton Magistrates' and Family Court and Bedford Employment Tribunal offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County Court and Family Court was used at approximately 16% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' and Family Court has five courtrooms in the Shire Hall, two of which have direct access to the custody suite. One has a secure dock and the other two have standard docks. The docks for courtrooms one and two are not easily accessible due to the narrow and steep steps. This causes difficulties for the custody contractor to escort defendants up and down. The dock to court four is accessed by taking the defendant across the car park to rear entrance of the courtroom. There are eight cells all of which are operational.

Bedford County and Family Court has two hearing rooms in the Shire Hall, both of a reasonable standard. One of the informal magistrates' courtrooms is also used for civil work that is heard by a Circuit Judge during one week in every month.

The Shire Hall was built around 1881. The facilities in general are inadequate in the magistrates' court but reasonable in the county court. The family work is heard in the county court section of the building where possible which is compliant with the Equality Act 2010, however the magistrates' court side is not. The building is Grade II listed and therefore not easy to adapt to bring up to acceptable standards any proposed work has to be approved by the council planning and is costly. The formal courtrooms do not lend themselves to digital working because of the limitations of the listed fixed furniture. The site does not have a custody van dock and the custody contractor has to off load and load defendants in the car park next to the magistrates' and staff entrance. This building is also at risk of flooding due to its close proximity to the river.

The court has a witness suite but this is on the first floor and no good for access for those with disabilities. There are video link facilities which are currently being used to enable witnesses to give evidence to Luton Magistrates' Court.

Luton Magistrates' Court and Family Court has seven courtrooms. Two courtrooms were decommissioned some years ago and can be re-commissioned at low cost. These courtrooms are suitable for non-custody work. Four courtrooms have direct access to the custody suite. There are three secure docks and one standard dock. There are nine cells, all of which are operational. There is a secure custody van dock where defendants can be loaded and unloaded in private. The custody contractor at this site cannot take wheelchair users due to there being no lift from the custody suite to the courtrooms. Currently arrangements are made for cases to be heard at St Albans Magistrates' Court when the defendant is a wheelchair user.

The building is a purpose built courthouse and the facilities are to a good standard for all court users. The courthouse supports digital working for staff and magistrates in court. The courthouse has separate waiting facilities for prosecution and defence. There are video link facilities at this courthouse for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to give evidence. There are nine interview rooms available for private consultation.

The courthouse is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 in that it does not have a lift in the custody area, however the rest of the building is compliant.

Bedford Employment Tribunal has six hearing rooms over four floors with numerous private consultation rooms. The accommodation has good facilities and is compliant with the Equality Act 2010, with the ground floor housing a hearing room and the two interview rooms and a disabled toilet.

Location

Bedford Shire Hall is situated in the town centre, near the train station. Bedford is 20 miles from Luton and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Bedford and Luton. The travel time by rail is approximately 25 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £15.60. Luton Magistrates' and Family Court is located near the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walking distance from the train station.

There is an hourly direct bus service between Bedford and Luton. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour and the cost for a day ticket is £8.00.

Bedford Employment Tribunal is situated within half a mile of Bedfordshire Shire Hall.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	91%	By Car	0-30min	87%
	30-60min	9%		30-60min	13%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	36%	By Public Transport	0-30min	34%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	40%
	60-120min	19%		60-120min	22%
	>120min	2%		>120min	2%
	no data	3%		no data	3%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	91%	By Car	0-30min	87%
	30-60min	9%		30-60min	13%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

By Public Transport	0-30min	36%	By Public Transport	0-30min	34%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	40%
	60-120min	19%		60-120min	22%
	>120min	2%		>120min	2%
	no data	3%		no data	3%

County Court:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	90%	By Car	0-30min	85%
	30-60min	10%		30-60min	15%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	35%	By Public Transport	0-30min	33%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	40%
	60-120min	19%		60-120min	22%
	>120min	2%		>120min	2%
	no data	3%		no data	3%

Staff implications

There are 27 members of staff permanently based at Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bedford County and Family Court.

Other information

The Bedford Tribunal building is freehold.

The operating costs for financial year 2014/15 of Bedford and Mid Beds Magistrates' Court and Family Court, and Bedford County Court and Family Court were approximately £425,000.

Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court

Proposal

Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court is one of three magistrates' and family courts in Oxfordshire with the others being located in Banbury and Oxford. It currently has family work (private and public law) listed at one courtroom in the courthouse every day of the week and on two days a week (Wednesday and Thursday) a second courtroom is also used for family work.

The courthouse has not been used for criminal work since October 2013. From 2010 to 2013 the only criminal work heard at Bicester Magistrates' Court was road traffic work.

It is proposed that Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court is closed and the family work transferred to Oxford Combined Court, which provides a more appropriate hearing room environment for this type of work. The work can be accommodated at Oxford Combined Court with some enabling works being required to create an additional hearing room.

This proposal will enable HM Courts & Tribunals Service to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can then be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Oxford Combined Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Bicester Magistrates' Court was used at approximately 11% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court was built in 1957. The court has a total of two courtrooms and two cells although the cells have been decommissioned since 2010. Overall the building conditions and facilities are reasonable. The formal courtrooms are currently used for family work, however, a more appropriate hearing room environment for this family work can be provided at Oxford Combined Court. Although the courthouse has facilities to enable it to be used for criminal and youth work there is sufficient capacity in Banbury and Oxford Magistrates' Courts for this work.

The courtrooms and custody facilities are compliant with the Equality Act 2010. There are access issues for those with mobility issues in relation to the first floor of the courthouse. The first floor does not have any courtrooms but there are some staff based on the first floor. The courthouse has two car parking areas which provide a total of 38 spaces but neither area is secure which is a potential security issue.

Oxford Combined Court is a purpose built courthouse with two courtrooms and five hearing rooms for civil and family work. It offers good facilities for court users. There are a total of 14 interview rooms available for private consultation: 11 on the first floor and three on the ground floor. It has large waiting areas so if all the interview rooms are in use it is possible to hold private conversations in the building. It also has a Care Suite situated on the ground floor. There are on site catering facilities.

Location

Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court is situated in near the town centre.

Bicester is 15 miles from Oxford and the journey by car is approximately 20 minutes.

There is a regular train service at peak times between Bicester Town and Oxford. The travel time by rail is approximately 45 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £5.20. There is also a regular train service throughout the day between Bicester North and Oxford. The travel time is between 45 minutes and 1 hour 10 minutes with one change required. The cost of a return train ticket is £5.20. Oxford Combined Court is approximately 20 minutes walk from the train station and there are local buses from the train station which stop within two to three minutes walk from the entrance to the courthouse.

There is a regular bus service between Bicester and Oxford. The travel time by bus is between 45 minutes and 1 hour. The cost of a return bus ticket is £5.00.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	57%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	43%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	53%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	37%		30-60min	5%
	60-120min	10%		60-120min	71%
	>120min	0%		>120min	16%
	no data	0%		no data	8%

Staff implications

There are seven staff permanently based at Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court.

Other information

Bicester Magistrates' Court was due to close in April 2013. This closure was announced on 14 December 2010 as part of the Court Estates Reform Programme. Following the initial announcement, HM Courts & Tribunals Service conducted further analysis into changes in workload in Oxfordshire, specifically regarding Children Act Public Law cases. A decision was taken by the Lord Chancellor to retain Bicester Magistrates' Court and following the implementation of the single family court in 2014 it became Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court.

Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court is freehold.

The 2014/15 operating costs of Bicester Magistrates' Court and Family Court were approximately £58,000.

Bury St Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St Edmunds Crown Court

Proposal

Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St Edmunds Crown Court are co-located at the Shire Hall in Bury St Edmunds.

Bury St Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court is one of three magistrates' courts and family courts in the County of Suffolk with the others being located in Ipswich and Lowestoft. Please see separate proposals for closing Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court. In addition there is a family court based at Bury St Edmunds County and Family Court which is in a separate building in the town.

Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court deals with criminal, private and public family law and sits no more than two courts per day.

Bury St Edmunds Crown Court is one of two Crown Courts in Suffolk with the other being located in Ipswich. The Crown Court has not been used for some considerable time as there is sufficient capacity and excellent facilities at Ipswich Crown Court.

It is proposed that Bury St Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St Edmunds Crown Court are closed. Should they be closed the existing magistrates' and family workload would be moved to Ipswich Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Norwich Magistrates' Court and Family Court. It is proposed that victim and witness facilities will be installed at Bury St. Edmunds County Court and Tribunals which would enable court users, in suitable matters, to give evidence by video link. There is no crown court work currently being heard at Bury St Edmunds Crown Court.

Should Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court close this would enable the work will be moved to larger venues and enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the listing of cases meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Ipswich Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Norwich Magistrates' Court and Family Court offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

This venue was used for approximately 44% of its capacity during the 2014/15 financial year.

