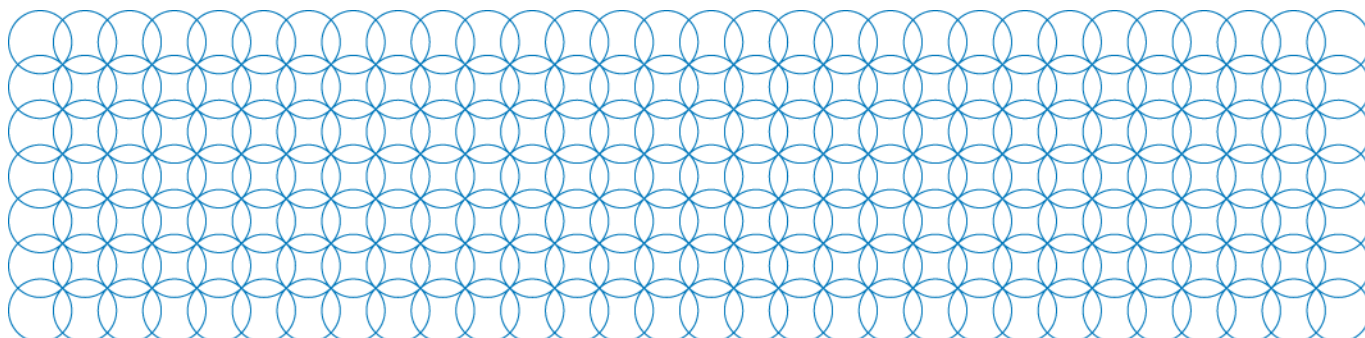


# **Proposal on the provision of magistrates' and county court services in London**

**Consultation Paper HMCS CP12/10**

Published on 23 June 2010

This consultation will end on 15 September 2010





## **Proposal on the provision of magistrates' and county court services in London**

**A consultation produced by Her Majesty's Courts Service, part of the  
Ministry of Justice. It is also available on the Ministry of Justice website at  
[www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk)**



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## The HMCS national estates strategy

HMCS is committed to providing a high quality courts service within a reasonable travelling distance of the communities that use it, while ensuring value for money for taxpayers.

HMCS currently operates out of 530 courthouses – 330 magistrates' courts, 219 county courts and 91 Crown Court centres.<sup>1</sup> However, the number and location of these does not reflect changes in population, workload or transport and communication links over the years since many of them were opened. This has resulted in some courts sitting infrequently and hearing too few cases. Some buildings do not provide suitable facilities for those attending or are not fully accessible for disabled court users. A number of magistrates' courts do not have secure facilities for prisoners. Other agencies with whom we work across the justice system are also put under strain by the need to work at a number of different courts in the same area, some of which are in close proximity to each other.

When public finances are under pressure, it is vital we eliminate waste and reduce costs. This consultation sets out how we believe we can best meet the justice needs of communities in each area and invites comments on whether work from the courts we propose to close could be moved to nearby courts which have sufficient capacity and, in the majority of cases, better facilities. By using these courts more efficiently we hope to save public money while also improving the services we provide for court users.

We are also consulting on the merger of a number of Local Justice Areas which would enable effective changes to courthouse provision. This will facilitate further efficiency savings in administrative work, whilst ensuring that magistrates continue to provide a vital frontline service to the public.

In order to form the proposals in this document the following principles have been followed:

- improve utilisation to at least 80%;
- provide greater flexibility through co-location of criminal courts and civil courts with tribunal hearing centres;
- plan on a long term basis;
- integrate developing policy and operational changes into estates planning;
- ensure access to courts – enabling the majority of the public to be within a 60 minute commute of their nearest court by public transport;<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> A number of courts are co-located or in combined centres.

<sup>2</sup> With consideration given to those who live in rural communities.

- ensure the estate supports the challenges of rural access;
- wherever possible centralise back office functions;
- have specialist facilities in large strategic locations only;
- move towards larger courts;
- maintain properties at an appropriate level; and
- share facilities with the Tribunal Service.

Court users should not have to make excessively long or difficult journeys to attend court, but geographical proximity for all court users should not be the sole (or even primary) concern. Providing people with appropriate access to justice does not necessarily mean providing a courthouse in every town or city. The speed of case outcome, the quality and efficiency of the service we provide, and an environment which commands respect for the justice system and the safety and comfort of court users, are much more significant to the delivery of effective local justice across all communities in England and Wales.

We need to ensure that local communities, including those in rural areas, have access to a court and we seek views on this. At the same time we must be realistic about the frequency with which most people need to visit a court, compared to other services which they use and travel to more regularly such as banks, schools, supermarkets or hospitals.

We need to consider the required courts estate in the context of the falling workload which is being dealt with in a more efficient and timely way as a result of close partnership working between HMCS and the judiciary. At the same time, we have been careful to ensure that there remains sufficient capacity within the remaining courts to accommodate any future increases in workload.

This consultation will take account of all of these factors plus any additional relevant considerations which are put forward during the consultation period.



## Introduction

This paper announces proposals that will enable HMCS in London to provide vital public services whilst reducing the cost for the taxpayer.

Feedback to the questions set out in the consultations will enable us to ensure that courts remain in the most important strategic locations, that communities continue to have access to courts within a reasonable travelling distance, and that cases are heard in courts with suitable facilities which will in turn reduce the overall costs. At the same time, we have been careful to ensure that there would be sufficient capacity within the remaining magistrates' courts should there be a decision to increase their sentencing powers in the future.

The consultation seeks the views of everyone with an interest in local justice arrangements. The Lord Chancellor will take all views expressed into account before making any decision on which courts ought to be closed and when.

This consultation is being conducted in line with the Code of Practice on Consultation issued by the Cabinet Office and falls within the scope of the Code. The consultation criteria, which are set out on page 57 have been followed.

A preliminary Impact Assessment and Equality Impact Assessment initial screening have been completed, which will be developed during the consultation period. A copy of the initial Impact Assessment, the initial screening for an Equality Impact Assessment and the Rural Proofing checklist is available at [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk).

