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Date: 13 March 2026

Dear Member

COUNTY COUNCIL - THURSDAY, 19 MARCH 2026

Please find enclosed, for consideration at the 19 March meeting of Full Council, the following reports which were unavaible when the main agenda pack was published.

Agenda Item No

- 8 **Member Allowances Scheme (Pages 1 - 22)**
- 10 **KCC's Position on Government's Foundation Strategic Authority Expression of Interest Invitation (Pages 23 - 32)**
- 13 **Motions for Time Limited Debate (Pages 33 - 46)**

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Watts', is written over a faint circular stamp.

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive

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By: Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council
To: County Council – 19 March 2026
Subject: Members' Allowances Scheme 2026 – 2030
Status: Unrestricted

Summary: This report summarises the amendments proposed to the Members' Allowances' Scheme and asks the Council to agree the Scheme for 2026-2030

1. Introduction

- a) Member Allowances were introduced to Local Authorities in accordance with Section 18 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (as amended by the Local Government Act, 2000). The regulations governing Local Authorities schemes is set out in "The Local Authorities Members' Allowances (England) Regulations 2003."
- b) Full Council is the decision-maker on Members' allowances. However, there is a legal requirement under the regulations for Members to have before them a report by an independent Member Remuneration Panel setting out their recommendations regarding the scheme.
- c) The current Member Remuneration Panel (MRP) were appointed by County Council on 7 November 2025 to a four-year term.
- d) The Panel was asked to first produce recommendations for a one-year Member Allowances Scheme covering 2025/26, which was agreed by the Council in July 2025.
- e) The next review that the Panel has undertaken is to make recommendations for the next four-year scheme covering April 2026 to March 2030. The intention is that each four-year scheme will be offset from the election year. This will mean clarity for individuals considering standing for election, and has enabled the new Council to consider what will be needed for the next scheme.
- f) Members are thanked for their engagement with the Panel and the full report of the Member Remuneration Panel is set out in Appendix 1 and Members are advised to read this in full.
- g) The main change proposed by the Panel relates to the calculation of the annual increase to Member Allowances. This is recommended to uplift at CPIH going forwards with the previous more complicated arrangement being replaced. To ensure consistency with the remainder of the budget it is recommended that the CPIH figure from October each year is used, which for October 2025 was 3.8%.

- h) The proposed changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme are set out in Appendix 2. This shows with track changes the amendments to the current scheme as set out in the Constitution.
- i) County Council has already discussed that there are likely to be further reviews of Committee arrangements and responsibilities and any changes would need to be reviewed by the Member Remuneration Panel before approval. It is therefore recommended that Selection and Member Services are asked to keep the arrangements under review and report back to full Council as necessary.

2. Recommendation

The County Council is asked to:

- a) **Note this report;**
- b) **Note the report of the Member Remuneration Panel and thank the Panel Members for their work; and**
- c) **Agree the changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in Appendix 2, this scheme to be in place until 31 March 2030 including:**
 - i. **Increase for 2026/2027 to the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances of 3.8%**
 - ii. **Annual indexation mechanism to be the CPIH figure for October**
 - iii. **The annual scheme to be agreed with the annual budget for the year and coming into effect at the beginning of each financial year;**
 - iv. **The Co-opted Member Allowance remain the same in 2026/27 as 2025/26, but increase at the same rate as the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances in subsequent years.**
 - v. **The Independent Persons allowance be changed to a fixed per annum payment of £700.**
 - vi. **The Dependents' Carers' Allowance at the current level and compared annually with the Real Living Wage. Where the Real Living Wage is higher, then the Dependents' Carers' Allowance will be increased to the same level.**
 - vii. **That the Selection and Member Services Committee be asked to keep the arrangements under review and report to full Council (including a further report from the Member Remuneration Panel) where any future changes are recommended.**

3. Appendices

Appendix 1 – Full Member Remuneration Panel Report and Recommendations
Appendix 2 – Proposed Member Allowance Scheme

4. Background Documents

None.

5. Report Author and Relevant Director

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Member Remuneration Panel (MRP) – Review and Recommendations for 2026/27 to 2029/30 Scheme

Introduction

This review presents independent recommendations for Members Allowances based on the full review of the Members Allowances Scheme. This review is being performed approximately 12 months after the interim review which was presented to the previous Members before the elections. For completeness, the recommendations that the panel deems relevant to be carried over from the interim review have been included in this report.

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the Panel conducted semi-structured interviews with senior Kent County Council staff (including the Head of Law/Monitoring Officer), and 5 Members of the Council. The Panel also conducted an electronic survey, circulated to all Members, which attracted 30 responses. The review also draws upon desk-based research, including benchmarking against Members Allowances Schemes in other jurisdictions.

Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA)

All elected KCC Members are entitled to receive a Basic Allowance (£16,266.91 for 2025/26) to perform their duties required under the Constitution. This flat rate allowance is intended to cover meeting attendance, dealing with constituent queries and correspondence, basic office consumables, and general home office costs. It is not a salary.

Some elected Members receive an additional Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for any special responsibility that they might have as a Member of the Council (such as Cabinet Member). These amounts vary and are normally expressed as a percentage of the SRA of the Council Leader, which is currently £53,493.38 as per the table below.

Basic and Special Responsibility Allowance Permissible Under the Current Scheme

Allowance	Amount (£)	% Leader's SRA	Number eligible	Total cost
Basic	£16,266.91	NA	81	£1,317,619.71
SRAs				
Leader	£53,493.38	100	1	£53,493.38
Cabinet Members	£34,770.70	65	9	£312,936.30
Deputy Cabinet Members	£16,048.01	30	11	£176,528.11
Cabinet Committee Chair	£9,361.34	17.5	6	£56,168.04
Council Chairman	£17,652.82	33	1	£17,652.82
Council Vice-Chairman	£9,361.34	17.5	1	£9,361.34
Planning Applications Committee Chair	£11,768.54	22	1	£11,768.54
Regulation Committee Chair (Note 1)	£11,768.54	22	1	£11,768.54
Oher Committee Chairs	£9,361.34	17.5	4	£37,445.36
Scrutiny Committee Chair	£9,361.34	17.5	1	£9,361.34
Leader of Opposition Group (Note 2)	£17,652.82	33	3	£52,958.46
			SRA Total	£749,442.23
			Total	£2,067,061.94

Notes to above table:

Note 1 – The council has made the decision to transfer the responsibilities of this committee to the Planning Application Committee but as the transfer has not been fully implemented at the time of this report, and the SRA remains on the scheme as one that could be paid if the Regulation Committee was re-established, it remains on the table.

Note 2 – For this SRA, the number eligible refers to the total amount payable. If there were more than 4 eligible Leaders of Opposition Groups, the total sum for 3 SRAs would be divided amongst them, under the current scheme.

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the Panel invited all Members to participate in a survey that considered the adequacy of the current approach to Member allowances, including the basic allowance, among other questions. We received 30 responses from Members on the topic of basic allowances.

The Panel also conducted a benchmarking exercise against a Peer Group of County Councils. The Peer Group included those County Councils with a population in excess of

one million, i.e. the largest County Councils by population. The Panel also took into account the annual budget for Kent County Council, in comparison with the Peer Group.

Findings

19 Members (63% of respondents) felt that the basic allowance currently available was not adequate remuneration for a KCC councillor.

Concerns were raised around the hours required to perform the role effectively, the perceived inequalities across differing wards, the issue with daytime meetings impacting ability to work alongside the role, and therefore the potential barriers to entry of the basic allowance.

The Peer Group selected for benchmarking purposes and their basic allowances comprised:

- Essex County Council - £14,471
- Hampshire County Council - £14,399
- Hertfordshire - £12,437
- Lancashire - £14,301
- Surrey – £14,410

The benchmarking exercise indicates that Kent County Council's basic allowance at £16,226.91 is currently the highest amongst these peers.