Accommodation

The Shire Hall at Bury St Edmunds has a total of three courtrooms, all of which have a direct link to the custody suite and a secure dock. There are five cells, all of which are in operation.

This building is freehold and was built in 1841. It is Grade II listed, which makes it difficult to adapt to meet modern standards and requires listed planning approval. The accommodation is inadequate and in need of modernisation. There are security issues for

the custody vehicles in that they can only load and unload defendants on the street near the custody entrance and the vans are required to park on the street.

There are video links to prisons, police and also a couple of booths for internal video links. There are two interview rooms available for private consultation.

The accommodation is partially compliant with the Equality Act of 2010, however, the custody suite and one of the courtrooms are not.

Ipswich Magistrates' Court and Family Court is a purpose built courthouse with a total of five courtrooms, three of which have a secure dock and direct access to the custody suite. There are eight cells, all of which are operational. The building also has two further rooms used for tribunal hearings, which have a separate entrance.

The court has a separate witness suite, with a witness link to courts. There is a Prison to Court Video Link (PCVL) in one courtroom with another being installed in June 2015. There are two PCVL booths in the waiting area and also a live link system to Police Investigation Centres. The court has five interview rooms available for private consultation.

The accommodation is compliant with the Equality Act of 2010, except for the custody suite which cannot accept wheel chair users as there is no suitable access.

Norwich Magistrates' and Family Court has a total of seven courtrooms; five on the first floor and a designated family courtroom and a separate youth courtroom on the ground floor. Four of the first floor courtrooms have direct access to the custody suite as does the family courtroom on the ground floor. There are three secure docks and two standard docks. The custody suite has thirteen cells, all of which are operational.

The accommodation is of a very good standard for all users. There is a Witness Suite providing protected access to the courts and there is also a separate entrance for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. There are live links to one of the Adult Trial courts and also the Youth Court. There is also a Prison to Court Video Link to one of the courtrooms, two video link booths for advocates and video conferencing and a live link system to Police Investigation Centres due to be installed in Summer 2015. There are ten interview rooms available for private consultation. The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Location

Bury St Edmunds Shire Hall is situated near the town centre, and approximately 20 minutes walk from the train station. Ipswich Magistrates' Court is located 27 miles from Bury St Edmunds. There is a regular train service between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich. The travel time by rail is approximately 35 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £12.50. Ipswich Magistrates' Court and Family Court is located near the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walking distance from the train station.

There is no direct bus service between Bury St Edmunds and Ipswich.

The journey time by car is approximately 40 minutes.

Norwich Magistrates' Court and Family Court is located 44 miles from Bury St Edmunds. There is a regular train service between Bury St Edmunds and Norwich. The travel time

by rail is approximately 60 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £17.30. Norwich Magistrates' and Family Court is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

A bus service between is available between Bury St Edmunds and Norwich, with an average travel time of 1 hr 20 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £12.30.

The journey time by car is approximately 65 minutes.

Bury St. Edmunds County Court and Tribunals is located near the town centre, next to the bus station and is approximately 20 minutes walk from Bury St Edmunds Shire Hall.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	52%	By Car	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	48%		30-60min	73%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	25%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	13%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	23%		30-60min	3%
	60-120min	52%		60-120min	49%
	>120min	6%		>120min	40%
	no data	6%		no data	7%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	49%	By Car	0-30min	3%
	30-60min	51%		30-60min	75%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	23%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	12%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	22%		30-60min	3%
	60-120min	53%		60-120min	51%
	>120min	6%		>120min	39%
	no data	6%		no data	7%

Staff implications

There are 13 members of staff permanently based at Bury St Edmunds Magistrates' court.

Other information

Bury St. Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St Edmunds Crown Court building is freehold.

Operating costs for financial year 2014/15 at Bury St Edmunds Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Bury St Edmunds Crown Court were approximately £272,000.

Chichester Combined Court (Crown and County)

Proposal

Chichester Combined Court is multi-jurisdictional courthouse which deals with criminal (Crown Court), civil, public and private law and divorce work.

Chichester Crown Court is the only Crown Court in West Sussex. There is however, one other Crown Court in East Sussex located in Lewes. In addition Lewes has satellite courtrooms at the Hove Trial Centre and Brighton Magistrates' Court. There is also a nearby Crown Court in Portsmouth approximately 18 miles away.

Chichester County Court is one of three county courts in West Sussex with the others being located in Worthing and Horsham. In addition there are four other county courts in East Sussex which are located in Brighton, Lewes, Eastbourne and Hastings.

It is proposed that Chichester Combined Court is closed and the Crown Court workload transferred to Portsmouth Combined Court and Lewes Combined Court (and other satellite courtrooms) as appropriate. The Crown Court workload can be absorbed in these courts without any enabling works being required.

The existing county court workload, both civil and family, would be transferred to Worthing County Court and Family Court and the workload can be absorbed without any enabling works being required.

This proposal will enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service could be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively. The receiving courts offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Chichester Combined Court was used at approximately 78% of its capacity.

Accommodation

The court has a total two crown courtrooms and two civil and family hearing rooms. The Crown Court has six cells, all of which are operational

Chichester Combined Court was built in 1930. The courthouse is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. There is a ramp to the staff entrance but there are steps into the public entrance. Although the courtrooms are accessible for people with disabilities, the public gallery is not. There are access issues for witnesses with disabilities. The only disabled toilet in the building is in the public area. This means that at present it is not possible to have wheelchair users as jurors. The District Judge hearing rooms are adequate and there are security issues posed by the layout of the building.

The witness waiting areas for the Crown Court users are very cramped and toilet facilities in the area are poor. There is no public counter for solicitors and barristers to access the listing office so they have to access secure staff areas which poses a security risk. Prison

to Court Video Link (PCVL) is only available in one courtroom. There are some security issues as there are no secure docks.

Portsmouth Combined Court is a multi-jurisdictional courthouse deals with criminal (crown court), civil, public and private law and divorce work. It has good facilities for court users including separate witness waiting rooms for prosecution and defence and 18 other rooms that can be used as waiting areas or for private consultations.

Lewes Crown Court has four courtrooms and in addition there are four satellite courtrooms at Hove Trial Centre and two satellite courtrooms at Brighton Magistrates' Court. There are better witness waiting facilities at these venues than those currently provided in Chichester Crown Court. There are more video link facilities across this group of courthouses than in Chichester Combined Court. There are two secure docks in the crown courtrooms in Brighton, four secure docks in Hove Trial Centre and one secure dock in Lewes Crown Court. The facilities for jurors in Lewes Crown Court, Brighton Magistrates' Court and Hove Trial Centre are better with larger, more pleasant waiting areas. Hove Trial Centre can accommodate jurors with disabilities.

Worthing County Court and Family Court is co-located with Worthing Magistrates' Court and Family Court and has six courtrooms in total. Two courtrooms are used for civil and family work. The courthouse offers good facilities for all court users and is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. There are three interview rooms available that are for the sole use of the county and family court users and another six which are used by the magistrates' court users but can be used by county and family court users if they are free. There is a large waiting area that is for the sole use of county and family court users.

Location

Chichester Combined Court is situated in the town centre, near the train station.

The distance and journey times to proposed and potential receiving courts are as follows:

Crown Court

Chichester to Portsmouth

Chichester is 18 miles from Portsmouth and the journey by car is approximately 30 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Portsmouth. The travel time by rail is approximately 40 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £8.70 Portsmouth Combined Court located in the town centre and is approximately 5 minutes walking distance from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between Chichester and Portsmouth. The travel time by bus is approximately one hour and 20 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £7.50.

Chichester to Brighton

Chichester is 33 miles from Brighton and the journey by car is approximately 50 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Brighton. The travel time by rail is approximately 50 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £16.00. There is no direct bus service between Chichester and Brighton.

Chichester to Hove

Chichester is 31 miles from Hove and the journey by car is approximately 50 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Hove. The travel time by rail is approximately 55 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £16.00. Hove Trial Centre is located approximately 15 minutes walking distance from the train station. There is a no direct bus service between Chichester and Hove.

Chichester to Lewes

Chichester is 38 miles from Lewes and the journey by car is approximately 55 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Lewes. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour and 10 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £17.50 Lewes Combined Court is located in the town centre and near the train station. There is a no direct bus service between Chichester and Lewes.

County and Family Court

Chichester to Worthing

Chichester is 21 miles from Worthing and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Worthing. The travel time by rail is approximately 35 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £10.90. Worthing County Court is located near the train station. There is no direct bus service between Chichester and Worthing.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Crown workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	89%	By Car	0-30min	49%
	30-60min	11%		30-60min	50%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	25%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	48%		30-60min	29%
	60-120min	25%		60-120min	68%
	>120min	1%		>120min	1%
	no data	0%		no data	2%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	96%	By Car	0-30min	35%
	30-60min	4%		30-60min	65%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	34%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	52%		30-60min	19%
	60-120min	13%		60-120min	77%
	>120min	1%		>120min	2%
	no data	1%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There are 23 staff permanently based in Chichester Combined Court.