Copies of the consultation paper are being sent to:

- Local MPs;
- Local Constabulary;
- Crown Prosecution Service – Chief Crown Prosecutor;
- Director of Offender Management;
- Civil Court Users Association;
- Mayor of London;
- District and County Councils and Local Authorities;
- Local Courts Board;
- Local Criminal Justice Boards;
- Judicial Issues Group;
- Local Bench Chairs;
- Criminal Defence Service;

- Law Society;
- Bar Council;
- Local legal practitioners;
- Senior Presiding Judge;
- Presiding Judge;
- Senior District Judge
- Association of HM District Judges;
- District Judge (Magistrates' Court);
- The Chief Magistrate;
- Magistrates' Association;
- National Bench Chairs Forum;
- Justices' Clerks' Society;
- Lord Lieutenant;
- High Sheriff;
- Witness Care;
- Victim Support;
- Youth Offending Teams;
- Prison Escort and Custody Service;
- The Coroners Service; and
- Trades Unions (PCS, FDA and Prospect).

This list is not meant to be exhaustive or exclusive and responses are welcomed from anyone with an interest in or views on the subject covered by this paper.

This consultation is also available at [www.justice.gov.uk](http://www.justice.gov.uk).

A map of proposals set out in this consultation paper is available at Annex A.

## Magistrates' courts in London

### The need for change

The magistrates' courts service in London has undergone considerable organisational change in recent years. The management structure was initially reorganised by the Greater London Magistrates' Courts Authority in 2003. More recently, HMCS has grouped the magistrates' courts into clusters for administrative purposes and made further changes to its management structure. Throughout this period performance has generally been sustained, and has improved in some key areas.

Previous changes to the management structure of London's magistrates' courts have reduced costs and improved efficiency, as has the concentration of functions within administrative centres. However, the number of sites to be supported has remained largely unaltered and resources are consequently stretched and many courts are struggling to provide effective services.

HMCS currently operates magistrates' courts in 34 locations across London. The quality of, and facilities offered by these locations varies considerably. We have a number of relatively new, purpose-built courthouses with modern facilities, there is still a significant number that are over a hundred years old and many of these were converted from other uses and not designed with the needs of modern courthouse users in mind.

Usage of courtroom facilities is also extremely variable across London. The 2009/10 utilisation rate for the London magistrates' courts is circa. 79% but this figure obscures the fact that a number are sitting for considerably less than this.<sup>3</sup> We also find that some of our newest courthouses, with the most modern facilities for court users, are using only half their available courtroom space, whilst other, older courthouses have more cases listed in them than they can comfortably manage with their current courtrooms and ancillary facilities.

In developing the estates rationalisation proposals that follow we have therefore adopted a number of key principles. These were set out in some detail in the paper *Planning for the future of the magistrates' courts service in London* issued on 13 October 2009<sup>4</sup> and include the following:

- provision of a magistrates' courts service that is accessible to court users (in terms of the speed of case outcome, the quality and efficiency of the

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<sup>3</sup> Seven courts have a utilisation rate of less than 70% and, of these, two are used for less than 60% of the time.

<sup>4</sup> This paper can be found online at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/news/announcement131009a.htm>

service we provide, and courthouse environment as much as reasonable geographical proximity);

- creation of a courthouse (and Local Justice Area) structure that is sufficiently flexible to enable the work of the courts to be dealt with in a timely way;
- provision of an appropriate and safe environment for court users and those who work within the criminal and family justice systems;
- demonstration of cost effectiveness and efficiency in comparison to the rest of the country; and
- not allowing existing boundaries to inhibit the creation of a structure that best fits future requirements to better serve court users.

On this last point, in London we have largely organised the magistrates' courts service along borough boundaries and this is especially so in outer London. This has meant that all our structures, including management structures, are designed to support a large number of small units. As a result, there are currently 28 Local Justice Areas (LJAs) within the London Criminal Justice Board (LCB) area, each with a separate bench of magistrates.<sup>5</sup> This model is neither efficient nor sustainable.

The second dimension of our proposal is therefore that we merge the 28 existing LJAs that currently exist into nine as follows:

1. Camden, Islington, Enfield and Haringey to be referred to in this document as **North London** Local Justice Area;<sup>6</sup>
2. Hackney, Tower Hamlets, Stratford and Waltham Forest to be referred to in this document as **North East London** Local Justice Area;
3. Barking, Havering and Redbridge to be referred to in this document as **East London** Local Justice Area;
4. Bexley, Bromley, Greenwich and Lewisham to be referred to in this document as **South East London** Local Justice Area;
5. Croydon, Lambeth & Southwark and Sutton to be referred to in this document as **South London** Local Justice Area;
6. City of London, City of Westminster, Kensington and Chelsea, and Hammersmith and Fulham to be referred to in this document as **Central London** Local Justice Area.
7. Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth to be referred to in this document as **South West London** Local Justice Area;
8. Ealing, Hillingdon and Hounslow to be referred to in this document as **West London** Local Justice Area; and
9. Barnet, Brent and Harrow to be referred to in this document as **North West London** Local Justice Area;

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<sup>5</sup> The Courts Act 2003 affords magistrates' national jurisdiction but they are assigned individually to specific Local Justice Areas.

<sup>6</sup> The names of any new LJAs will be determined in consultation with the judiciary.

We also propose to replace the current 20 outer London youth panels and the Inner London and City Youth Panel<sup>7</sup> with nine youth panels (one per new LJA) and then return Inner London and City youth work to originating Local Justice Areas i.e. Lambeth and Southwark work currently heard at Balham to the South London LJA and Greenwich and Lewisham work currently heard at Camberwell to the South East London LJA.

While the LJA amalgamations above will result in benches of between 284 and 428, changes on this scale will have a number of benefits:

- we will be able to list more flexibly enabling magistrates' to sit at a wider number of courthouses thereby making better use of magistrates' time and courtroom availability;
- we will be able to distribute work across the larger LJAs more effectively (i.e. shifting workload to where capacity and capability exists within the LJA), leading to improved utilisation levels and more efficient use of resources;
- it will provide HMCS with the opportunity to create specialist centres aimed at providing better service court users with specific needs particularly victims and witnesses;
- creation of nine youth panels (attached to larger LJAs) will enable us to provide access to a youth court in each LJA every day of the week and adopt a more consistent approach to youth work across London;
- it will reduce the cost of administering 28 LJAs (e.g. by reducing the number of bench and other meetings held) and, in turn, facilitate more efficient deployment and use of Legal Advisers and other staff.