Recommendations:

Basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes. Given the complexity of the mandate of KCC we believe that the basic allowance is a fair reflection of the time commitment that is required for Kent County Council even though it is the highest amongst the peer group.

As the incidental use of the home is a key component that the basic allowance seeks to recognise we believe that the CPIH is the best measure of inflation to be adopted by Kent County Council for this review period applying it on the current KCC allowance.

The CPIH 12-month rate is 3.6% for the 12 month period to December 2025.

The Panel notes concerns made by Members in response to the survey about the basic allowance being below minimum wage - if it were an employed role - however, the role is not employed and, as such, is not protected by such legislation.

In line with the uprating recommendations made in the 2025 Interim Review (included on page 11 in this report), the Panel recommends an uplift of 3.6% in line with the latest CPIH measure. This is to be applied to the Basic Allowance.

Special Responsibility Allowances (SRAs)

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the panel invited all Members to participate in a survey that considered the adequacy of the current allowance approach to Member allowances, including the special responsibility allowances, among other questions. We received 30 responses from Members on the topic of special responsibility allowances.

The Panel also conducted a benchmarking exercise against a Peer Group of County Councils. The Peer Group included those County Councils with a population in excess of one million, i.e. the largest County Councils by population. The Panel also took into account the annual budget for Kent County Council, in comparison with the Peer Group.

Findings

10 Members (33% of respondents) felt that the current special responsibility allowance currently available does not appropriately compensate for the additional responsibilities undertaken.

Concerns were raised around the hours required to perform the role effectively, the perceived inequalities across differing SRA roles (e.g., Chairs and Vice Chairs), professional skill requirements, and a cap on the number of SRAs available for any one Member.

- Essex County Council - Paid as % of Leaders allowance, from 10% to 80%
- Hampshire County Council – fixed, numerous and various
- Hertfordshire – From 0.25 x Basic Allowance (BA), to Leader 4 x BA
- Lancashire - Paid as % of Leaders allowance, from 10% to 70%
- Surrey – Fixed, available only for certain roles; limited

Recommendations

In line with the uprating recommendations made in the 2025 Interim Review, the Panel recommends an uplift of 3.6% in line with the latest CPIH measure. This is to be applied to the Special Responsibility Allowance (SRA) for the Leader, with other SRAs increasing as a relevant proportion of this. The Panel believes that the reference SRA for the Leader is appropriate on a standalone basis and as a reference point for other SRAs.

It is noted that the roles of the Regulation and Electoral/Boundary Review committees are being subsumed into the Planning and Selection and Member Services committees. At this stage, there is no recommendation made to change the relevant SRA for this role, but this may be reviewed in the future.

Co-opted Member/ Independent Person Allowances

This review has considered the Allowance paid to the co-opted Members and Independent Persons within its scope, to provide Kent County Council with recommendations on the allowance.

The Co-opted Member Allowance for the Governance and Audit Committee was increased from £1,500 to £1,700 following the Panel's recommendation in the 2025/26 interim review, as accepted by County Council on 10 July 2025.

The provision for the Independent Person (Standards) in the Members' Allowances Scheme was an allowance of £500 per annum. In addition to the annual payment, the Independent Person is entitled to a daily rate of £100 for each day (or pro-rata for part days) worked. They are also eligible to claim expenses and dependent carer's allowances where applicable.

Approach

For the purpose of this review, the Panel conducted a benchmarking exercise against a Peer Group of County Councils. The Peer Group included those County Councils with a population in excess of one million, i.e. the largest County Councils by population. The Panel also took into account the annual budget for Kent County Council, in comparison with the Peer Group.

Findings

The Peer Group selected for benchmarking purposes comprised:

- Essex County Council - £750 p.a. plus expenses
- Hampshire County Council - £813 p.a. (not including Audit Committee Member, £2000 p.a.) plus expenses and dependent carer's allowance
- Hertfordshire - £500-1000 p.a. plus expenses
- Lancashire - £1,500 plus expenses for Audit Committee, other roles expenses only
- Surrey - expenses only

The benchmarking exercise indicates that Kent County Council's lumpsum Co-opted Member Allowance approach for the Governance and Audit Committee co-opted Members is broadly consistent with the approach taken by Peers.

The approach to other Co-opted roles and Independent Persons is less consistent across the benchmarking group. The benefit of the lumpsum approach is that it supports budget planning and transparency, with the risk being that Co-opted Member time spent to deliver against the workload is not accurately reflected. The benefit of the less common daily/hourly rate approach is that the time spent on Council work by Co-opted Members is more accurately recognised, with the risk being that this is harder to budget for and it may create an incentive for excessive time spent on Council business. On balance, the more widely adopted lumpsum approach presents the lower risk to Kent County Council, provided that expectations for the demands of the role are managed with prospective Co-opted Members upfront. It is also noted that the allowance is intended as an honorarium rather than as compensation for time spent.

The benchmarking exercise also highlighted that the approach to Coopted Member expenses varies, with some only some Co-opted Members eligible for expense reimbursement. It was noted that a minority of County Council Members Allowances Schemes state that Co-opted Members are eligible for the Carer's Allowance.

Of the Peer Group County Councils allocating a lumpsum Co-opted Member Allowance, the range was from £500 to £2000. Kent County Council's current Audit Committee allowance of £1,700 (as increased in the 2025/26 scheme) falls within this range.

The current Independent Person (Standards) lumpsum allowance falls within the Peer Group range for these roles.

Recommendations

The current Co-opted Member Allowance of £1,700 for the Audit Committee is now more appropriately aligned with the public service performed by Co-opted Members in a large County Council with budget oversight in excess of £2.6 billion. The role played by Co-opted Members carries significant responsibilities, and the Audit skillset is in high demand from the private sector, where typical compensation is significantly higher than the allowance, even with a public service discount applied. The Panel notes that the increase from £1,500 to £1,700 agreed in 2025/26 has been welcomed and considers this level appropriate for the current period. Given the recent review and adjustment of the Governance & Audit Committee allowance, we recommend the standard uprating mechanism is applied on an annual basis, with no further adjustments required.

For other Independent Persons and Co-opted Members, the Panel recommends moving away from a per diem-based mechanism towards a lumpsum approach, consistent with the approach taken by the Peer Group. This lumpsum payment should be eligible for the annual uprating in line with other Members allowances. This will support budgetary planning and provide transparency for people considering taking on these roles. Given

the proposed removal of the additional per diem, we recommend the lumpsum amount should be adjusted to £700, which falls within the Peer Group range.

We recommend that all Co-opted Members and Independent Persons should be eligible to claim travel expenses in the same way as elected Members and should be entitled to the Carer's Allowance. This is to support all interested people to perform these public service roles, so that travel and care costs are not a barrier to suitably qualified candidates.

Travel and Subsistence (and related expenses)

The current approach to expenses policy is based on receipts for eligible reimbursable travel and accommodation expenditure and HMRC mileage rates. Certain expenses can be eligible on a discretionary basis, for example taxi fares may be eligible with a receipt where necessary.