Other information

Chichester Combined Court building is freehold.

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Chichester Combined Court, centre were approximately £274,000.

Chichester Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Chichester Magistrates Court is one of four magistrates' courts in West Sussex with the others being located in Worthing, Horsham and Crawley. The court deals with criminal work. The courthouse has three courtrooms. It currently has criminal work (trials) listed in two courtrooms, four days per week. The venue is also used to hear Residential Property Tribunal Services (RPTS) work approximately one day per week. The court has a low level of utilisation.

It is proposed that Chichester Magistrates' Court is closed and the workload transferred to Worthing Magistrates' Court and Horsham Magistrates' Court, both of which offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

This proposal will enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively.

Workload

Chichester Magistrates' Court has three courtrooms. The courtroom utilisation is low, and was used for approximately 41% of its capacity during the 2014/15 financial year.

Accommodation

Chichester Magistrates' Court was built in 1977. The courthouse is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010 as the accommodation is spread over two mezzanine floors. There is a slope but it is too steep for independent use. There are no security issues.

The court has three courtrooms and five operational cells, and offers reasonable facilities for court users although all waiting areas are in need of redecoration. There is a witness waiting suite away from the main waiting area with a number of waiting rooms with separate access for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. There is sufficient space in the courthouse to provide separate waiting areas for witnesses and defendants. There is video link equipment available in the witness suite with both internal and external connections but it is old and unreliable and in need of upgrading. There are two interview rooms for solicitors to use with their clients away from the main waiting area on the first floor.

Worthing Magistrates' Court is co-located with Worthing County Court and Family Court and has six courtrooms in total, four of which are used for magistrates' court work. The courthouse offers good facilities for court users and the witness waiting areas are well maintained. There are two separate dedicated witness waiting areas at Worthing Magistrates Court – one for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses and one for general prosecution witnesses. The video link facilities for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses are within the witness waiting area and the equipment allows for both internal and external connections. In addition there are two Prison to Court Video Link (PCVL) booths at Worthing which can also be used by witnesses to provide evidence both internally and externally. There are six interview rooms available for private consultations.

Horsham Magistrates' Court is co-located with Horsham County Court and Family Court and has two courtrooms and two hearing rooms. The two courtrooms are used for magistrates' court work. The courthouse offers good facilities for court users and the witness waiting areas are well maintained. There are two separate dedicated witness waiting areas at Horsham Magistrates' Court – one for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses and one for general prosecution witnesses. The video link facilities for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses are within the witness waiting area. The current video link allows witnesses to give evidence internally to Horsham Court rooms, but these are currently being upgraded and this will enable witnesses to come to the courthouse to give evidence for hearings at other courts. There is separate access for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses into the witness waiting area. There are two interview rooms in the main waiting area for use and an additional interview room on another floor for private consultations.

Location

Chichester Magistrates' Court is situated in the town centre, near the train station.

Chichester is 21 miles from Worthing and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Worthing. The travel time by rail is approximately 35 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £10.90. Worthing Magistrates' Court is located near the train station. There is no direct bus service between Chichester and Worthing.

Chichester is 35 miles from Horsham and the journey by car is approximately 55 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Chichester and Horsham. The travel time by rail is approximately 35 minutes. The cost of a return ticket is £19.90. There is no direct bus service between Chichester and Horsham.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	96%	By Car	0-30min	12%
	30-60min	4%		30-60min	85%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	4%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	29%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	55%		30-60min	19%
	60-120min	15%		60-120min	75%
	>120min	1%		>120min	5%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	96%	By Car	0-30min	12%
	30-60min	4%		30-60min	85%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	4%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	29%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	55%		30-60min	19%
	60-120min	15%		60-120min	75%
	>120min	1%		>120min	5%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are 13 staff permanently based in Chichester Magistrates' Court.

Other information

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Chichester Magistrates' Court were approximately £438,000.

Chichester Magistrates' Court is a freehold building. There are some building constraints as local architects built this property and it is considered a building of local interest, therefore any alterations need to be submitted to the local authority for consideration.

The National Probation Service occupies part of the building and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Colchester County Court and Family Court (Falkland House)

Proposal

Colchester County and Family Court deals with civil, bankruptcy, private law and divorce. It is one of four county courts in the County of Essex with the others being located in Chelmsford, Basildon and Southend (please see separate integration proposal for Southend County and Family Court). The court has a relatively low level of utilisation.

The accommodation at Colchester County Court and Family Court is not ideal for court users as it is spread between two adjoining buildings over three floors. There are some security issues as there is no CCTV. It does not have sufficient interview rooms to allow for private consultation required by court and tribunal users. The courthouse is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

It is proposed that Colchester County Court and Family Court is closed and the existing civil workload transferred to Chelmsford County and Family Court, whilst the family work would be allocated primarily to Chelmsford County and Family Court and Colchester Magistrates' and Family Court depending on the appropriate judicial tier.

Should Colchester County Court and Family Court close the existing family workload would be issued and allocated in accordance with the principles of the Single Family Court.

These proposals will enable the receiving courts and tribunals to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service could be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Chelmsford County and Family Court and Colchester Magistrates' Court and Family Court offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Colchester County and Family Court was utilised at approximately 58% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Colchester County and Family Court was built in 1979, and has three courtrooms and two hearing rooms. The accommodation is spread between two buildings, with an adjoining door on the first floor. The courthouse has three interview rooms available for private consultation. There are no video link facilities. The accommodation is split over three floors in both buildings and is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. There are some security issues as it does not have a CCTV system.

Colchester Magistrates' and Family Court is a purpose built courthouse which opened in 2011. It has a total of five courtrooms. As a new building it offers an excellent standard of accommodation and facilities for courts and tribunals users. The courthouse has a designated witness suite on the ground floor and eight interview rooms available for private consultation. The building is fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security or maintenance issues.

Chelmsford County and Family Court has four courtrooms and four hearing rooms. It offers good facilities for court and tribunals users. It has large and comfortable waiting areas for parties and witnesses, including a designated child witness waiting room, and has 15 interview rooms, available for private consultation. There are three external and one internal video link facilities for witnesses to give evidence via video link in all four courtrooms. The accommodation is fully compliant with the Equality Act of 2010 and there are no security or maintenance issues.

Location

Colchester County and Family Court is situated close to the town centre and is approximately ten minutes walk from the nearest train station.

Colchester is located 24 miles from Chelmsford and the journey by car is approximately 25 minutes.

There is a regular train service from Colchester to Chelmsford. The travel time by rail is approximately 25 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £12.40. Chelmsford County and Family Court is approximately a ten minute walk from the station.

There is a regular coach service from Colchester to Chelmsford, with a travel time of approximately 50 minutes. The cost of a return ticket is £4.50.

Chelmsford County Court and Family County Court is situated close to the town centre.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	71%	By Car	0-30min	16%
	30-60min	28%		30-60min	82%
	60-120min	1%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	1%
By Public Transport	0-30min	31%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	36%		30-60min	11%
	60-120min	31%		60-120min	84%
	>120min	2%		>120min	5%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 12 staff based at Colchester County and Family Court.

Other information

The operating costs for the financial year 2014/15 for Colchester County and Family Court were approximately £159,000.

The building is leasehold and the lease is due to expire in September 2018.

Colchester County Court Offices (Norfolk House)

Proposal

Colchester County Court Offices are currently mainly used as a hearing venue for Social Security and Child Support Tribunal (SSCS) work. The building is also occasionally used for civil hearings. It is an adjoining building to Colchester County and Family Court (Falkland House). There are issues with the accommodation which are outlined in the proposal for Colchester County Court and Family Court.

It is proposed that Colchester County Court Offices (Norfolk House) are closed and the existing workload moved to Chelmsford County Court and Family Court and Colchester Magistrates' and Family Court. Further details of the accommodation and location of these courthouses are set out in the proposal for Colchester County and Family Court.

During the 2014/15 financial year Colchester County Court Offices was utilised at approximately 26% of its capacity.

The building is leasehold and the lease is due to expire in September 2018.

Dartford Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Dartford Magistrates' Court is one of eight magistrates' courts in Kent with the others being located in Chatham, Maidstone, Margate, Canterbury, Sevenoaks, Folkestone and Dover (please see the separate proposal for Dover Magistrates' Court). It currently has criminal work listed at three courtrooms on one day per week (Monday) and at two courtrooms on two days later in the week (Wednesday and Thursday).