Larger Benches sitting across fewer locations will also enable us to provide magistrates with a higher volume and wider variety of work. This will, in turn, generate the opportunity for magistrates to gain skills and confidence in a broader mix of work and for HMCS to better accommodate a variety of sitting patterns. Our proposals will also increase the workload in some courts reducing the likelihood of sittings going short, a frequent source of frustration for magistrates.

In summary, in operating out of 34 magistrates' courts with 28 separate LJAs and Benches HMCS is unable to maintain an efficient service in London. By implementing the proposals set out below we believe that we can make better use of the remaining estate and significantly reduce costs both to HMCS and other agencies within the criminal justice system.

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<sup>7</sup> The Inner London and City Youth Panel is a statutory entity and currently comprises four rota groups: Lambeth and Wandsworth (sitting at Balham Youth Court); Hammersmith and Fulham, Kensington and Chelsea and Westminster (sitting at West London Magistrates' Court); Camden, Hackney, Islington, Tower Hamlets and City youth court (sitting at Thames and Highbury Corner Magistrates' Courts); Greenwich, Lewisham and Southwark youth courts (sitting at Camberwell Green Magistrates' Court). There are currently 137 magistrates sitting on the Inner London and City Youth Panel.

## The proposal

- To close the magistrates' courts in Acton, Barking, Brentford, Harrow, Kingston upon Thames, Sutton and Woolwich;
- To close the magistrates' courts at Balham, Tower Bridge, Highgate and Waltham Forest (upon completion of required enabling works at Camberwell Green, Enfield, Highbury Corner and Stratford magistrates' courts respectively);
- Subject to the above, to continue to operate magistrates' courts in Barnet, Bexley, Brent, Bromley, Camberwell Green, City of London, City of Westminster, Croydon, Ealing, Enfield, Feltham, Greenwich, Haringey, Havering, Highbury Corner, Hendon, Redbridge, Richmond upon Thames, South Western, Stratford, Thames, Uxbridge, West London and Wimbledon and the Inner London Family Proceedings Court at Wells Street;
- To merge the 28 Local Justice Areas to create nine Local Justice Areas (as set out above); and
- To replace the current 20 outer London youth panels and the Inner London and City Youth Panel with nine youth panels and then to return Inner London and City youth work to originating Local Justice Areas.

## **Acton Magistrates' Court**

Acton is a small, three-courtroom centre that deals primarily with youth work, TV licensing, local authority and council tax prosecutions. It also currently houses the Specialist Domestic Violence Court (SDVC) for West London. Together with Ealing Magistrates' Court, it currently forms the Ealing Local Justice Area (LJA).

The proposal is that the court will close and that its work will be listed across the other courts in the new West London LJA, in particular Ealing and Feltham.

### **Workload**

The court lists two of its three courtrooms on a regular basis. That said, court one only sits four days per week (Monday to Thursday) and court two sits alternate four days per week (Monday to Thursday) and three day weeks (Monday to Wednesday). The third court is not used.

### **Accommodation**

The courthouse is approximately 104 years old and not fit for purpose. Not all courts have access to the cells. There are no full height secure docks or a video link to the prison. There is a lack of dedicated vulnerable victim facilities and no informal courtrooms. Witness facilities are extremely poor with only one very small room available for use which is accessed via administrative office areas. Witnesses also have to use the same entrance as the general public and have to walk through the public waiting area to get into the court itself.

The custody area and main public areas are not Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) compliant. As the public waiting area is so small, this also creates a number of security issues as we are unable to segregate youths and adults.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Acton, Ealing, Feltham and Uxbridge (Hillingdon) are reasonable and travel links are good. Acton is approximately two miles from Ealing, nine miles from Feltham and twelve miles from Uxbridge (Hillingdon).

The route between Acton and Feltham is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with three trains an hour running between the two. The train journey takes between 32 and 41 minutes and costs £5.40 return. Regular tube and bus services (from Acton to Hatton Cross and Hatton Cross to Feltham respectively) are also available with an average journey time of approximately 35 minutes (for both tube and bus) and costs £9.00 (return).

The route between Acton and Ealing is also via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with two trains an hour. The train journey takes approximately six minutes and costs £2.90 return. There is also a regular bus service (every six to seven minutes) with an average journey time of approximately twelve minutes, costing £4.00 return.

The route between Acton and Uxbridge is also via 'A' graded roads. The tube journey from Acton Town to Uxbridge takes between 33 and 41 minutes and costs £5.10 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are four staff based at Acton Magistrates' Court: three administration staff and one usher. Legal advisors sit in rotation at the court.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Acton Magistrates' Court was £203,558.<sup>8</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £310,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Acton Magistrates' Court a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work to Ealing, Feltham and Uxbridge.

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<sup>8</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).



## **Merger of Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon Local Justice Areas to form the West London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 150, 153 and 125 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches, HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Ealing, Feltham and Uxbridge or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Barking Magistrates' Court**

Barking Magistrates' Court is a four court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction with some centralised listing of traffic cases. However, because of limited cells access (only one of the four has a direct and secure link to the custody area) the nature and volume of work that can be listed there is limited.

It is the only courthouse within the current Barking & Dagenham Local Justice Area (LJA).

The proposal is that the court will close and that its work will be listed across the other courts in the new East London LJA, namely Havering (Romford) and Redbridge.

### **Workload**

While the courthouse is open every day, only two or three court rooms out of a possible four courtrooms are listed. Four courts per week are centralised traffic work.

### **Accommodation**

The building is Grade II listed and has many maintenance issues that are difficult to remedy. The custody area has rising damp and the custody facilities are not acceptable either for staff and defendants. There are no secure facilities for the delivery of prisoners in custody and only one courtroom has a secure dock.

Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) accessibility is poor and witness facilities are very limited. The staff office area is cramped and basement storage areas present Health & Safety, security and fire risks which, although being managed, cannot be eliminated.

One of the courtrooms is of a non-standard design leading to security issues for magistrates (public access to the courtroom is immediately adjacent to the Bench).

Both Redbridge and Havering are relatively modern in comparison and we can provide better witness facilities at Havering in particular.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Barking, Havering and Redbridge are reasonable and travel links are good. Barking is approximately seven miles from Havering (Romford) and five miles from Redbridge (Ilford).