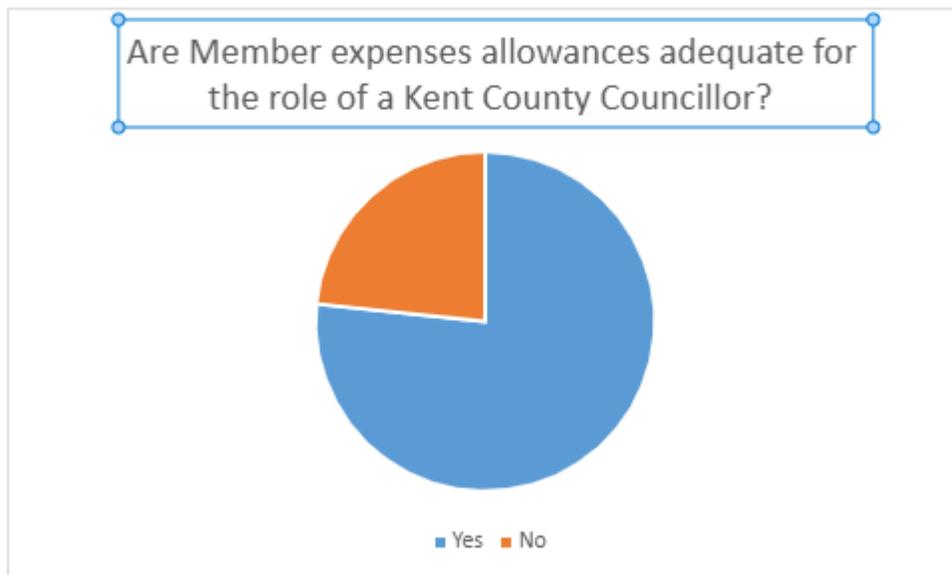
Approach

Members were invited to participate in a survey that considered the adequacy of the current expense approach, among other questions. We received 30 responses from Members on the topic of expenses.

The Panel also undertook benchmarking against other County Council expense approaches.

Findings

Of the 30 Member survey responses received, 23 respondents considered the current expense approach adequate, 7 did not:



The majority (77%) of Members that responded to the survey indicated that the current approach to Member expenses is adequate.

Where the approach was considered inadequate, additional information provided through the survey indicates some Members may not fully understand expense eligibility and further information or awareness may be needed, for example some expenses cited by Members as ineligible may already be eligible under the current scheme. One respondent cited the mileage rate as insufficient.

Where concerns were raised, for example regarding mileage, this Panel has considered benchmarking data to compare the approach with Member allowances schemes in other local authorities. Our benchmarking shows that aligning mileage allowances with the HMRC rates is a commonly adopted approach across other County Councils, and is consistent with peers including Essex, Hampshire, Hertfordshire, Lancashire, Surrey, Norfolk, East Sussex and Devon.

Recommendations

Based on Member consultation via the survey and our benchmarking exercise, this Panel recommends the current approach to Member expenses continues without changes.

Dependent Carer's Allowance

The current scheme has provision for a Dependent Carer's Allowance. This Panel does not have data on the current uptake of this allowance, not the proportion of Members eligible for this allowance choosing to claim this allowance. This allowance is typically important in supporting people with caring responsibilities to access these public service positions, and importantly in ensuring the diversity of the Member population reflects constituents.

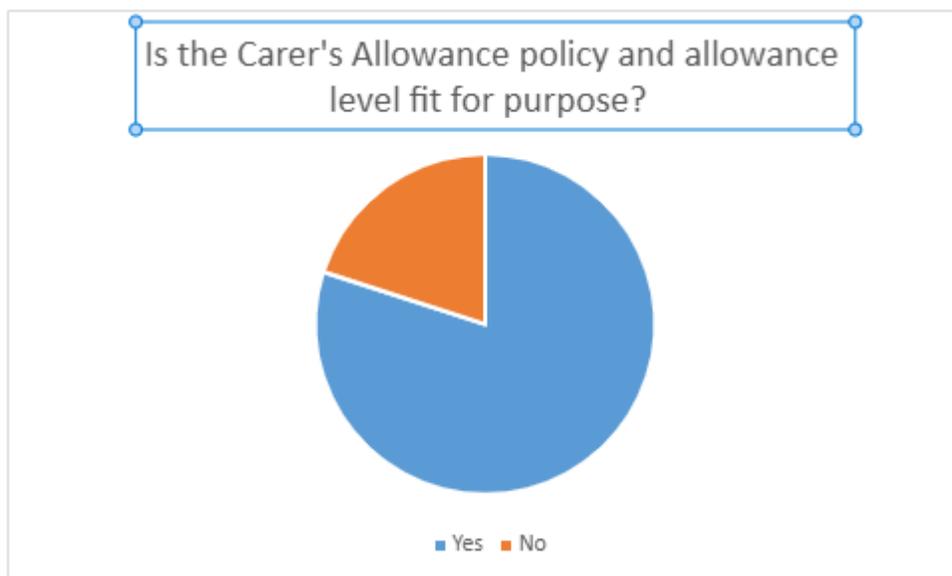
Approach

Members were surveyed on the Dependent Carer's allowance approach and 30 responses were received. Areas for further consideration emerging from the survey were benchmarked against other local authorities.

Findings

The current approach follows an accepted process of reimbursing actual care costs, subject to an hourly cap. This is applicable to childcare and adult dependent care and requires receipts/documentation. Carers from the Member's household are excluded.

Members were asked about whether the current allowance is fit for purpose. We received 30 responses, with 80% of respondents agreeing the current allowance is fit for purpose.



Based on additional information provided by respondents, where the answer was 'no' this was typically because there was a lack of information and awareness about the Carer's Allowance. Only one respondent indicated that the level of this allowance was inadequate when providing additional information about their response.

We note that only 4 survey respondents indicated that they claim or have claimed the Carer's allowance (13%). One respondent indicated they have caring responsibilities but did not claim the allowance, indicating that this was by choice rather than a barrier to uptake.

Our benchmarking indicates that the level of the allowance is broadly in line with comparator County Councils. That said, some schemes link the amount to the Real Living Wage. The benefit of this approach is that the amount is reviewed and updated in line with living wages annually, using an independently calculated and nationally accepted mechanism (Real Living Wage).

Recommendations

The Panel recommends that the level of allowance cap should be reviewed annually and increased in line with the Real Living Wage, as set by the Living Wage Foundation. This is in line with several comparator county councils and will ensure that the level of the cap is appropriate and does not become a barrier to Members. The current level of £13.98 is above the Real Living Wage of £13.45 and therefore no increase is required in this review period.

Some Members have indicated that they lack information about this allowance and the process for claiming this allowance. As such the Panel notes that further communication and education/awareness activities may be needed to build awareness of this allowance

and the process for claiming it. It may be helpful to remove barriers to serving as Members by promoting uptake by eligible Carers, as one survey response implied there is a misconception that there may be negative connotations to claiming this allowance.

Following the Interim review, the Member Remuneration Panel had indicated that the items listed below would be considered as part of this full review. However, based on our updated understanding of the matters and our responsibilities as a MRP vis a vis those of the KCC's administrative responsibilities, we are now of the view that these matters are best dealt with by KCC:

1. Review of job profile/descriptions for Members - Assessing KCC's profiles and descriptors for internal consistency and for comparison against other similar local authorities.
2. Communication of Members Allowances:
 - a. The training and awareness including Member Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements
 - b. Awareness interventions on expense regime and available allowances.

Uprating

This interim review considered the indexation methodology which is used by the Kent County Council to adjust/uprate/index annually all the categories of the Member allowances. The annual adjustment enables KCC to adjust the allowances pending a full review of the allowances which is normally performed every four years by the Members Review Panel.

Benchmarking

The Panel conducted a desk-based benchmarking exercise against a Sample Group of six County Councils nationwide. The Sample Group included County Councils from across the entire country to get as diverse and as representative a group as possible. The Sample Group selected for benchmarking purposes comprised:

- Surrey
- Essex
- Lancashire
- Derbyshire
- Devon
- West Sussex

Approach

In addition to the benchmarking exercise, feedback from semi-structured interviews with senior Kent County Council staff (including the Chief Executive, Monitoring Officer and Corporate Director Finance), the Leader of the Council, and 9 Members of the Council, along with the electronic survey feedback was considered.