The Kent Judicial Business Group (JBG) launched a consultation on listing arrangements jointly with HM Courts & Tribunals Service in December 2014 with responses due in February 2015. The review included a proposal to centralise more work at Chatham Magistrates' Court and reduce the number of courts at Dartford Magistrates' Court to one day a week from 1 October, 2015. The Kent JBG, having considered the responses to the review approved the proposals. The Kent JBG and HM Courts & Tribunals Service both took the view that a more effective and efficient criminal justice system could be achieved this way.

It is proposed that Dartford Magistrates' Court is closed and all the work is transferred to Chatham Magistrates' Court.

The facilities at Dartford Magistrates' Court are inadequate and out of date for staff, judiciary and all court users, and the work can be accommodated at Chatham Magistrates' Court which offers better accommodation and facilities for users.

Should the court close it would enable the work to be moved to a courthouse with better facilities for court users and would allow the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could then be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Chatham Magistrates' Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Dartford Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 30% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Dartford Magistrates' Court was built in 1900. The court has three courtrooms. The court has five cells, although operationally only one courtroom is used for remand prisoners on the three days a week the court is currently open.

There is a very small waiting room with poor facilities and it does not allow for an easy separation of prosecution and defence witnesses. One of the courtrooms is very small and cannot be used for custody cases. There is only a limited internal video link within the building and no external video links available. There are no virtual court video link facilities available at the courthouse to allow prisoners and witnesses to appear by virtual link from other locations e.g. North Kent Police Station or the witness suite at Swanley.

The courthouse is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010; the access around the building does not meet the requirement of wheelchair users and the first floor has no

means for physically impaired people to access. There is an external disabled lift to access the building as there are two flights of stairs to the front of the building. In order to use this facility court users need to contact the court to arrange access. The security of the building is fair, however the property has limited barrier controlled on-site car parking facilities at the rear of the property. These parking facilities are in high demand and shared with the detention staff; prisoner vans are docking in the same area as the magistrates and staff car parking area which is an elevated risk to both staff and magistrates.

Chatham Magistrates' Court has six courtrooms. The court has five cells but these have a greater maximum capacity than those at Dartford Magistrates' Court (11 compared to five).

There are three waiting areas in total in Chatham Magistrates' Court, one large area on the first floor and two separate waiting areas on the ground floor. This allows for the separation of prosecution and defence witnesses. There are good interview facilities with nine interview rooms plus individual offices for other criminal justice agencies. There are extensive external video links in all of the courtrooms. There are virtual court links which allow prisoners and witnesses to appear by virtual link at Medway Magistrates' Court from other locations e.g. North Kent Police Station or the witness suite at Swanley.

Location

Dartford Magistrates' Court is situated in the town centre.

Dartford is 17 miles from Chatham and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Dartford and Chatham. The travel time by rail is approximately 35 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £9.40.

There is no direct bus service between Dartford and Chatham. There is a regular bus service between Dartford and Bluewater and a regular bus service between Bluewater and Chatham. The overall travel time by bus is approximately one hour. The maximum cost of a return bus ticket between Dartford and Bluewater is £3.00. The maximum cost of a return bus ticket between Bluewater and Chatham is £6.00.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	86%	By Car	0-30min	30%
	30-60min	14%		30-60min	70%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	25%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	34%		30-60min	13%
	60-120min	41%		60-120min	85%
	>120min	0%		>120min	2%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at Dartford Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Dartford Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for the financial year 2014/15 for Dartford Magistrates' Court were approximately £213,000.

Dover Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Dover Magistrates' Court is one of eight magistrates' courts in Kent with the others being located in Folkestone, Canterbury, Maidstone, Margate, Chatham, Sevenoaks and Dartford (please see the separate proposal for Dartford Magistrates' Court). The courthouse currently deals with Family work (private and public law), TV Licensing, Education, non Crown Prosecution Service prosecutions, Confiscation, Council Tax and other local authority prosecutions.

It is proposed that Dover Magistrates' Court is closed and the work is transferred to Folkestone Magistrates' Court. The work can be accommodated at Folkestone Magistrates' Court without any enabling works being required.

Should the court close it would enable the work to be moved to a courthouse with better facilities for court users and would allow the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could then be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Folkestone Magistrates' Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Dover Magistrates' Court was utilised at approximately 15% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Dover Magistrates' Court was built in 1987. The court has four courtrooms. The court has nine cells, although operationally only one courtroom is used for remand prisoners on one day per week and the cells are only used otherwise for occasional courts.

The court provides adequate facilities but there is a lack of external video and prison video links. In addition it does not have a virtual court link available. The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

The court rooms and office infrastructure suffer from historic heating and cooling issues which currently affects the public, judiciary and staff. The fire alarm system also requires replacement.

Folkestone Magistrates Court has four courtrooms. The facilities at the courthouse are much better for court users. There is a much larger and more comfortable waiting room area which allows for easier separation of prosecution and defence witnesses and parties in family cases. There are more interview rooms available. There are external video links in two of the courtrooms and prison to court video links. In addition there is a virtual court link available in Folkestone Magistrates' Court which enables defendants to be heard virtually from prison or custody suite and witnesses to give evidence by virtual link, for example from a police witness suite.

Location

Dover Magistrates' Court is situated in the town centre.

Dover is 11 miles from Folkestone and the journey by car is approximately 20 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Dover and Folkestone. The travel time by rail is approximately 15 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £5.40.

There is a regular bus service between Dover and Folkestone. The travel time by bus is approximately 30 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £5.80.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	55%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	45%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	43%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	50%		30-60min	32%
	60-120min	6%		60-120min	67%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	100%	By Car	0-30min	55%
	30-60min	0%		30-60min	45%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	43%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	50%		30-60min	32%
	60-120min	6%		60-120min	67%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There are 50 members of staff permanently based at Dover Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Dover Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Dover Magistrates' Court were approximately £347,000.

Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Eastbourne Magistrates Court, County Court and Family Court is a multi-jurisdictional courthouse which deals with criminal, civil, public and private law and divorce work. There are currently only a maximum of two magistrates' courtrooms used for criminal work four days per week. The two county courtrooms are also not fully utilised with one courtroom not being used three days per week. The venue is also used to hear Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) Tribunal work approximately one day per week and Coroner Court work one day per week.

Eastbourne Magistrates Court, County Court and Family Court is one of two multi-jurisdictional courthouses in East Sussex with the other being located in Hastings. In addition in East Sussex there is a county court, family court and magistrates' court located in Brighton and a county court based in Lewes.

Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is poorly utilised, and is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

It is proposed that Eastbourne Magistrates', County Court and Family Court is closed and the workload moved primarily to Hastings Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court, which is a larger courthouse with better facilities for court users. There will be some enabling works required at Hastings Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court to create additional courtroom capacity and cell capacity.

There will also be the option, where appropriate for court users, to move some work to Brighton Magistrates' Court (criminal work), Brighton Family Court (family) and Brighton County Court (civil work).

Should Eastbourne Magistrates Court, County Court and Family Court close it would enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can then be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Hastings Magistrates Court, County Court and Family Court, Brighton Magistrates' Court and Brighton County Court offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court was utilised for approximately 38% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Eastbourne Magistrates Court, County Court and Family Court has five courtrooms, three of which can be used for criminal work and two of which can be used for civil and family work. The court has seven cells although these are not currently operational as all custody cases from Eastbourne are already being taken to Hastings Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court to be video linked into Brighton Magistrates' Court.

Eastbourne Magistrates' Court (as was) was built in 1975 and the accommodation was expanded in 2006. The facilities for the judiciary are unsatisfactory due to the construction

and layout which does not meet the current design guide or operational requirements for both civil and criminal courtrooms. There have been some reasonable adjustments made to the courthouse but it is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court offers reasonable facilities for court users. There is a witness waiting suite for prosecution witnesses away from the main waiting area with a number of waiting rooms. This includes a separate room for vulnerable witnesses with separate access, however to enter the courthouse vulnerable witnesses are still required to approach via the front of the building in full view of all other court users. There are no separate waiting rooms for defence witnesses.

The video link equipment is based within the witness suite but is old and in need of upgrading and only allows internal connections. There are six interview rooms for private consultations on the ground floor and two on the first floor. The seating in the waiting area is old and needs replacing.

Hastings Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is a large courthouse with six court rooms and two hearing rooms. The courthouse offers good facilities for court users. The entrance for vulnerable witnesses is better placed in that access is via the back of the building and actively managed by the security team and Witness Service. There is a large court car park and although parking is not routinely provided for all court users, there is more scope to allow vulnerable parties to park safely. The video link equipment allows both internal and external connection. There are twelve interview rooms available, six of which are used for county court and family court users. There is a newly refurbished family suite containing a dedicated hearing room, waiting area and CAFCASS area.