The route between Barking and Havering (Romford) is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with three trains an hour running between the

two. The train journey takes between 23 and 39 minutes and costs £5.40 return. Buses also run regularly with an average journey time of approximately 46 minutes and cost of £4.00 return.

The route between Barking and Redbridge is also via 'A' graded roads. Buses run regularly between the two with an average journey time of between 39 and 51 minutes at a cost of £4.00 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are twelve staff based at Barking Magistrates' Court: five administration staff, two ushers and five Legal Advisors.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Barking Magistrates' Court was £313,434.<sup>9</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £115,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Barking Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work to Havering and Redbridge.

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<sup>9</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Barking, Havering and Redbridge Local Justice Areas to form the East London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 95, 90 and 120 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Havering or Redbridge or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Brentford Magistrates' Court**

Brentford is a small two court centre that, because of its size and poor facilities, sits infrequently. It is closed to the public Mondays and Tuesdays. Its workload is predominantly traffic work generated from within a number of London boroughs. Together with Feltham Magistrates' Court, it currently forms the Hounslow Local Justice Area (LJA).

The proposal is for the court to close and for its work to be redistributed, primarily across the courts within the proposed West London LJA, namely Ealing, Feltham and Uxbridge.

### **Workload**

Court one at Brentford is listed one day a week (Thursday) and court two alternate two/three days a week (Wednesday/Thursday to Friday).

### **Accommodation**

The courthouse is 158 years old and not fit for purpose. The custody facilities and secure entry into the building are inadequate. The court has damp in the cells area which is spreading. There is poor DDA accessibility and compliance is very problematic given its Grade II listed status.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Brentford, Ealing, Feltham and Uxbridge (Hillingdon) are reasonable and travel links are good. Brentford is approximately 2.5 miles from Ealing, six miles from Feltham and ten miles from Uxbridge (Hillingdon).

The route between Brentford and Ealing is via a 'B' road. There is a good bus service every seven minutes and the journey takes around 20 minutes and costs £4.00 return.

The route between Brentford and Feltham is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with two trains an hour running between the two. The train journey takes approximately thirteen minutes and costs £5.10 return.

The route between Brentford and Uxbridge is via 'A' graded roads. Regular bus and tube services (from Brentford to Ealing Broadway and Broadway to Uxbridge respectively) with an average journey time of approximately one hour (for both tube and bus) and costs £9.00 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are two staff based at Brentford Magistrates' Court: one administration staff and one usher. Legal advisors sit in rotation at Brentford Magistrates' Court.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Brentford Magistrates' Court was £203,558.<sup>10</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £310,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Brentford Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the three LJAs.

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<sup>10</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Ealing, Hounslow and Hillingdon Local Justice Areas to form West London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 150, 153 and 125 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Ealing, Feltham and Uxbridge or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Harrow Magistrates' Court**

Harrow Magistrates' Court is a three court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction. It also takes traffic work from neighbouring Local Justice Areas (LJAs). It is the only courthouse within the current Harrow LJA.

The proposal is for the court to close and for its work to be heard at the courthouses within the new North West London LJA, namely Hendon and Brent Magistrates' Courts.

### **Workload**

Courts are listed every day and the courthouse has good utilisation levels. However, one third of this work is traffic work transferred in from other LJAs.

### **Accommodation**

The main entrance is not suitable for access by wheelchair and there is a fundamental security issue as the public counter is accessible prior to passing through the security check. The concourse is a long narrow corridor with limited waiting space. There is no segregation between adult and youth courts. The witness accommodation is directly off the main concourse and there is no dedicated route to the courtrooms for witnesses.

External security at the building is currently compromised as a victim support office is based in a separate building at the rear of the car park; meaning public visitors to the building have to pass unfettered through the court's car park. There is also no secure van bay at Harrow so defendants in custody arrive in an unsecure car park in full view of the public.

The main heating pipework at Harrow is buried within the floor. It is degraded and is in urgent requirement for replacement. Running repairs have been undertaken to date but to undertake more comprehensive and reliable repair will require full building closure and is prohibitively expensive. The listed status of the building increases the cost associated with such work.

The size of the courthouse, its operational deficiencies and the availability of modern facilities and spare capacity at Brent and Hendon means that it is difficult to justify the continued retention of this building. Closure and transfer of work would enable us to offer improved and more modern facilities to court users, magistrates and staff.

Hendon has been recently refurbished and provides separate facilities for defendants and witnesses. Both Brent and Hendon also offer better security arrangements for court users, magistrates and staff.



## **Location**

Travelling times between Harrow, Brent and Hendon are reasonable and travel links are good. Harrow is approximately six miles from Brent and six miles from Hendon.

The route between Harrow and Brent is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with three trains an hour running between Harrow and Willesden Junction. The train journey takes approximately sixteen minutes and costs £7.00 return. There are regular tube and bus services (from Harrow on the Hill to Neasden) with an average journey time of fifteen minutes for the tube and cost of £7.00 return.

The route between Harrow and Hendon is via 'A' graded roads. There is a reasonable train service, with the train journey (with changes) taking approximately one hour and costs between £5.40 and £11.90 return. Bus Route 183 takes you between the two court houses with an average journey of 50 minutes and a cost of £3.80.

## **Staff implications**

Currently there are nine staff based at Harrow Magistrates' Court: four administration staff, one usher and four legal advisors.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

## **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Harrow Magistrates' Court was £227,371.<sup>11</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £60,000.

## **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Harrow Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work to Brent and Hendon.

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<sup>11</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Barnet, Brent and Harrow Local Justice Areas to form the North West London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 120, 137 and 85 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Brent or Hendon (Barnet) or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Kingston upon Thames Magistrates' Court**

Kingston upon Thames Magistrates' Court is a four court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction; it also hears youth work and deals with traffic summonses from neighbouring Local Justice Areas (LJAs). It is the only courthouse within the current Kingston upon Thames LJA.

The proposal is for the court to close and for its work to be heard at the courthouses within the new South West London LJA, namely Wimbledon, Richmond and South Western.

### **Workload**

The court generally only lists three out of its four court rooms. Of these, one courtroom hears traffic work from other LJAs two days a week.