Findings

A review of the Indexation Methodology for the Sample Group revealed that of the six County Councils:

- All six use an uprating methodology that is based on inflation or other wage bargaining body
- One has an inflation only indexation methodology which is based on Consumer Price Index (CPI)
- Three have an indexation methodology based on the National Joint Council for Local Government (NJC) pay increase award
- One has a hybrid methodology based on CPI for basis and special responsibility allowances, HMRC rates for car allowances and NJC for carers allowances
- One utilises the Public Sector Pay Index (excluding bonuses) published by the Office of National Statistics for all allowances.

The benchmarking exercise indicates that Kent County Council's previous approach was complex and unpredictable compared to the other approaches. This approach was an average of the increase to staff who have been deemed successful in the prior year's performance management process and the average of up to eight bodies who use the Public Sector Pay Index (excluding bonuses) published by the Office of National Statistics. The eight bodies include: Armed Forces' Pay Review Body; Review Body on Doctors' and Dentists' Remuneration; NHS Pay Review Body; Prison Service Pay Review Body; School Teachers' Review Body; Senior Salaries Review Body; National Crime Agency Remuneration Review Body; and Police Remuneration Review Body.

The approach adopted by KCC was complex and although it enables KCC to be as wide ranging as possible in the indexation methodology, the complexity, opacity and lack of predictive power relative to other simpler inflationary adjustment mechanisms mean that it is not fit for purpose.

Recommendation

The Panel considers that an indexation methodology should be simple, highly transparent & easily accessible and with a high predictability due to widespread use and

availability of information. Based on these criteria, the Panel favours the Consumer Price Index (CPI) approach.

There are two CPI measures that are widely used in the UK: CPIH (Consumer Prices Index including owner occupiers' housing costs), CPI (Consumer Prices Index).

CPIH - This is the headline measure of inflation used by the Office for National Statistics (ONS) and is considered the most comprehensive. It includes owner occupiers' housing costs, which are not included in the CPI.

CPI - This is a broader measure of inflation, similar to the European harmonised CPI. It excludes owner occupiers' housing costs, making it slightly different from CPIH

Of the two measures above, the Panel prefers the CPIH. EIM65960 - Local Government Councillors and civic dignitaries in England: ODPM guidance: Part One: Members' allowances defines the basic allowance as per below.

Basic allowance is intended to recognise the time commitment of all councillors, including such inevitable calls on their time as meetings with officers and constituents and attendance at political group meetings. It is also intended to cover incidental costs such as the use of their homes. As the incidental use of the home is a key component that the basic allowance seeks to recognise we believe that the CPIH is the best measure of inflation to be adopted by Kent County Council for this review period.

The Panel recommends the use of the 12-month rate based on the figure for the 12-months to December of the year prior to the increase being applied for the annual uprating process for the next 3 years (until the next full review). This uprating will be applied to all the allowances except for the carers' allowance which will be adjusted using the Real Living Wage mechanism.

Summary of recommendations:

1. The Basic Allowance for 2026/7 be increased by 3.6% in line with the CPIH Index and methodology in the paragraph above.
2. The Basic Allowance be increased for the subsequent three years of the Scheme, in line with the CPIH Index, taken to be the one to the calendar year to December
3. Special Responsibility Allowances for 2026/7 be increased by 3.6% in line with the CPIH Index.

4. Special Responsibility Allowances be increased for the subsequent three years of the Scheme, in line with the CPIH Index, taken to be the one to the calendar year to December.
5. The Co-opted Member Allowance remain the same in 2026/27 as 2025/26, but increase at the same rate as the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances in subsequent years.
6. The Independent Persons allowance be changed to a fixed per annum payment of £700.
7. The Dependents' Carers' Allowance at the current level and compared annually with the Real Living Wage. Where the Real Living Wage is higher, then the Dependents' Carers' Allowance will be increased to the same level.
8. The current approach to travel and expenses should remain the same.
9. The Panel also recommends the following:
 - a. Review of job profile/descriptions for Members - Assessing KCC's profiles and descriptors for internal consistency and for comparison against other similar local authorities.
 - b. Communication of Members Allowances:
 - i. The training and awareness including Member Continuing Professional Development (CPD) requirements
 - ii. Awareness interventions on expense regime and available allowances.

Member Remuneration Panel

February 2026

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Members' Allowances Scheme (202~~6/275/26~~ Scheme)

21.14 Basic Allowance - £~~16,266.91~~16,885.05 per annum (inclusive of an element for routine subsistence expenditure on KCC duties).

	%	£
Executive		
Leader	100	53,493.38 <u>55,526.13</u>
Cabinet Members (maximum 9)	65	34,770.70 <u>36,091.99</u>
Deputy Cabinet Members (maximum 11)	30	16,048.04 <u>16,657.83</u>
Cabinet Committee Chair (maximum 6)	17.5	9,361.34 <u>9,717.07</u>
Council		
Council Chairman	33	17,652.82 <u>18,323.63</u>
Council Vice-Chairman	17.5	9,361.34 <u>9,717.07</u>
Planning Applications Committee Chair	22	11,768.54 <u>12,215.74</u>
Regulation Committee Chair	22	11,768.54 <u>12,215.74</u>
Other Committee Chairs (a)	17.5	9,361.34 <u>9,717.07</u>
Scrutiny Committee Chair	17.5	9,361.34 <u>9,717.07</u>
Select Committee Chairs (for period of review)	17.5	9,361.34 <u>9,717.07</u>
Opposition		
Leader of each Opposition Group (of at least five members) (c)	33	17,652.82 <u>18,323.63</u>

21.15 Notes to Table in 21.14:

- (a) Other Committee Chairs: Governance and Audit, Health Overview and Scrutiny, Selection and Member Services, and Pension Fund.
- (b) No Member to receive more than one Special Responsibility Allowance.
- (c) The Opposition Group must comprise a minimum of five Members, one of which will be the appointed Opposition Group Leader. The maximum total SRA funding available for Opposition Group Leaders shall be 3 times the SRA set out in the table for a single Opposition Group Leader. In the event of there being more than 3 qualifying Opposition Group Leaders, the total amount is shared equally amongst them.
- (d) No other allowance to be payable.

Indexation

21.16 This is a ~~four~~one-year scheme ~~for year 2025/26~~covering 2025/26 to 2029/30.

21.1621.17 ~~Each indexation increase is subject to annual approval by full Council and will apply to the Basic Allowance, Special Responsibility Allowances and Dependent Carers' Allowance. Each year of the scheme, the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances are to increase in line with the CPIH Index. The allowance payable to independent Co-Opted Members of the Governance and Audit Committee will be increased by the same index for the final three years of the scheme.~~

21.18 ~~A 5% reduction was applied compared to the previous year. The CPIH figure to be used will be the one for the full calendar year prior to the start of the municipal year to which it is to be applied. The increase will be agreed as part of the annual budget and applied from the beginning of the municipal year.~~

21.1721.19 ~~The Dependents' Carers' Allowance will be set at the level of the Real Living Wage which is in place at the time the indexation is applied as part of the budget. However, this will only apply once the Real Living Wage is higher than the rate set for the Dependents' Carers' Allowance in place in the 2025/26 scheme (£13.98/hour).~~

Travel Expenses

21.1821.20 Travel by private vehicles will be reimbursed at the rates set for tax allowance purposes by the HM Revenue and Customs for business travel. Currently, these are 45p per mile for the first 10,000 miles and 25p a mile thereafter by car; the relevant HMRC rates will be paid for travel by bicycle.

21.1921.21 Parking fees, public transport fares and any hotel expenses will be reimbursed at cost, but only on production of a valid ticket or receipt - the cheapest available fare for the time of travel should normally be purchased.

21.2021.22 Taxi fares will only be reimbursed on production of a valid receipt and if use of public transport or the Member's own car is impracticable.