Brighton Magistrates' Courts has ten courtrooms; eight for magistrates' court work and two for Crown Court work. The courthouse offers good facilities for court users. The entrance for vulnerable witnesses is better placed in that access is via the back of the building. There are a number of general waiting rooms around the building and also a separate defence witness waiting room if required.

Brighton County Court has two courtrooms and three hearing rooms and is used exclusively for civil work. There is a large waiting area and interview rooms are available for private consultation. An external video link is available.

Brighton Family Court has three courtrooms and three hearing rooms and is used exclusively for family work. There is a large waiting area and interview rooms are available for private consultations. An external video link is available in Brighton County Court which adjoins the building.

Location

Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court and is situated in the town centre.

Eastbourne is 17 miles from Hastings and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Eastbourne and Hastings. The travel time by rail is approximately 30 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £8.40. Hastings Magistrates' Court, County and Family Court is located near the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between Eastbourne and Hastings. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour and 15 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £6.20.

Eastbourne is 25 miles from Brighton and the journey by car is approximately 45 minutes.

There is also a regular train service between Eastbourne and Brighton. The travel time by rail is approximately 40 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £21.60. The courthouses in Brighton are approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between Eastbourne and Brighton. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour and ten minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £7.00.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	90%	By Car	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	10%		30-60min	99%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	38%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	20%
	60-120min	15%		60-120min	72%
	>120min	1%		>120min	7%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	90%	By Car	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	10%		30-60min	99%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	38%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	20%
	60-120min	15%		60-120min	72%
	>120min	1%		>120min	7%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	99%	By Car	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	1%		30-60min	99%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	45%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	47%		30-60min	22%
	60-120min	7%		60-120min	76%
	>120min	0%		>120min	1%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Staff implications

There are 16 staff based permanently at Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court.

The National Probation Service and Witness Service occupy part of the building and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Other information

Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court and Hastings Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court are both freehold.

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court were approximately £260,000.

Harlow Magistrates' Court

Proposal

Harlow Magistrates' Court is one of five magistrates' courts in the County of Essex, with the others being located in Basildon, Chelmsford, Colchester and Southend. Since April 2014, there has been no magistrates' court work listed at the courthouse as the new courthouses in Colchester and Chelmsford have sufficient capacity for the workload and offer excellent facilities for court users. The venue has been used to hear Social Security and Child Support (SSCS) work two days per week.

It is proposed that Harlow Magistrates' Court is closed and the existing SSCS workload transferred to Chelmsford County and Family Court. This courthouse is a more appropriate venue for SSCS work with better facilities for people with disabilities. Some enabling works would be needed at Chelmsford and Family County Court to accommodate the additional SSCS hearings and judiciary.

Should Harlow Magistrates' Court close this would enable the work to be moved to a larger venue and enable the court and tribunal to be responsive and flexible with the listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Chelmsford County and Family Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Harlow Magistrates' Court was not used for magistrates' work. As mentioned above the courthouse has been used to hear SSCS work.

Accommodation

Harlow Magistrates' Court has a total of three courtrooms. The two large courtrooms have direct access to the custody suite, one has a secure dock and the other a standard dock.

This building is freehold and was built circa 1963 with some additional space added in the form of portacabins in 1992. These portacabins are now past their expected life expectancy and would require substantial modernisation and/or replacement to bring the accommodation up to a fit for purpose standard. The courthouse has three interview rooms available for private consultation

The courthouse has a waiting room for prosecution witnesses but not for defence witnesses. There are no video link facilities. The accommodation is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

The facilities at Chelmsford County and Family Court are much better for court and tribunal users. It has four courtrooms and four hearing rooms. It has large and comfortable waiting areas for parties and witnesses, including a designated child witness waiting room, and has fifteen interview rooms, available for private consultation. There are three external and one internal video link facilities for witnesses to give evidence via video link in all four courtrooms. The accommodation on the first and second floors is fully compliant with the Equality Act of 2010 and there are no security or maintenance issues

Location

Harlow Magistrates' Court is situated in the town centre.

Harlow is 21 miles from Chelmsford and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is no direct train service between Harlow and Chelmsford. There is a regular bus service between Harlow and Chelmsford. The journey time by bus is approximately 50 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £7.40.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	77%	By Car	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	23%		30-60min	98%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	28%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	34%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	34%		60-120min	65%
	>120min	1%		>120min	33%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There is one member of staff permanently based at Harlow Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Harlow Magistrates' Court was retained following a previous consultation to close it under the Court Estate Reform Programme (CERP) announced in December 2010. At that time it was decided that Harlow Magistrates' Court was needed as a satellite court ahead of the new magistrates' courthouses at Colchester and Chelmsford being completed. These are now fully operational and offer excellent facilities for users.

Harlow Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for the financial year 2014/15 for Harlow Magistrates' Court were approximately £102,000.

King's Lynn County Court and Family Court

Proposal

King's Lynn County Court and Family Court is one of two county and family courts in Norfolk with the other being located in Norwich. The courthouse deals with civil, bankruptcy, divorce and family work and administration for Charging Orders in the South East Region.

It is proposed that King's Lynn County Court and Family Court is closed and the civil, and bankruptcy work is moved to Norwich Combined Court and Peterborough Combined Court. Utilisation levels at the court are low, and the work can be accommodated at both venues without any enabling works being required. Should the court close the existing family hearings would be moved to King's Lynn Magistrates' Court and Family Court which is based in another building in the town. The administration for Charging Orders would be moved to King's Lynn Magistrates' Court.

Should King's Lynn County Court and Family Court close it would enable the work to be moved larger venues with better facilities for court users and would enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can then be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Norwich Combined Court and Peterborough Combined Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, King's Lynn County Court and Family Court was utilised at approximately 34% of its capacity.

Accommodation

King's Lynn County Court and Family Court has one courtroom and two hearing rooms.

This building is leasehold and the current lease expires in October 2016. The facilities in general are good for all court users. There are five interview rooms available for private consultation. The accommodation is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Peterborough Combined Court has three courtrooms and three hearing rooms for civil and family work. The facilities are good at this site for all users. All three courtrooms have video link facilities and there are three interview rooms available for private consultation. The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Norwich Combined Court has a total of two courtrooms and four hearing rooms. It is a purpose built courthouse and the accommodation is of good standard for all court users. There is an on site café for all users. There is an internal video link system for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to give evidence. The court has seven interview rooms available for private consultation. The accommodation is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

King's Lynn Magistrates and Family Court has four courtrooms. The facilities in general are good for all users. There is an internal video link system for vulnerable and intimidated

witnesses to give evidence. There are six interview rooms available for private consultation. The accommodation is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Location

King's Lynn County Court and Family Court is situated in the town centre, a 15 minute walk from the rail station.

King's Lynn is 36 miles from Peterborough and the journey by car is approximately one hour.

There is a regular train service between King's Lynn and Peterborough. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour 35 minutes with one change required at Ely. The cost of a return train ticket is £14.40. Peterborough Combined Court is situated in the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between King's Lynn and Peterborough. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour 30 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £11.00.

King's Lynn is 43 miles from Norwich and the journey by car is approximately one hour and 10 minutes.

There is a regular train service between King's Lynn and Norwich. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour and 50 minutes with one change required at Ely. The cost of a return train ticket is £33.90. Norwich Combined Court is located near the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between Kings Lynn and Norwich. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour and 30 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £11.00.

King's Lynn Magistrates' and Family Court is located in the town centre and approximately 500 metres from the County Court building.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	59%	By Car	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	41%		30-60min	62%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	38%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	19%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	36%		30-60min	0%
	60-120min	33%		60-120min	51%
	>120min	5%		>120min	40%
	no data	7%		no data	9%

Staff implications

There are 20 staff permanently based at Kings Lynn County Court and Family Court.

Other information

The operating costs for 2014/15 for King's Lynn County Court and Family Court were approximately £301,000.

King's Lynn County Court and Family Court is a leasehold building, and the lease is due to expire in October 2016.

Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is one of three magistrates' courts, county courts and family courts in Suffolk with the others being located in Ipswich and Bury St Edmunds. Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is a multi-jurisdictional courthouse which deals with criminal, civil, divorce and private and public family law work, and sits four days per week.

Utilisation levels at the court are low, and the building is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The witness suite at Lowestoft Magistrates' Court is located in the county court area away from the criminal courts. Special arrangements have to be put in place to ensure the safety of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to and from the courtroom.

It is proposed that Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is closed and the civil hearing work move to Great Yarmouth Magistrates' Court and Family Court, the family hearing work to Ipswich Magistrates' and Family Court, and the criminal work to Great Yarmouth Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Norwich Magistrates' Court and Family Court. These courts all provide good facilities for users, are compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The work can be accommodated without any enabling works being required.