### **Accommodation**

We occupy this courthouse under lease agreement from the local authority. The court forms part of the Kingston Guildhall and is 73 years old. Only one courtroom has direct access to the cells, of which there are only four. Consequently we are severely restricted as to the volume and nature of the work we are able to list there.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Kingston, Wimbledon, Richmond and South Western (Battersea) are reasonable and travel links are good. Kingston is approximately six miles from Wimbledon, five miles from Richmond and eight miles from Battersea.

The routes between Kingston and Wimbledon, Richmond and Battersea are all via 'A' graded roads.

There is a good train service between Kingston and Wimbledon, with four trains an hour running between the two. The train journey takes approximately fifteen minutes and costs £5.40 return. There are regular tube and bus services (from Richmond to Wimbledon) with an average journey time of 30 minutes for (both tube and bus).

There is a good train service between Kingston and Richmond, with four trains an hour. The train journey takes between 20 and 45 minutes and costs £4.50 return. Bus route 65 runs between Kingston Railway station and Richmond Tube Station, twice an hour and costs £3.80 return.

There is also a good train service between Kingston and Battersea, with four trains an hour between the two. The train journey takes approximately 35 minutes and costs £6.40 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently the majority of the administration team which processes Kingston work is based at South Western Magistrates' Court; however there are nine administration staff/ushers and four legal advisors also permanently based at Kingston.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Kingston upon Thames Magistrates' Court was £319,124.<sup>12</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £170,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Kingston upon Thames Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the new LJA.

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<sup>12</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth Local Justice Areas to form the South West London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 84, 106, 77 and 65 magistrates (respectively) in the four Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will still be able to sit at Kingston, Merton, Richmond or South Western or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Sutton Magistrates' Court**

Sutton Magistrates' Court is a five court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction. It also deals with traffic and television licence prosecutions from neighbouring Local Justice Areas (LJAs). It is the only courthouse within the current Sutton LJA.

The proposal is for the court to close and for its work to be heard at the courthouses within the new South London LJA, particularly Croydon Magistrates' Court.

### **Workload**

The court lists two to three courts a day. Twice a week, one courtroom hears centralised summons work from other LJAs.

### **Accommodation**

This courthouse was constructed in 1963 and is a purpose built magistrates' court comprising four criminal courts. A later detached building occupies the rear of one of the two car parks and contains a single family court.

Only two of the courts in the main building have cell access with the other two youth courts having no direct access to the cells. The custody facility is small with just seven cells. There is no secure van dock so defendants in custody arrive in an unsecure car park in full view of the public.

DDA accessibility is reasonable with all the courts being on one level and the court having a ramped front entry. However, the two main courts are traditional with multiple changes in level and fixed furniture so unsuitable for the majority of people with disabilities.

The witness facility within the building is in itself good but the layout of the building means that witnesses have to pass through public concourse or round the exterior of the building to access courtrooms.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Sutton and Croydon are reasonable and travel links are good. Sutton is approximately four miles from Croydon.

The route between Sutton and Croydon is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with four trains per hour. The train journey takes approximately 40 minutes and costs £4.50 return. Bus route 154 runs between the two court houses in approximately 40 minutes and costs £4.00 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are twelve staff based at Sutton Magistrates' Court: six administration staff, two ushers and four Legal advisors.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Sutton Magistrates' Court was £348,395.<sup>13</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £90,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Sutton Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the new LJA.

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<sup>13</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Croydon, Lambeth & Southwark and Sutton Local Justice Areas to form the South London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 154, 111 and 85 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches, HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Croydon, Camberwell or Tower Bridge or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.



## **Woolwich Magistrates' Court**

Woolwich Magistrates' Court is a small two court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction, but mainly hears adult remand and trial work. Together with Greenwich, it forms the current Greenwich & Lewisham Local Justice Area (LJA).

The proposal is for the court to close and for its work to be heard at the courthouses within the new South East London LJA, namely Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich.

### **Workload**

The court lists two courts a day.

### **Accommodation**

The courthouse was built in 1912 and is Grade II listed. It is a purpose built magistrates' court and is currently run as a satellite of Greenwich. The building is in the civic centre of Woolwich Arsenal close to the town hall and other local amenities.

Woolwich Magistrates' Court is an old building with limited custody and witness facilities; closure and transfer of work would enable us to make better use of more modern facilities at the two better, more modern, under utilised courthouses nearby. Witness facilities are small but adequate for a two court centre however it is only accessible via the main entrance and the only access to the courtrooms is via the public concourse. The custody facility is small but only one of the two court rooms is accessible from the cells. DDA access via the main entrance is reasonable but the formal courtroom on the ground floor is traditional in layout with changes in levels and fixed furniture so not suitable for access for court users with mobility problems or visual impairment.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Woolwich, Bexley and Bromley are reasonable and travel links are good. Woolwich is approximately six miles from Bexley, seven and half miles from Bromley and three miles from Greenwich.

The route between Woolwich and Bexley is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with five trains per hour. The train journey takes approximately 40 minutes and costs £4.50 return. Bus route 96 or 401 runs between the two court houses in approximately 50 minutes.

The route between Woolwich and Bromley is via 'A' graded roads. There is a fair train service, with two trains an hour between the two. The train journey takes approximately one hour and costs £3.70 return. Bus routes between the

court houses are approximately one and a quarter hours and costs £4.00 return.

The route between Woolwich and Greenwich is via 'A' graded roads. There is a good train service, with five trains an hour running between the two. The train journey takes approximately ten minutes and costs £3.70 return. Bus route 161 or 51 takes you between the two locations in approximately 35-40 minutes and costs £4.00 return.

### **Staff implications**

There are no administrative staff permanently based at this court. Ushers/list caller, administration staff and Legal Advisors are deployed to this court on rotation.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Woolwich Magistrates' Court was £181,298.<sup>14</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £45,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Woolwich Magistrates' Court a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the new LJA.

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<sup>14</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Bexley, Bromley and Greenwich & Lewisham Local Justice Areas to form the South East London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 107, 101 and 76 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Greenwich, Bexley and Bromley or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient

## **Balham Youth Court**

Balham is a two courtroom centre used solely for youth work. The majority of the work of the court comes from outside the Borough in which it is located i.e. predominantly Lambeth and Southwark. This is done to enable the Lambeth and Southwark Local Justice Area (LJA) courts (Camberwell Green and Tower Bridge) to take youth work from Greenwich and Lewisham.