21.2121.23 Travel expenses will be reimbursed for any journey on Council duties between premises as agreed for tax purposes (normally excluding journeys to constituents' homes).

21.2221.24 VAT receipts for fuel must always be provided to accompany Members' expense claims and any instructions issued by the Head of Governance in relation to the submission of expense claims complied with.

21.2321.25 Air travel and rail travel other than to/from London or within Kent should be booked through Officers to enable use of discounting arrangements.

21.2421.26 Journeys undertaken in accordance with the following descriptions are allowed to be claimed for:

- (a) attendance at KCC premises to undertake KCC business, including attendance at Council, Cabinet and Committees, etc (including Group meetings) and to undertake general Member responsibilities,
- (b) representing KCC at external meetings, including Parish and Town Councils and those of voluntary organisations where the member is there on behalf of KCC,
- (c) attendance at events organised by KCC and/or where invitations have been issued by County Officers or Members (including Chair's events and other corporate events), and
- (d) attendance at meetings/events where the Member is an official KCC representative (as determined by the Selection and Member Services Committee) or requested by the Leader or the relevant Cabinet Member.

Subsistence Expenses

21.2521.27 These are not normally reimbursed. Hotel accommodation should be booked through Officers. Any other reasonably unavoidable costs related to overnight stays, excluding normal subsistence, will be reimbursed on production of a receipt.

Dependents' Carers' Allowance

21.2621.28 Members who incur expenses themselves in respect of care responsibilities for dependent children under 16 or dependent adults certified by a doctor or social worker as needing attendance will be reimbursed, on production of valid receipts, for actual payments to a carer while the Member is on Council duties, up to a maximum of £13.98 per hour for each dependent child or adult. Money paid to a member of the Members' household will not be reimbursed. In the case of an allowance for the care of a dependent relative, the relative must reside with the Councillor, be dependent on the Councillor and require constant care. Subject to the Childcare Voucher Scheme's standard terms and conditions*, any Member may, if they wish, sacrifice a portion of their Basic Allowance for Childcare Vouchers which are not subject to tax and national insurance deductions.

(a) * For reference these terms and conditions include (but are not limited to):

- i. The childcare provider must be OFSTED registered.
- ii. The children must be aged between 0 and 16.
- iii. A sacrifice agreement would need to be signed.
- iv. The amount that can be sacrificed varies depending on whether the applicant is a basic, higher, or additional rate taxpayer.

Pensions

21.2721.29 Members are not eligible for admission to the pension scheme.

Co-Opted Members

21.2821.30 An allowance is payable to an Independent Person for Standards of £~~700~~~~500~~ per annum ~~plus a daily rate of £100 (pro rata for part of a day)~~.

21.2921.31 An allowance is payable to an independent member of the Governance and Audit Committee of £1700 per annum; they shall also be entitled to claim expenses and the Dependents' Carers' Allowances in line with this scheme.

Election to Forgo Allowances

21.3021.32 In accordance with Regulation 13 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, any Member may elect to forgo all or any part of their entitlement to allowances, by notice in writing to the Head of Governance.

Submission of Claims

21.3121.33 In accordance with Regulation 14 of the Local Authorities (Members' Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003, the time limit for the submission of claims relating to travel, subsistence, Co-Opted Members and dependent carers allowances is four months from the date the expense was incurred.

No Other Allowances are Payable

21.3221.34 Only allowances complying with the above scheme are payable.

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive

To: Kent County Council - 19 March 2026

Subject: KCC Position on the Government's Foundation Strategic Authority Expression of Interest Invitation

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

On 12 February 2026, Ministers wrote to all council leaders inviting areas without an existing devolution agreement to submit expressions of interest (Eol) in establishing Foundation Strategic Authorities (FSAs), with responses to be reviewed from 20 March 2026. This report sets out the Leader's position, communicated directly to Minister Fahnbulleh by letter of 11 March 2026, that Kent County Council (KCC) is unable to submit or support an Eol at this time.

Recommendations:

The County Council is asked to:

- 1)** Note the Leader's decision not to submit, or support the submission of, an expression of interest for a Foundation Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway at this time.
 - 2)** Note that KCC officers will continue to support joint working and planning across LGR and devolution with all Kent and Medway councils, notwithstanding the Leader's position on the Eol.
 - 3)** Note the Leader's call on the Secretary of State to bring forward the final LGR decision for Kent and Medway significantly ahead of the current mid-July 2026 timetable.
-

Introduction

1.1 On 12 February 2026, Ministers Miatta Fahnbulleh MP (Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Devolution, Faith and Communities) and Matthew Pennycook MP (Minister of State for Housing and Planning) wrote to all council leaders, mayors, and chief executives across England. The letter announced two policy steps: first, a non-statutory consultation on the geographies for Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs); and second, an invitation to areas without an existing devolution agreement to submit expressions of interest (Eol) in joining a new wave of Foundation Strategic Authorities (FSAs).

1.2 The Ministers stated that FSAs would hold devolved powers over local transport and skills and would be responsible for delivering the area's SDS where boundaries were coterminous with the FSA. The Government presented FSAs - as non-mayoral Combined or Combined County Authorities - as a stepping stone towards full mayoral devolution. Ministers confirmed that responses would be reviewed from 20 March 2026, and that Eols must have the support of all relevant authorities and meet the criteria in the English Devolution White Paper.

1.3 Critically, the ministerial letter stated that the Government does not regard Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) as a barrier to conversations about FSA establishment. This represents a significant shift from the position previously communicated to Kent and Medway by MHCLG, which had consistently linked devolution progress to the completion of LGR and made clear that only successor unitary council(s) could request or consent to the creation of a new strategic authority.

2. The Context for Kent and Medway

2.1 Kent and Medway was not selected for inclusion in the Government's Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) in January 2025. Following that decision, and acting on MHCLG's then-clear advice that devolution would only follow LGR, the KCC Reform administration developed its preferred LGR option — Option 1A: a single unitary council for Kent and Medway, with three constituent 'area assemblies'. Option 1A is one of five options currently subject to MHCLG consultation, with a final decision expected by mid-July 2026.

2.2 KCC's business case for Option 1A reflects the Reform administration's support for greater devolution to Kent and Medway. However, it explicitly rejects the assumption that devolution can only be achieved through an additional Strategic Authority layer. KCC's position is that a single unitary council operating at the Kent and Medway scale could itself be designated the strategic authority for the area, and could receive and discharge devolved powers efficiently and effectively, without the additional cost and governance burden of a separate FSA.

3. The Leader's Position: Declining to Submit an Eol

3.1 The Leader wrote to Minister Fahnbulleh on 11 March 2026 to set out KCC's position in response to the ministerial invitation. The Leader confirmed that, whilst there is considerable appetite across all councils in Kent and Medway for greater devolved powers, this request is not one that KCC is able to support in the current circumstances. The letter was sent to the Minister ahead of the 20 March 2026 review date.

3.2 The Leader's core reasoning is set out below:

- **Policy inconsistency.** Until 12 February 2026, MHCLG's position had been unambiguous: devolution would not be on offer until sufficient progress had been made on LGR, and only the successor unitary council(s) could request or consent to the creation of a new strategic authority. This was the settled position since Kent and Medway was excluded from the DPP in January 2025. It was on this

basis that the KCC Reform administration built and submitted the business case for Option 1A. The Leader considers that this significant change of policy direction, issued whilst the LGR consultation remains live, represents an inconsistency that carries considerable risk.