Should Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court close it would enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved and more efficient service can be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court was utilised at approximately 26% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court was built in 1988. It has a total of four courtrooms and six cells. The accommodation has seven interview rooms available for private consultation. There is a witness suite but it is located in the county court area away from the criminal courts. This causes operational issues as special arrangements have to be put in place to ensure the safety of vulnerable and intimidated witnesses to and from the courtroom. There are no video link facilities at this site. The accommodation is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Great Yarmouth Magistrates' and Family Court has a total of five courtrooms. All courtrooms have direct access to the custody suite, which incorporates ten cells, all of which are operational. The building is a purpose built courthouse. The accommodation is of a good standard for all users. The court has separate witness waiting facilities, with a witness link into courtrooms. There is a fully functional prison to courtroom link in one courtroom, two video link booths for advocates or video conferencing and a live link system to Police Investigation Centres. There are three interview rooms available for private consultation. The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Ipswich Magistrates' Court and Family Court has a total of five courtrooms, three of which have a secure dock and direct access to the custody suite. There are eight cells, all of which are operational. The building also has two further rooms used for tribunal hearings, which have a separate entrance. This building is a purpose built courthouse and accommodation is of a good standard for all users, although custody areas cannot accept wheel chair users as there is no suitable access. The courthouse has a separate witness suite, with a witness link to courts. There is a Prison to Court Video Link (PCVL) in one courtroom with another being installed in June 2015. There are a couple of video link booths in the waiting area and also a live link system to Police Investigation Centres. The court has five interview rooms available for private consultation. The accommodation is compliant with the Equality Act 2010, except for the custody suite.

Norwich Magistrates' and Family Court has a total of seven courtrooms; five on the first floor and a designated family courtroom and a separate youth courtroom on the ground floor. Four of the first floor courtrooms have direct access to the custody suite as does the family courtroom on the ground floor. There are three secure docks and two standard docks. The custody suite has 13 cells, all of which are operational. The accommodation is of a very good standard for all users. There is a Witness Suite providing protected access to the courts and there is also a separate entrance for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. There are live links to one of the Adult Trial courts and also the Youth Court. There is also a Prison to Court Video Link to one of the courtrooms, two video link booths for advocates and video conferencing and a live link system to Police Investigation Centres due to be installed in Summer 2015. There are ten interview rooms available for private consultation. The court is compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Location

Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is adjacent to the town centre.

Lowestoft is 11 miles from Great Yarmouth and the journey by car is approximately 20 minutes.

There is a regular bus service between Lowestoft and Great Yarmouth. The travel time by bus is approximately 45 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £5.00. Great Yarmouth is located near the town centre and is approximately 10 minutes walking distance from the bus stop.

Lowestoft is 45 miles from Ipswich and the journey by car is approximately one hour and 10 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Lowestoft and Ipswich. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour and 35 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £20.80. Ipswich Magistrates' and Family Court is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

Lowestoft is 28 miles from Norwich and the journey by car is approximately 45 minutes

There is an hourly train service between Lowestoft and Norwich. The travel time by rail is approximately 45 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £10.90. Norwich Magistrates' and Family Court is approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

There is also a regular bus service available. The travel time by bus is approximately 80 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £5.50.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	80%	By Car	0-30min	53%
	30-60min	20%		30-60min	47%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	42%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	32%		30-60min	13%
	60-120min	24%		60-120min	75%
	>120min	0%		>120min	10%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	76%	By Car	0-30min	71%
	30-60min	24%		30-60min	29%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	25%	By Public Transport	0-30min	19%
	30-60min	43%		30-60min	28%
	60-120min	31%		60-120min	46%
	>120min	0%		>120min	6%
	no data	1%		no data	1%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	80%	By Car	0-30min	53%
	30-60min	20%		30-60min	47%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%

	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	42%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	32%		30-60min	13%
	60-120min	24%		60-120min	75%
	>120min	0%		>120min	10%
	no data	2%		no data	2%

Staff implications

There are currently 31 staff permanently at Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court.

Other information

Lowestoft Magistrates' Court County Court and Family Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Lowestoft Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court were approximately £348,000.

Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Redhill Magistrates' Court & Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court are co-located at the Law Courts in Redhill. The Law Courts deal with criminal, civil, public and private law and divorce work. There are three magistrates' courtrooms, two of these are used every day with the third is used two days per week at most. Of the two that are used every day one courtroom is used to hear county wide magistrates' work. There is a further courtroom that is used on an ad hoc basis for both magistrates' court and county court hearings. There are two county court hearing rooms which are fully utilised.

The Law Courts in Redhill is one of three multi-jurisdictional courthouses in Surrey with the others being located in Guildford and Staines. It is proposed that the Law Courts in Redhill is closed and the criminal workload transferred to the remaining two magistrates' courts in Surrey. There is sufficient capacity within these courthouses to absorb the work without any need for enabling works at the receiving sites.

This proposal will enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service can then be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Guildford Magistrate' Court, County Court and Family Court and Staines Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Should the Law Courts be closed the existing family and county workload would be transferred primarily to Guildford County Court and Family Court.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court was utilised for approximately 49% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Redhill Magistrates' Court (as was) was built in 1977, and has a total of four courtrooms and two hearing rooms. The court has six cells, which are all operational.

The courthouse is compliant with the Equality Act 2010. There is a lift and public access to all floors but the doors are manual and assistance may be required.

The courthouse has reasonable facilities for users although the hearing rooms that are used for civil and family work are small and not suitable for all types of civil and family work. There is a small waiting room and two interview rooms available for private consultations for civil and family court users.

Guildford Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court has nine courtrooms, one of which is used for Crown Court work, and four hearing rooms. There are good facilities for users with larger hearing rooms and waiting areas. There are 20 interview rooms available

for private consultation. There are good video link facilities available and also secure separate areas for witnesses.

Staines Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court has seven courtrooms. There are good facilities for court users including a purpose built victim and witness suite. There are 11 interview rooms available for private consultation. There are good video link facilities available in the magistrates' courtrooms. There is a larger cell capacity at the courthouse than at Redhill Magistrates' Court.

Location

Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court is situated near the town centre of Redhill, approximately 15 minutes walk from the station.

Redhill is 26 miles from Guildford and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Redhill and Guildford. The travel time by rail is approximately 35 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £11.90. Guildford Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is located in the town centre and is approximately 10 minutes walk from the train station. There is no direct bus service between Redhill and Guildford.

Redhill is 30 miles from Staines and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Redhill and Staines. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour and 15 minutes with one change required. The cost of a return train ticket is £31.20. Staines Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court is located near the town centre and approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station. There is no direct bus service between Redhill and Staines.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	68%	By Car	0-30min	7%
	30-60min	32%		30-60min	86%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	8%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	13%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	32%		30-60min	10%
	60-120min	54%		60-120min	82%
	>120min	1%		>120min	8%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

County workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	63%	By Car	0-30min	5%
	30-60min	37%		30-60min	77%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	6%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	11%
By Public Transport	0-30min	10%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	29%		30-60min	8%
	60-120min	58%		60-120min	73%
	>120min	2%		>120min	8%
	no data	1%		no data	12%

Staff implications

There are 23 members of HM Courts & Tribunals Service staff permanently based at Redhill Magistrates' Court/Reigate County Court.

The Witness Service has one local manager based on site.

Other information

Redhill Magistrates' Court & Family Court and Reigate County Court and Family Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Redhill Magistrates' Court and Family Court and Reigate County and Family Court were approximately £477,000.

St. Albans County Court

Proposal

St. Albans County Court deals with civil and bankruptcy work. It is one of three county courts in the County of Hertfordshire, with the others being located in Hertford and Watford. St Albans County Court is co-located with St Albans Crown Court.

It is proposed that St. Albans County Court is closed and the existing workload is transferred to Watford County Court. The work can be accommodated without any enabling works being required. The space created by the movement of St Albans County Court would allow for other criminal workload to be listed in the courthouse.

Should St. Albans County Court close this would enable the work to be moved to a larger county court venue in Hertfordshire. This would allow the courts to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Watford County Court venue offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, St. Albans County Court was utilised for approximately 65% of its capacity.

Accommodation

St Albans County Court has one hearing room and the facilities at the court are generally good for users. The county court facilities are on the first floor and are compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

Watford County Court has three courtrooms and four hearing rooms and the facilities at the court are good for users. There are two courtrooms that have video link facilities and there are eight interview rooms available for private consultation. The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Location

St Albans County Court is located near the town centre and approximately 15 minutes walk from the train station.

St Albans is 10 miles from Watford and the journey by car is approximately 20 minutes.

There is a regular train service between St Albans and Watford. The travel time by rail is approximately 20 minutes from St Albans Abbey to Watford Junction. The cost of a return rail ticket is £7.30. Watford County Court is located near the train station.