The proposal is to either:

- increase courtroom capacity at Camberwell Green and return Lambeth and Southwark youth work there (with Wandsworth youth work returning to South Western); or
- increase courtroom capacity at Wimbledon and move Wandsworth youth work there (enabling Lambeth and Southwark youth work to be heard at South Western).

### **Workload**

Balham is open Monday to Thursday (on Friday youth work is listed at South Western magistrates' court) and is used solely for youth work.

### **Accommodation**

Witness and custody facilities are poor. The vast majority of the building is, in fact, occupied by the Probation Service and alternative arrangements will be negotiated should the decision to close the court be taken.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Balham, South Western and Camberwell Green Bridge are reasonable and travel links are good. Balham is approximately three miles from South Western and 4.5 miles from Camberwell.

Approximately five trains an hour run between Balham and Battersea (South Western Magistrates' Court) with a journey time of ten minutes and a cost of £3.70 return.

There are approximately three trains an hour between Balham and Denmark Hill (approximately fifteen minutes walk away from Camberwell Green magistrates' court) with a journey time (including changes) of between 22 and 33 minutes and a cost of £3.70 return.

### **Staff implications**

There are no administrative staff permanently based at this court. Ushers/list caller, administration staff and Legal Advisors are deployed to this court on rotation.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Balham Youth Court was £264,224.<sup>15</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £325,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Balham Youth Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the relevant LJAs. This will include securing the funding for the required expansion at Camberwell Green/Wimbledon.

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<sup>15</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Kingston, Merton, Richmond and Wandsworth Local Justice Areas to form the South West London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 84, 106, 77 and 65 magistrates (respectively) in the four Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Kingston, Merton, Richmond or South Western or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court**

Tower Bridge is a three court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction. Together with Camberwell Green, the two courthouses form the current Lambeth & Southwark Local Justice Area (LJA).

The proposal is to extend, expand and improve the courtroom capacity and ancillary facilities at Camberwell Green and, upon completion, to close Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court and hear its work within the new building and the other courthouse within the new South London LJA, namely Croydon.

### **Workload**

Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court sits daily hearing a full range of criminal work. There are three courtrooms.

### **Accommodation**

Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court is an early 20<sup>th</sup> century, Grade II listed building which, although purpose built, no longer complies with either DDA legislation or modern court building design standards.

The courthouse consists of three courtrooms over two floors. Court one is on the ground floor whilst Courts two and three are on the first floor. None of these courtrooms are DDA compliant or have disabled accessibility.

Of the three courtrooms, only court one has secure access from the cell area and a secure dock. Court two has access to the cell area via a narrow concrete staircase, which leads to a narrow, insecure corridor. The configuration of the courtroom means any custody cases enter directly to the side of the magistrates' bench and then have to cross to the open/insecure dock situated at the opposite end of the courtroom.

Court three has no direct access to the cell area, which restricts listing of cases to non-custodial matters i.e. minor trials and non Crown Prosecution Service work.

The 'main' public waiting area at this court is a small area located immediately upon entering the main entrance. Although this area has fixed furniture on both the ground floor and the first floor, there is insufficient seating available. The layout of the entrance, and the building being Grade II listed, make it extremely difficult and expensive to reconfigure these areas to increase the seating capacity. Members of the public waiting for Courts two & three have to congregate around the entrance doors to the lobby for the two courtrooms or on the stairs from the ground floor, both of which pose health and safety and security risks.

Victim and witness facilities at the courthouse are also inadequate. There is insufficient space to accommodate the witness service and, as only one small witness room is available, there is no provision for dealing with vulnerable victims. As a consequence, the courthouse is unable to comply fully with either the Victims Code or Witness Charter; accordingly, all cases involving vulnerable victims and witnesses, including domestic violence cases, have to be transferred for trial to Camberwell Green Magistrates' Court. Any matters that involve a disabled witness are also automatically transferred to Camberwell Green for trial.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Tower Bridge and Camberwell Green are reasonable and travel links are good. Tower Bridge is approximately four miles from Camberwell Green.

The route between Tower Bridge and Camberwell Green is via 'A' graded roads. There is a frequent tube service from London Bridge to Oval (approximately 25 minutes walk away from the courthouse) costing approximately £7.20 return. Bus routes 40 and 35 run frequently between Tower Bridge and Camberwell with an average journey time of 30 minutes and a return trip cost of £4.00.

### **Staff implications**

There are no administrative staff permanently based at this court. Ushers/list caller, administration staff and Legal Advisors are deployed to this court on rotation.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court was £267,751.<sup>16</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £810,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Tower Bridge Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the relevant LJAs. This will include securing the funding for the required expansion at Camberwell Green.

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<sup>16</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).



## **Merger of Croydon, Lambeth & Southwark and Sutton Local Justice Areas to form the South London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 154, 111 and 85 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches, HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Croydon, Camberwell or Tower Bridge or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Highgate (Haringey) Magistrates' Court**

Highgate Magistrates' Court is a four court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction.

The proposal is to extend, expand and improve the courtroom capacity and ancillary facilities at Highbury Corner and Enfield and, upon completion, to close Highgate Magistrates' Court and hear its work at courthouses within the new North London Local Justice Area (LJA).

### **Workload**

Of the four courtrooms at Haringey, only three are listed every day. Haringey also accommodates the LJA Specialist Domestic Violence Court one morning per week.

### **Accommodation**

Court four has no direct access to the cell area and its design is such that this court is rarely, if ever, used. There is not a separate entrance or area to segregate adult and youth courts.

There has only been minimal DDA work undertaken and the witness facilities and custody are in poor condition and in need of major investment.

The deficiencies at the court limit the volume and nature of work that can be heard and make the effective and efficient listing of work problematic.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Highgate, Enfield and Highbury Corner are reasonable and travel links are good. Enfield is approximately five miles away and Highbury is three miles away.

The route between Highgate and Highbury is via 'A' graded roads. There is a frequent bus service costing approximately £4.00 return and takes 32 minutes. Alternatively, there is a regular tube service which takes seventeen minutes and costs £6.30 return.