- **Risk to Option 1A.** The Leader's view is clear that any decision by KCC to submit an EoI for an FSA - whether unilaterally or jointly with other councils - would undermine the business case for Option 1A. Option 1A proposes that a single unitary council for Kent and Medway could itself operate as the strategic authority, making a separate FSA unnecessary and duplicative. Supporting an EoI would contradict this core argument and would compromise KCC's position in a live statutory consultation process.
- **Integrity of the consultation.** The MHCLG consultation on LGR options for Kent and Medway is still live. Residents, businesses and partners across the area have submitted responses in good faith on the basis of the options as presented, including Option 1A. The Leader considers that acting to undermine Option 1A during this consultation period would be a serious breach of faith with those respondents and with the integrity of the consultation process itself.
- **Cost to the taxpayer.** KCC's position is that establishing a separate FSA would place additional governance demands and costs on the Kent council taxpayer that a single unitary council could avoid. The Reform administration's preference is to maximise devolved powers through the most efficient institutional structure, not to add a new layer of strategic authority.

4. Relationships with Other Kent and Medway Councils

4.1 The Leader has been explicit that KCC's decision is not intended to fetter the ambitions of other councils in Kent and Medway that may wish to pursue an EoI. KCC wishes to remain a good and constructive partner to all councils across the area. Existing strategic relationships and joint working have remained strong throughout the LGR process, even where councils disagree on preferred options. KCC officers will continue to support joint working and planning arrangements across LGR and devolution matters, notwithstanding the Leader's decision on the EoI.

4.2 The Leader's letter makes clear that KCC's position is not a permanent refusal to engage with devolution for Kent and Medway. Once the Secretary of State has made the final LGR decision, the position on an FSA EoI can be reconsidered in light of the outcome. KCC officers will continue to engage constructively with MHCLG, partner councils and other stakeholders in the interim.

5. Conclusion

5.1 The Leader's decision not to support an EoI for an FSA at this time reflects the KCC Reform administration's commitment to Option 1A, the integrity of the live MHCLG consultation, and the need to protect the interests of Kent council taxpayers. The decision is not a rejection of devolution but a response to the sequencing and assumptions behind the Government's latest invitation, which represent a significant departure from the policy position previously communicated to Kent and Medway.

5.2 The most direct route to resolving the current impasse is for the Government to accelerate its LGR decision for non-DPP areas. The current mid-July 2026 timetable places councils, staff, service users, and residents in unnecessary uncertainty. The Leader calls on the Secretary of State to bring that decision significantly forward, and the County Council is asked to note that call.

6. Recommendations

6.1 The County Council is asked to:

- 1) Note and endorse the Leader's decision not to submit, or support the submission of, an expression of interest for a Foundation Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway at this time.
 - 2) Note that KCC officers will continue to support joint working and planning across LGR and devolution with all Kent and Medway councils, notwithstanding the Leader's position on the EoI.
 - 3) Note the Leader's call on the Secretary of State to bring forward the final LGR decision for Kent and Medway significantly ahead of the current mid-July 2026 timetable.
-

7. Report Author:

David Whittle - Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance

8. Appendices:

Appendix 1: Letter from Ministers Fahnbulleh and Pennycook to all council leaders, 12 February 2026 (MHCLG).

Appendix 2: Letter from the Leader of Kent County Council to Minister Fahnbulleh, 11 March 2026.



Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government

Matthew Pennycook MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

Miatta Fahnbulleh MP
*Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Devolution, Faith and Communities*
2 Marsham Street
London
SW1P 4DF

All Council Leaders, All Mayors, and All Chief Executives

12 February 2026

Dear Leaders, Mayors, and Chief Executives,

Economic growth is the number one mission of this government. We know that growth is best achieved when local leaders are empowered to think strategically across the right geographies, supported by strong institutions, and when they have the ability to plan for the long term. This belief has underpinned our ambitious programme of deepening and extending devolution. It has also guided many of our changes to the planning system.

We are determined to keep up the pace on these vital reforms. That is why we wrote to you before Christmas about our overhaul of national planning policy, and it is why today we are taking two further steps: publishing a non-statutory consultation on the geographies for Spatial Development Strategies (SDSs), so that we can confirm the areas across which the new system of strategic planning will operate; and inviting expressions of interest from authorities without an existing devolution agreement to be part of a new wave of Foundation Strategic Authorities (FSAs) across England.

Spatial Development Strategies

The Planning and Infrastructure Act 2025 reinstates a strategic planning system for England. Once the provisions in the Act are commenced – which is expected by the summer – places will be required to produce an SDS. These strategies will deal with strategic and cross-boundary issues and set the context for local plans, which will have to be in ‘general conformity’ with the umbrella SDS once adopted. By taking a sub-regional view of how growth needs can be sustainably met, they will help us build more homes, co-ordinate the delivery of strategic infrastructure, grow the economy, and improve the environment and climate resilience.

We strongly believe that strategic planning, as just one part of the growth equation, is most effective when done over devolution geographies. Aligning it with Strategic Authorities’ transport, skills, and economic development powers will help ensure better integrated, more effective delivery. This is why we set out, in the English Devolution White Paper, that Mayoral Strategic Authorities will be empowered to produce SDSs for their regions, and why we are giving Mayors strategic development management powers through the English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, currently before Parliament. This will enable Mayoral Strategic Authorities to guide planning applications of

potential strategic importance to ensure that the overall strategy and any policies within the SDS are being implemented.

For parts of the country currently without mayoral devolution, we have set out that SDSs need to be developed across 'sensible geographies' in line with the principles of the English Devolution White Paper. Today we are launching a consultation on what these sensible geographies might be. In some places, there is already broad agreement on them, and we have indicated these in the consultation. In other places, we do not believe there is a consensus view yet, and so we are seeking proposals from you that align with the 'sensible geography' criteria in the White Paper.

Where SDSs are not coterminous with Strategic Authorities, the formal mechanism for areas to work together on their SDS will be a Strategic Planning Board (SPB), which will be established through secondary legislation. We will undertake statutory consultation prior to establishing these boards, alongside more detailed engagement and discussion with relevant authorities. This is expected to take place in the spring for most areas, but there may be an opportunity to move ahead with this more quickly where there is clear agreement, in which case MHCLG officials will be in contact with authorities about the details of an SPB during the consultation period.

A new wave of Foundation Strategic Authorities

Given our belief that sensible strategic planning and devolution geographies will, in the vast majority of cases, be one and the same, the development of SDS footprints is also an opportunity to agree the shape of devolution geographies for areas currently without a Strategic Authority. The government is therefore inviting these places to come forward with expressions of interest for the establishment of new FSAs, which must meet the criteria in the English Devolution White Paper and therefore should, typically, align with SDS geographies. As you would expect, we are also working across government to ensure this approach aligns with other reform programmes affecting public service boundaries, including the current Review of Police Structures.

FSAs will have devolved powers over local transport and skills, as well as being responsible for delivering the area's SDS where the SDS boundary is coterminous with the FSA. There are then a further set of powers and partnerships available to FSAs – the full FSA offer is set out in Devolution Framework at Section 3.10 of the English Devolution White Paper. The government is also currently consulting on giving FSAs the power to raise an Overnight Visitor Levy, which would be an additional power not currently in the Devolution Framework.

The government remains firmly committed to mayoral devolution and is forging ahead with it – including through our Devolution Priority Programme – but we have been clear that this model works best when built on firm foundations. This includes the strong unitary structures we are creating through local government reorganisation, and we remain fully committed to delivering these important reforms within this Parliament to the timetable set out. Alongside this, we see FSAs – as non-mayoral Combined or Combined County Authorities – to be a valuable way to build local capacity and partnerships, and as a stepping stone towards mayoral devolution in the future. While we recognise the demands that delivering reorganisation places on local authorities, we do not see that as a barrier to conversations about the establishment of FSAs and how to devolve powers to unleash local growth. We want to discuss with local authorities interested in taking this forward how best to manage the two processes effectively.

We would therefore like to invite all areas in England without an existing devolution agreement to come forward with their neighbours to take on devolution through an FSA over a sensible geography. We welcome expressions of interest over the coming weeks and we will begin reviewing responses from 20 March.