There is a regular bus service between St Albans and Watford. The journey time by bus is approximately 55 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £7.00.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	98%	By Car	0-30min	76%
	30-60min	2%		30-60min	24%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	27%	By Public Transport	0-30min	1%
	30-60min	64%		30-60min	33%
	60-120min	9%		60-120min	65%
	>120min	0%		>120min	1%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are five members of staff permanently based at St Albans County Court

Other information

St Albans County Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs for the financial year 2014/15 for St Albans County Court and St Albans Crown Court collectively were approximately £751,000.

Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court

Proposal

Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court is one of six county courts in Kent, with the others being located in Maidstone, Dartford, Canterbury, Chatham (Medway County and Family Court) and Thanet. All six courthouses deal with civil, public and private family law and divorce work.

It is proposed that Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court is closed and the existing civil workload transferred to Maidstone Combined Court and Hastings County Court. There is capacity in other HM Courts & Tribunals buildings in the area to absorb the work from Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court. There would be some enabling works required at Hastings County and Family Court to create additional hearing room capacity as it is also proposed that this building will accommodate the workload from Eastbourne Magistrates' Court, County Court and Family Court should it close (see separate proposal).

Should Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court be closed the existing family court workload would be issued and allocated in accordance with the principles of the Single Family Court to one of four other family courts which are based in Maidstone, Medway (Chatham), Dartford and Canterbury.

This proposal will enable the receiving courts to be more responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases, meeting customer and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could then be delivered with courts being utilised more efficiently and effectively. The proposed receiving courts offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court was utilised at approximately 17% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court offers good facilities for users with two courtrooms and one hearing room. However, it only has four interview rooms so it is sometimes difficult for users to have private conversations within the courthouse. The security for the building is based at the front door with the hearings being held on the first floor. This can sometimes pose security issues.

Maidstone Combined Court has one courtroom and two hearing rooms for civil and family work. It is a purpose built courthouse with larger waiting areas. There are two interview rooms designated for county court and family court use and a further sixteen interview rooms that are designated for crown court use but available for county court and family court users when the Crown Court is sitting. There is a very large concourse and seating areas are provided outside the county court administration office so court users can have private conversations. If the interview rooms are being used there is plenty of space within the courthouse for private conversations. The security for the courthouse is on the same floor level as the courtrooms.

Hastings County Court and Family Court is co-located with Hastings Magistrates' Court and Family Court. It has three courtrooms dedicated to civil and family work. There is a large waiting area next to each of the courtrooms and six interview rooms. The entrance for vulnerable witnesses is better placed in that access is via the back of the building and actively managed by the security team and Witness Service. There is a large court car park and although parking is not routinely provided for all court users, there is more scope to allow vulnerable parties to park safely.

Medway County Court and Family Court is located in Chatham and is the Designated Family Centre for Kent sitting all three tiers of judiciary in family courts. It has two courtrooms and five hearing rooms. There are larger waiting areas split over two floors and eight interview rooms available for private consultations. If the interview rooms are being used there is plenty of space within the courthouse for private conversations. The security for the courthouse is based on the same level as the courtrooms.

Canterbury Combined Court is a purpose built courthouse with four courtrooms for civil and family work. It has large and comfortable waiting areas. There are five interview rooms designated for county court and family court use and a further ten interview rooms that are designated for crown court use but available for county court and family court users when the crown court is sitting. If the interview rooms are being used there is plenty of space within the courthouse for private conversations. The security for the courthouse is based on the same level as the courtrooms. There are on site catering and parking facilities for court users.

Dartford County and Family is a purpose built courthouse with two courtrooms and two hearing rooms. It has waiting areas split over two floors and two interview rooms. If the interview rooms are being used there is plenty of space within the courthouse for private conversations. The security for the courthouse is based on the same level as the courtrooms.

Location

Tunbridge Wells County is situated in the town centre. The distances and journey to proposed receiving courts are as follows:

County Court

Tunbridge Wells to Maidstone

Tunbridge Wells is 20 miles from Maidstone and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is a one train an hour between Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone West (this is the nearest train station to Maidstone Combined Court) with one change required at Tonbridge. The travel time by rail is approximately 45 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £9.50.

There is a regular bus service from Tunbridge Wells to Maidstone. The travel time by bus is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £6.00.

Tunbridge Wells to Hastings

Tunbridge Wells is 29 miles from Hastings and the journey by car is approximately 45 minutes.

There is also a regular direct train service between Tunbridge West and Hastings. The travel time by rail is approximately 45 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £36.60. Hastings County Court is located near the town centre and is approximately 15 minutes walking distance from the train station.

There is no direct bus service from Tunbridge Wells to Hastings.

Family Court

Tunbridge Wells to Maidstone

Tunbridge Wells is 20 miles from Maidstone and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is a one train an hour between Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone West (this is the nearest train station to Maidstone Combined Court) with one change required at Tonbridge. The travel time by rail is approximately 45 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £9.50.

There is a regular bus service from Tunbridge Wells to Maidstone. The travel time by bus is approximately 1 hour and 20 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £6.00.

Tunbridge Wells to Chatham (Medway Family Court)

Tunbridge Wells is 27 miles from Chatham and the journey by car is approximately 45 minutes.

There is a train service between Tunbridge Wells and Chatham with two changes required at Sevenoaks and Swanley. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour and 40 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £16.10.

There is no direct bus service from Tunbridge Wells to Chatham.

Tunbridge Wells to Canterbury

Tunbridge Wells is 50 miles from Canterbury and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is a train service between Tunbridge Wells and Canterbury with one change required at Tonbridge. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour 30 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £22.30.

There is no direct bus service from Tunbridge Wells to Canterbury.

Tunbridge Wells to Dartford

Tunbridge Wells is 27 miles from Dartford and the journey by car is approximately 40 minutes.

There is a train service between Tunbridge Wells and Dartford with one change required at London Waterloo. The travel time by rail is approximately one hour 45 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £41.70.

There is no direct bus service from Tunbridge Wells to Dartford.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	92%	By Car	0-30min	7%
	30-60min	8%		30-60min	92%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	1%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	26%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	53%		30-60min	18%
	60-120min	21%		60-120min	77%
	>120min	1%		>120min	4%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 13 staff permanently based at Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court.

Other information

Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court is a leasehold building. The lease is due to expire in September 2017.

The operating costs for 2014/15 for Tunbridge Wells County Court and Family Court were £463,000.

Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court

Proposal

Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court is one of five magistrates' courts in the County of Hertfordshire, with the others being located in Hatfield, Hertford, St. Albans and Stevenage. There are currently only a maximum of two magistrates' courtrooms being used each day, one for family work and one for criminal work.

The facilities at Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court are generally very poor for all users. The courthouse does not have its own custody suite, or a lift to the dock from the cells, and the accommodation is split over two floors. The building is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

It is proposed that Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court is closed the existing criminal work would be transferred to St Albans Magistrates' Court and the existing family work would be transferred to Watford County Court and Family Court. The work can be accommodated without any enabling works being required, and both venues are fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010.

This proposal would enable the courts to be more responsive and flexible with the listing of cases meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. St Alban's Magistrates' Court and Watford County and Family Court offer good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Should this proposal go ahead the Judicial Business Group (JBG) would undertake local stakeholder engagement to consider the need for the merger of Local Justice Areas.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, utilisation at Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court was approximately 55% of its capacity.

Accommodation

Watford Magistrates' Court (as was) was built in 1935, and has three courtrooms. Two courtrooms have a direct link to the custody suite that is in the adjoining police station, but it does not have its own custody suite. The facilities in general are poor and out of date for staff, judiciary and all users. The courthouse has three interview rooms available for private consultation. There is one video link facility at this location.

The accommodation is split over two floors and is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. There is no lift to the docks from the cells. It does, however, have a separate disabled access entrance to the side of the building that needs to be opened by security when it is required.

St Albans Magistrates' Court has a total of six courtrooms. There are also an additional two courtrooms in the courthouse which are used for crown court work. Three of the courtrooms have direct access to the custody suite, where there are 11 cells all of which are operational. There are four secure docks and one standard dock. The courthouse has waiting rooms for both prosecution and defence witnesses. There are three video link

facilities for witnesses to give evidence. The court has eight interview rooms available for private consultation.

There are two courtrooms on the ground floor making this building fully compliant with the Equality Act of 2010, both in terms of public and defendant access.

Watford County Court and Family Court has three courtrooms and four hearing rooms. The facilities are good for users. There are two courtrooms that have video link facilities and there are eight interview rooms available for private consultation. The building is compliant with the Equality Act 2010 and there are no security issues.

Location

Watford Magistrates' and Family Court is located in the town centre, near the train station.

Watford is 10 miles from St Albans and the journey by car is approximately 20 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Watford and St Albans. The travel time by rail is approximately 20 minutes to St. Albans Abbey. The costs of a return rail ticket is £7.30. St Albans Magistrates' Court is located near the town centre and approximately 20 minutes walk from the train station.