The route between Highgate and Enfield is via 'A' graded roads. There is a regular bus service which takes 57 minutes and costs £4.00 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are 20 staff based at Highgate Magistrates' Court: eight administration staff, four ushers and eight Legal Advisors.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Highgate Magistrates' Court was £311,795.<sup>17</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £275,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Haringey Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the relevant LJAs. This will include securing the funding for the required building improvements at Highbury Corner and Enfield.

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<sup>17</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Enfield, Haringey and Camden and Islington, Local Justice Areas to form North London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 120, 136 and 92 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Enfield or Highbury Corner or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## **Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court**

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court is a five court centre that has general criminal jurisdiction. It also takes traffic work from neighbouring Local Justice Areas (LJAs).

The proposal is to extend, expand and improve the courtroom capacity and ancillary facilities at Stratford Magistrates' Court and, upon completion, to close Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court and hear its work at courthouses within the new North East London LJA (namely Stratford and Thames).

### **Workload**

Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court sits every day the majority of which being traffic work. Approximately one fifth of the courts workload is traffic work transferred in from other LJAs.

### **Accommodation**

The court does not have any significant accommodation problems.

### **Location**

Travelling times between Waltham Forest (Walthamstow), Stratford and Thames (Bow) are reasonable. Stratford is approximately four miles away and Bow is six miles away.

The routes between both Walthamstow and Stratford and Walthamstow and Bow are via 'A' graded roads.

There are several train services between Walthamstow and Stratford which (including changes) takes between 25 and 35 minutes and costs £5.90 return. Alternatively, there are regular combined rail, bus and/or tube routes which take between 24 and 43 minutes and cost £8.60 return.

There are also several combined rail, bus and/or tube routes between Walthamstow and Bow which take between 38 and 49 minutes and cost £8.60 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are seventeen staff based at Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court: eight administration staff, three ushers and six Legal Advisors.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court was £386,370.<sup>18</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £100,000.

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Waltham Forest Magistrates' Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth redistribution of work across the relevant LJAs. This will include securing the funding for the required expansion at Stratford.

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<sup>18</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Merger of Hackney and Tower Hamlets, Newham and Waltham Forest Local Justice Areas to form North East London Local Justice Area**

There are currently 113, 140 and 117 magistrates (respectively) in the three Benches above.

By merging the three Local Justice Areas and Benches HMCS will be able to deliver the benefits outlined above.

Magistrates will be able to sit at Stratford or Thames or in a neighbouring LJA should this be more convenient.

## County courts in London

There are 21 'stand-alone' civil and family courts in London (including the Principal Registry of the Family Division (PRFD), the Inner London Family Proceedings Court and the Royal Courts of Justice).<sup>19</sup> Eighteen of these courts are designated county courts.

Central London (The City of London and the London Borough of Westminster) is the hub of London civil and family business. In terms of population, Central London is significantly less residential than the London suburbs and Greater London. However, travel into the centre is generally possible in less than one hour from any point in London. The following county courts are situated in Central London:

- The Central London County Court and Civil Trial Centre (Westminster);
- Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Court (City of London); and
- The Mayors and City of London Court (City of London).

The fifteen other courts are situated in outer London suburbs.

Civil and county courts in London serve their respective local populations but a number are relatively close together. Work from across London (particularly more complex, high profile cases) gravitate towards Central London where numerous solicitors practices and barristers chambers are based.

### The need for change

HMCS has increased mediation and alternative dispute resolution services in order to reduce the amount of cases which have to come to court, and improved the experience for users. As more claims are processed online and by telephone, and other non-judicial processes are being centralised away from the frontline, counter services will also be less needed.

Of the current county courts, we propose to close two to enable us to focus the delivery of front-line services and better meet the needs and expectations of the user communities we serve.

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<sup>19</sup> The Royal Courts of Justice deals with High Court business and the PRFD is a specialist family court centre which supports the High Court Family Division and which is the Care Centre for London. The PRFD also deals with most private law, divorce work issued in Central London.



## The proposal

To continue to operate county courts in:

- Barnet;
- Bow;
- Brentford;
- Bromley;
- Central London;
- Clerkenwell & Shoreditch
- Croydon;
- Edmonton;
- Kingston;
- Lambeth;
- Romford;
- Uxbridge;
- Wandsworth;
- West London;
- Willesden; and
- Woolwich.

To close the county court in Ilford and the Mayor's & City of London court.

## **Ilford County Court**

Ilford County Court has general civil and family jurisdiction but does not hear care or bankruptcy work. The proposal is that the court be closed and that its work be dealt with at Bow and Romford County Courts.

### **Workload**

The court lists work for two District Judges Monday to Friday who hear general civil and family work (not care or bankruptcy). Cases that fall under the jurisdiction of Circuit Judges are transferred to Bow, Romford or Central London County Courts.

### **Accommodation**

The building fabric and mechanical and electrical services at the county court are in poor condition. The court has rising damp in the basement and the interior looks decidedly shabby. The roof leaks and intermittent patching is not really solving the problem. It has been subject to vandalism in the past couple of years with fly tipping in the car park which is open at the rear of the building. The boilers are old and inefficient and require replacement. Even with considerable investment the building is unable to offer modern, fit-for-purpose facilities.

### **Location**

It is approximately ten miles to Romford and four miles to Bow. Public transportation links are very good. Ilford, Romford and Bow are on the same train line and on the same road. By train the travel time between Ilford and Bow and Ilford and Romford is no more than 25 minutes at a cost of approximately £4.50 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are 20 staff based at Ilford County Court.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Ilford County Court was £186,368.<sup>20</sup> Closure would also remove the need for HMCS investment in backlog maintenance of around £175,000.

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<sup>20</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Ilford County Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth transfer of work. This will include some enabling works in both Bow and Romford to enable judiciary and staff to be relocated and the work to be transferred.

## **Mayor's & City Court**

Mayor's & City Court has general civil jurisdiction but does not hear family or bankruptcy work. The proposal is that the court be closed and that its work is dealt with at Central London and Clerkenwell and Shoreditch County Courts.

The current court is the product of the combination of the historic Mayor's Court and the City of London Court (by the Mayor's and City of London Court Act 1920). In 1971, the old Mayor's and City of London Court was abolished (by section 42 of the Courts Act 1971), the City of London was made a county court district and the new county court given the name of its predecessor.