This will help sustain momentum on this exciting next stage of empowering local government and ensure the government delivers the benefits of devolution to all parts of England as soon as we can. It is important that all expressions of interest have the support from the relevant authorities and meet the criteria set out in the English Devolution White Paper.

As we said in our letter just before Christmas, it is only through continued close working between all of us that we will deliver the homes, jobs and improved living standards we owe to those we serve. The steps we are taking today will help embed that cooperation not just in this Parliament, but for years to come.

Best Wishes,



MIATTA FAHNBULLEH MP
Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for
Devolution, Faith and Communities



MATTHEW PENNYCOOK MP
Minister of State for Housing and Planning

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Miatta Fahnbulleh MP

Parliamentary Under Secretary of State for Devolution,
Faith and Communities

By Email

Linden Kemkaran
Leader's Office
Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Email: linden.kemkaran@kent.gov.uk

11 March 2026

Dear Minister,

Further to your letter of 12 February 2026, co-signed by Matthew Pennycook MP, I write regarding your request, with a submission deadline of 20 March 2026, for expressions of interest (EoI) in establishing Foundation Strategic Authorities (FSAs) in areas outside the Devolution Priority Programme.

I have given this issue considerable thought. Whilst I recognise there is appetite across all councils in Kent and Medway for greater devolved powers from Westminster and Whitehall, in current circumstances, this most recent request, is not one that KCC is able to support.

Until your ministerial statement of the 12 February 2026, the advice and position from MHCLG regarding devolution to Kent and Medway could not have been clearer. Devolution would not be on offer until sufficient progress had been made on local government reorganisation, and only the successor unitary council(s) could request, and then consent, to the creation of a new strategic authority.

That was, in essence, the position of MHCLG since Kent and Medway was not selected for inclusion in the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) in January 2025.

It was on this basis that the new Reform administration in KCC developed its proposal for Option 1A - a single unitary council for Kent and Medway with three constituent 'area assemblies' - which is currently one of the five options for LGR in Kent and Medway that MHCLG is currently undertaking a consultation on.

Whilst the business case for Option 1A makes clear that the KCC Reform administration would welcome further devolution of certain powers to Kent and Medway, we are also explicit in our rejection of the assumption in government policy that this could only be achieved through a new additional Strategic Authority placing ever greater demands on the Kent council taxpayer.

Our position is that a single unitary council for Kent and Medway could operate at the scale necessary to be designated the strategic authority for the area, and would be able to receive and discharge devolved powers efficiently and effectively.

It is clear to me that any decision to submit an expression of interest for an FSA by KCC, either unilaterally or jointly with other councils, would critically undermine the business case for Option 1A.

I stand fully behind Option 1A as the best option for local government reorganisation in Kent and Medway. Doing anything to undermine it whilst the MHCLG public consultation is still ongoing would be a serious breach of faith with the businesses, residents and partners who have already submitted, in good faith, their views and opinions on all the options out to consultation.

It is difficult to avoid the conclusion that this latest *volte face* in government policy - extending the FSA offer to non-DPP areas - represents a significant change of direction whilst the relevant consultation processes remain live. I would also respectfully ask that consideration be given to the considerable legal and procedural risks of issuing an EoI request in areas where LGR consultations are still ongoing, given the inherent link between reorganisation and devolution.

In short, it is my view that KCC cannot submit an EoI for an FSA until the Secretary of State has made the final decision on LGR options for Kent and Medway currently in consultation.

Whilst I have no doubt that this will disappoint my fellow council leaders who are eager to make progress on devolution, I want to be explicit that KCC wishes to remain a good partner to all councils in Kent and Medway.

Existing strategic relationships and joint working across all Kent and Medway councils has remained strong, even where we disagree on LGR options. To that end, whilst KCC is not able to sign an EoI now, KCC officers will still support joint working and planning arrangements across LGR and devolution.

Our intention is not to fetter the ambition of other councils, but to protect our own position in regard to Option 1A.

The most obvious way to move beyond this impasse is for the Government to make the decision on LGR sooner rather than later. The current timetable for non-DPP areas of a final decision by mid-July 2026 leaves all councils, our staff, our service users and our residents in an unnecessary limbo that can easily be avoided. I call on you to bring that decision significantly forward and to do so without delay.

Yours sincerely,



Linden Kemkaran
Leader of Kent County Council

By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager

To: County Council – 19 March

Subject: Motion for Time Limited Debate

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary

County Council may consider and resolve Motions for Time Limited Debate submitted by Political Groups, in accordance with section 14.32 of the KCC Constitution.

Three Motions for Time Limited Debate are included in the agenda for the 19 March 2026 meeting of the Full Council.

1. In advance of each ordinary meeting of the Full Council, each Political Group may submit one Motion for Time Limited Debate for debate and decision. Motions are placed on the agenda in the order they are received by Democratic Services.
 2. Motions for Time Limited Debate are different from normal Committee or Decision papers as they are not prepared by KCC Officers, with the associated assurances and operational guidance. The Motions and any Background Information supplied for context are developed and submitted by the Political Groups, who are responsible for their content. They are therefore prepared and considered on the basis that they are political matters, allowing the Council to debate and resolve political positions on a range of issues outside of the main substantive decision-making framework for functions within the responsibility of the County Council.
 3. The official adoption of any substantive changes, if relevant, to strategies or policies referenced in a Motion approved by Full Council, where applicable to matters for which the Council has powers and responsibilities, would be subject to separate and additional relevant governance processes and decision-making, in line with the constitutional and legislative arrangements.
 4. A maximum of 45 minutes will be allowed for each debate. The Motions must meet the general requirements of Motions as set out in the constitution and the debate is conducted in accordance with normal procedure rules along with any relevant directions given by the Chairman of the Council.
 5. The submitted Motions for Time Limited Debate are appended to this covering report.
-

Recommendation:

The County Council is asked to consider and determine the submitted Motions for Time Limited Debate

Appendices:

1. MTLT – Reform Group – Illegal Migration Emergency
2. MTLT – Green Group – Strengthening Water Infrastructure & Resilience
3. MTLT – Liberal Democrat Group – Merchant Navy and Red Ensign Day

Report Author:

Joel Cook

Democratic Services Manager

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**Motion for Time Limited Debate
Declaration of an Illegal Migration Emergency in Kent**

Submitted by the Reform UK Political Group

**Proposer – Mr David Wimble
Seconder – Mr Jeremy Eustace**

Motion:

This Council resolves to declare an Illegal Migration Emergency in Kent as follows:

The Declaration

Kent County Council declares an Illegal Migration Emergency in Kent.
The County is the frontier for the influx of illegal migrants via small boats into the UK.

Kent residents and taxpayers are dealing with the consequences of illegal migration in terms of

- Cost (financial)
- Culture
- Community Cohesion
- Crime

Therefore, the Council calls on the Leader of the Council to:

- (a) demand the Labour government stops the arrival of migrants by small boats immediately
- (b) seek to ensure that the Labour government provides full funding to cover the costs to the County Council and partner public agencies in dealing with the consequences of illegal migration, and
- (c) press for Kent's emergency services, resilience structures and emergency planning to be appropriately supported and funded to deal with this crisis.

Background Information provided by the Reform UK Group

Introduction

1. The current Labour government and the previous Conservative government have overseen the unprecedented illegal mass influx of thousands of unvetted, primarily adult, male migrants into the country on boats from the safe country of France.
2. Kent is at the forefront of the invasion, with 'small boat' arrivals at Dover being the primary route. Most of the arrivals are taken from boats mid-Channel and brought to Dover by the UK Border Force and the RNLi. However, the number of additional migrants who are not aided in this way and arrive in the County is unknown.
3. As Kent is the frontier County for this illegal invasion, it is the County as a whole that suffers many of the consequences, putting a strain on its public services and finances. It

represents a failure of the State under both national Labour and Conservative administrations.