There is a regular bus service between Watford and St. Albans. The journey time by bus is approximately 55 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £7.00.

Watford Magistrates' Court is situated within less than half-a-mile of Watford County and Family Court.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Magistrates' workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	84%	By Car	0-30min	86%
	30-60min	16%		30-60min	14%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	33%	By Public Transport	0-30min	33%
	30-60min	49%		30-60min	47%
	60-120min	18%		60-120min	19%
	>120min	0%		>120min	2%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Family workload:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	87%	By Car	0-30min	88%
	30-60min	13%		30-60min	12%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	34%	By Public Transport	0-30min	34%
	30-60min	51%		30-60min	49%
	60-120min	15%		60-120min	15%
	>120min	0%		>120min	2%
	no data	0%		no data	0%

Staff implications

There are 42 members of staff permanently based at Watford Magistrates' Court.

Other information

Watford Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The operating costs in 2014/15 for Watford Magistrates' Court and Family Court were £315,000.

West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court

Proposal

West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court is one of four magistrates' courts in the County of Berkshire with the others being located in Reading, Maidenhead and Slough. West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court currently has criminal and youth work listed at two courtrooms in the courthouse on one day per week. In addition local authority work is heard one day per month at the courthouse.

It is proposed that West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court is closed and the work is moved to Reading Magistrates' Court. The work can be accommodated at Reading Magistrates' Court without any enabling works being required.

Should the court close it would enable the work to be moved to a courthouse with better facilities and would enable the court to be responsive and flexible with the throughput and listing of cases meeting user and workflow demands more effectively. An improved more efficient service could be delivered with courts and tribunals being utilised more efficiently and effectively. Reading Magistrates' Court offers good facilities for HM Courts & Tribunals Service users.

Workload

During the 2014/15 financial year, utilisation at Newbury Magistrates' Court was approximately 11% of its capacity.

Accommodation

West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court was built in 1966 and has two courtrooms and one hearing room. The courthouse is not fully compliant with the Equality Act 2010. The main front entrance can be accessed via a ramp. There is a platform lift located in the former public county court area which provides access to the first floor witness service secure area. Court users need to be escorted by security staff to make use of this facility. There is a disabled toilet in the former public county court area on the ground floor.

There is one dedicated witness room and other rooms and offices in the courthouse that can be used as witness waiting rooms on an ad hoc basis. There is also an internal witness video link for cases heard at West Berkshire (Newbury). It does not allow the transmission of evidence to other courts.)

The courthouse does not have its own cells. It has a custody suite that is owned and managed by Thames Valley Police. The access to these was down a stairwell and they are no longer used. Prisoners are delivered to the custody suite by accessing the Police Station van dock at the rear of the Police Station. The Prisoner Escort Contract Service (PECS) provider, Geo Amey, currently has an office in the custody suite for their use.

The cells are accessed from the courthouse and prisoners are produced from the custody suite via this access. The cells that are used are dependent upon the number of prisoners produced. Close liaison takes place between the police, the court and Geo Amey. Custody cases are not routinely listed at Newbury.

Reading Magistrates' Court has nine courtrooms. In 2010 two courtrooms were converted from magistrates' courts to Crown courtrooms. Courtrooms 8 and 9 were also created at the same time and allow easy access to people with mobility issues. During these works, a disabled passenger lift was installed that allows access to the first floor. There are also disabled parking bays within the boundary of the court allowing easy access. There are separate waiting areas for prosecution and defence witnesses, each with their own toilet facilities. There is a vulnerable witness suite available with video link equipment for vulnerable and intimidated witnesses. There is also a disabled toilet available within the main concourse and close to courtrooms 8 and 9.

Location

West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court is situated in within walking distance of the town centre.

Newbury is 20 miles from Reading and the journey by car is approximately 35 minutes.

There is a regular train service between Newbury and Reading. The journey time by rail is approximately 30 minutes. The cost of a return train ticket is £9.40.

There is a regular bus service between Newbury and Reading. The journey time by bus is approximately one hour and 20 minutes. The cost of a return bus ticket is £7.50.

Travel time data for this court pre and post closure is shown below:

Before	Time	%	After	Time	%
By Car	0-30min	94%	By Car	0-30min	28%
	30-60min	6%		30-60min	72%
	60-120min	0%		60 - 120min	0%
	>120min	0%		>120min	0%
	no data	0%		no data	0%
By Public Transport	0-30min	30%	By Public Transport	0-30min	0%
	30-60min	44%		30-60min	15%
	60-120min	12%		60-120min	78%
	>120min	7%		>120min	4%
	no data	6%		no data	3%

Staff implications

There are no staff permanently based at West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court.

The National Probation Service occupies part of the building and alternative arrangements would need to be made should the decision to close the court be taken.

Other information

West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court is a freehold building.

The 2014/15 operating costs of West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court were approximately £155,000.

West Berkshire (Newbury) Magistrates' Court was included in the Court Estates Reform Programme proposals in 2010. At that time the Lord Chancellor decided that the court should remain open in order to retain a court service provision within the locality. Since that time the criminal workload in West Berkshire has reduced further and utilisation at the court is very low. In addition to this, the building is not compliant with the Equality Act 2010, and there are issues with the existing facilities which are detailed above.

Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions.

Question 1. Do you agree with the proposals? What overall comments would you like to make on the proposals?

Question 2. Will the proposals for the provision of court and tribunal services have a direct impact on you? If yes, please provide further details.

Question 3. Are there other particular impacts of the proposals that HM Courts & Tribunals Service should take into account when making a decision? Please provide details.

Question 4. Our assessment of the likely impacts and supporting analysis is set out in the Impact Assessment accompanying this consultation. Do you have any comments on the evidence used or conclusions reached? Please provide any additional evidence that you believe could be helpful.

Question 5. Are there alternatives to travelling to a physical building that would be a benefit to some users? These could include using technology to engage remotely or the use of other, civic or public buildings for hearings as demand requires. Please explain your answer, with specific examples and evidence of the potential demand for the service where possible.

Question 6. Please provide any additional comments that you have.

Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.

About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

Full name	
Job title or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
Date	
Company name/organisation (if applicable):	
Address	
Postcode	
If you would like us to acknowledge receipt of your response, please tick this box	<input type="checkbox"/> (please tick box)
Address to which the acknowledgement should be sent, if different from above	

If you are a representative of a group, please tell us the name of the group and give a summary of the people or organisations that you represent.

Contact details/How to respond

Please send your response by 8 October 2015 to:

**HMCTS Consultation
Ministry of Justice
Post point 1.13
102 Petty France
London
SW1H 9AJ**

Fax: 0870 761 7768

Email: estatesconsultation@hmcts.gsi.gov.uk

Complaints or comments

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation process you should contact the Ministry of Justice at the above address.

Extra copies

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at www.gov.uk/moj

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from the Ministry of Justice (please see details above).

Publication of response

The response to this consultation exercise will be available on-line at www.gov.uk/moj.

Representative groups

Representative groups are asked to give a summary of the people and organisations they represent when they respond.

Confidentiality

Information provided in response to this consultation, including personal information, may be published or disclosed in accordance with the access to information regimes (these are primarily the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA), the Data Protection Act 1998 (DPA) and the Environmental Information Regulations 2004).

If you want the information that you provide to be treated as confidential, please be aware that, under the FOIA, there is a statutory Code of Practice with which public authorities must comply and which deals, amongst other things, with obligations of confidence. In view of this it would be helpful if you could explain to us why you regard the information you have provided as confidential. If we receive a request for disclosure of the information we will take full account of your explanation, but we cannot give an assurance that confidentiality can be maintained in all circumstances. An automatic confidentiality

disclaimer generated by your IT system will not, of itself, be regarded as binding on the Ministry.

The Ministry will process your personal data in accordance with the DPA and in the majority of circumstances, this will mean that your personal data will not be disclosed to third parties.

Impact Assessment

Impact Assessment for proposals likely to affect businesses, charities, voluntary sector or the public sector – see guidance on: (<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/impact-assessment-template-for-government-policies>)

Consultation principles

The principles that Government departments and other public bodies should adopt for engaging stakeholders when developing policy and legislation are set out in the consultation principles.

<http://www.cabinetoffice.gov.uk/sites/default/files/resources/Consultation-Principles.pdf>

[leave blank – inside back cover]

© Crown copyright 2015
Produced by the Ministry of Justice

You may re-use this information (excluding logos) free of charge in any format or medium, under the terms of the Open Government Licence. To view this licence, visit <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/doc/open-government-licence/> or email: psi@nationalarchives.gsi.gov.uk

Where we have identified any third party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned.

Alternative format versions of this report are available on request from the Ministry of Justice [please see above for contact details].