Section 29 of the 1971 Act also imposes an obligation on the 'Common Council of the City of London' to continue to make the current courthouse (Guildhall Buildings) available for 'the sittings and business' of the court, albeit terminable by agreement.

### **Workload**

Two Circuit Judges and two District Judges sit full time Monday to Friday at the Mayor's and City of London Court hearing general civil and family work (not care or bankruptcy).

The jurisdiction of the court is relatively small, particularly in terms of population. Therefore the Circuit Judges sitting at the Mayor's court also hear trial work from across London to supplement the Central London Civil Trial Centre.

### **Accommodation**

The building is in ornate neo-gothic style but is not fit for modern county court use. It has been very difficult to do anything at all to improve accessibility for court users with a disability, with access for wheelchair users especially difficult. The fabric of the court is in poor shape and it cannot be modernised to bring it up to current courtroom or courthouse standards, with the general office especially difficult to configure efficiently due to a large column in the middle of the room.

Both Central London and Clerkenwell and Shoreditch are large centres and offer better facilities than Mayors & City, Shoreditch in particular only having been opened in 2005.

### **Location**

It is approximately one mile to Clerkenwell & Shoreditch County Court and four miles to Central London County Court. Public transport links are very good. Shoreditch and Clerkenwell are approximately fifteen minutes apart by foot and Central London is approximately 25 minutes by tube at a maximum cost of £8.00 return.

### **Staff implications**

Currently there are fourteen staff based at Mayor's & City Court.

HMCS will engage with staff and the Trades Unions throughout the consultation process.

### **Cost implications**

The 2009/10 operating cost of Mayor's & City Court was £206,312.<sup>21</sup>

### **Implementation**

Should the decision be taken to close Mayor's & City Court, a full implementation plan will be produced to ensure the smooth transfer of work with minimal disruption for court users.

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<sup>21</sup> 2009/10 HMCS operating costs (excluding staff and non cash costs).

## **Annex A – Map of proposals**

# Current courts in London

## Legend

 HMCS Courts

## TYPE

-  County/Magistrates/Crown
-  County/Crown
-  County/Magistrates
-  Magistrates/Crown
-  Magistrates
-  County
-  Crown



# Proposed courts in London

**Symbol Legend**

-  HMCS Regional Boundaries
-  HMCS Area Boundaries 10/11

0 1 2 4 6 8 Miles



## Questionnaire

We would welcome responses to the following questions set out in this consultation paper.

**Question 1a. What comments would you like to make on the proposals for the future provision of magistrates' courts services in London (including court closures, Local Justice Area mergers and restructuring of the Youth Panels)?**

**Question 1b. Please describe any particular impacts that should be taken into account when considering the proposals for magistrates' courts in London and why.**

**Question 1c. Will the proposals for magistrates' courts in London have a direct impact on you? If yes please provide further details. (Your information will assist in reviewing the equality impact assessment)?**



**Question 2a. What comments would you like to make on the proposals for the future provision of county court services in London?**

**Question 2b. Please describe any particular impacts that should be taken into account when considering the proposals for county courts in London and why.**

**Question 2c. Will the proposals for county courts in London have a direct impact on you? If yes please provide further details. (Your information will assist in reviewing the equality impact assessment)**

**Thank you for participating in this consultation exercise.**

## About you

Please use this section to tell us about yourself

<b>Full name</b>	
<b>Job title</b> or capacity in which you are responding to this consultation exercise (e.g. member of the public etc.)	
<b>Date</b>	
<b>Company name/organisation</b> (if applicable):	
<b>Address</b>	
<b>Postcode</b>	
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.

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## **Contact details/How to respond**

Please send your response by 15 September 2010 to:

**Ian Priston**  
**London Regional Communications Manager**  
**HMCS**  
**2<sup>nd</sup> Floor, Rose Court**  
**2 Southwark Bridge**  
**SE1 9HS**  
**Tel: 020 7921 2095**  
**Email: [ian.Priston@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ian.Priston@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk)**

### **Extra copies**

Further paper copies of this consultation can be obtained from this address and it is also available on-line at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/index.htm>.

Alternative format versions of this publication can be requested from [ian.priston@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:ian.priston@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk) or by phone 020 7921 2095.

### **Publication of response**

A paper summarising the responses to this consultation will be published within 3 months of the end of the consultation period. The response paper will be available on-line at <http://www.justice.gov.uk/index.htm>.

### **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 Department.

The Department 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.

## The consultation criteria

The seven consultation criteria are as follows:

1. **When to consult** – Formal consultations should take place at a stage where there is scope to influence the policy outcome.
2. **Duration of consultation exercises** – Consultations should normally last for at least 12 weeks with consideration given to longer timescales where feasible and sensible.
3. **Clarity of scope and impact** – Consultation documents should be clear about the consultation process, what is being proposed, the scope to influence and the expected costs and benefits of the proposals.
4. **Accessibility of consultation exercises** – Consultation exercises should be designed to be accessible to, and clearly targeted at, those people the exercise is intended to reach.
5. **The burden of consultation** – Keeping the burden of consultation to a minimum is essential if consultations are to be effective and if consultees' buy-in to the process is to be obtained.
6. **Responsiveness of consultation exercises** – Consultation responses should be analysed carefully and clear feedback should be provided to participants following the consultation.
7. **Capacity to consult** – Officials running consultations should seek guidance in how to run an effective consultation exercise and share what they have learned from the experience.

**These criteria must be reproduced within all consultation documents.**

## Consultation Co-ordinator contact details

If you have any complaints or comments about the consultation **process** rather than about the topic covered by this paper, you should contact Sara Edet/Andy Holmes, HMCS Consultation Co-ordinators, on 020 3334 6686/6693, or email [hmcs.consultations@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:hmcs.consultations@hmcourts-service.gsi.gov.uk).

Alternatively, you may wish to write to the address below:

**Sara Edet/Andy Holmes**  
**HMCS Consultation Co-ordinators**  
**2.37, 2nd Floor**  
**102 Petty France**  
**London SW1H 9AJ**

If your complaints or comments refer to the topic covered by this paper rather than the consultation process, please direct them to the contact given under the **How to respond** section of this paper at page 55.



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