4. Clearly, the Reform administration on Kent County Council cannot take national-level actions; however, until there is a change in central government and/or a change in a national agreed approach, the County will continue to suffer the consequences in a way that is disproportionate to the rest of Country. Hence, the need for a “Declaration of an Illegal Migration Emergency” in Kent by Kent County Council will focus attention on Kent’s specific needs with this local crisis, and would put pressure on central Government to take meaningful action.

Legislative Context

5. Many migrants dispose of their passports or other identification on the way to the UK. According to Migration Watch, only 2% of small boat migrants have their passports on arrival in the UK. It is illegal to enter the UK without identification.

Section 3.1(a) of the Immigration Act 1971 states that “...where a person is not a British citizen, [then] he shall not enter the United Kingdom unless given leave to do so...”.

Formal immigration assessments for each individual arriving into the UK must inevitably happen before a decision is able to be made for each individual. In the event that a decision is made that their entry to the UK is without leave then that may be an illegal entry. (S. 33(1) Immigration Act 1971, as amended.) There is also a Government produced Guidance entitled “Irregular or unlawful entry and arrival”.

6. Kent County Council has a statutory duty under the Children Act 1989, to safely accommodate and care for all unaccompanied asylum-seeking children who arrive in Kent and are notified of it prior to their dispersal around the UK.

7. Kent County Council now receives Government Funding for Children up to 18. That funding reduces between of ages of 18 to 21 and drops off entirely for the 21 to 25 age bracket, leaving KCC entirely responsible for the cost of housing, feeding, clothing and other care needs. Because these young adults qualify as care leavers, KCC is statutorily obliged to care for them up to the age of 25. This places a huge strain on an already overstretched service.

Background

8. Between 2018 and 2025, 194,000 people arrived by small boat. In 2025, 41,500 people were detected crossing the English Channel in small boats, which was an increase of 13% on the previous year. Small boats make up more than 80% of all detected unauthorised arrivals in the UK. In the first three months of 2026, 3400 people have arrived on our shores.

9. Most arrivals by boat are from the safe country of France, but they originate from a large number of other countries. Between 2018 and 2024, Iran, Afghanistan, Iraq, Albania, Syria and Eritrea made up 70% of people crossing in small boats. There are few returns, with the number to the end of 2024 being only 3%, with the majority of those being returned to Albania.

10. Most of the men are leaving their women and children in their home countries; many of whom will plan to follow if asylum is granted for the male relatives. Much of the small

boat 'industry' is organised by gangs and can involve people trafficking and modern slavery.

11. Some 76% of those crossing the Channel are military-aged men over the age of 18 years, but there is a relatively small number of women and children too. The vast majority of the men arriving via small boats are unvetted, and often from unstable countries with misogynistic cultures and histories of violence.

Impact of the Illegal Migration on Kent

(a) Financial

12. The Chancellor of the Exchequer's Audit of in-year spending pressures facing the new Labour government in 2024 stated that the costs relating to asylum and illegal immigration amounted to £6.4 billion of pressures on day-to-day spending in 2024/25. Reform UK has stated that the cost of illegal migration is currently running at £7 billion per annum, excluding many hidden costs such as the burden on the NHS. The national welfare bill for migrants is approximately £10 billion per year in the UK

13. Based on the current known populations of the UK and Kent, and using the lower of the cost estimates, the following costs are deemed highly likely:

- The cost of illegal migration and its associated asylum costs is £92 each year for every man, woman and child in the UK, calculated on a pro-rata basis.
- The annual cost of illegal migration for a Kent family of four is £368 pro-rata (excluding hidden costs).
- Equating it to Kent's population and calculating national costs on a proportionate basis, Kent residents' share of the national costs of illegal migration and associated asylum is £151 million per year pro-rata (excluding the 'hidden' costs e.g. those met by the police, the NHS and local authorities).
- Equating it to Kent's population and calculating national costs of migrant welfare of £10 billion per annum on a pro-rata basis, Kent taxpayers are paying £236 million in benefits to migrants per year.
- The share of costs of illegal migration and associated asylum, plus the costs of migrant benefits totals just under £600 per annum pro-rata for each of Kent's 648,393 households.

As mentioned, all costs above are estimates calculated on a pro-rata basis. The real costs are likely to be significantly higher than those stated, due to the greater tax take in Kent compared to many areas in the UK.

14. Kent County Council's costs of establishing and managing the 10 centres for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) up to the age of 18 years in the County prior to their dispersal around the UK are met by the Home Office. Costs are partially met for 18-21 year olds but not for 21-25 year olds. As those facilities have a current market valuation of approximately £20 million and were developed using funding from the DfE and the Home Office, it is fair to state that public money totalling £20 million is tied up in those properties. Additional costs to Kent County Council would include the opportunity cost of staffing involved in the service to UASC.

(b) Community Cohesion and Culture

15. Many of the migrants come from countries that have very different cultures, norms and values to the UK. Some come from countries where extreme violence is common, where LGBTQ behaviour is not acceptable, where 'honour killings' are rife; where inter-family marriage is allowed, and where there is misogyny with little respect for women and girls. Attempts to 'be kind' and tolerant of others' cultures and behaviours by certain political parties has led to a woke and divided society and weakened our British culture. Evidence of this is seen in the recent aversion to the flying of the Union Flag and Flag of St George; a reluctance of politicians to emphasise that British foundations are rooted in Christianity; perceived two-tier policing under the Labour government where some cultures are protected more than the native population; and the huge public outcry against hotels being used for asylum seekers and the subsequent dispersal policy direct into communities that has been introduced by the Labour government. In September 2025, the number of asylum seekers in hotels was 36,273, which is an increase of 4,232 from June 2025 and 7,000 higher than when Labour took office. Plans are underway for the government to house asylum seekers in newly-built council houses. The impact is an overall negative cost to our social cohesion.

(c) Crime

16. It has been reported that the Home Office is aware that the arrivals are likely to contain a number of potential terrorist cells, supporting ISIS and Al-Qaeda; and evidence shows this to be the case. The threat of terrorism in the UK is significant, with more than 39,000 Islamists being on the UK Counter-terrorism Watch List. Islamist terrorism is the most significant terrorist threat to the UK by volume, with roughly 75% of MI5's investigation work dedicated to it. However, illegal migration is also a threat to domestic order and security. Government data compiled by the Centre for Migration Control (2025) using Freedom of Information requests has shown that Afghans are 22 times more likely to commit sex crimes than British; Albanians are 152 times more likely to commit drug crime than British, and Congolese are 11 times more likely to commit violent crime than British.

17. Foreign nationals commit a crime every three minutes in the UK, with 170,000 across the past year. This is of epidemic proportions. Conservatives and now Labour have been reluctant to compile and release the crime data on foreign nationals and certainly on illegal migrants. However, if we look at other European countries, we see worrying data. For instance, in Italy, foreigners commit 43% of all recorded crime including 60% of robberies, although they make up only 9% of the population.

18. It is clear that the number of convictions or incarcerations vary according to nationality. Certain nationalities, notably Albanians, Iranians and Afghans, are amongst the most common non-UK nationalities in the prison population, with Indians and Sudanese also high. Some crimes are more common amongst foreign nationals, such as drug and sexual offences.

(d) Public Health

19. Newly arrived migrants in the care of 'the state', are given free NHS checks and treatment and dental care, often in priority to native UK citizens, and putting strain on our health services through NHS triage and screening, treatment, interpreter services and 'overseas visitors teams'. A number of infectious diseases are believed to be on the increase, potentially due to having been carried by migrants e.g. Tuberculosis (TB). The most common countries of origin for non-UK born people with TB are India, Pakistan, Romania, Somalia and Eritrea. Migrants have been seen by Kent residents urinating and

defecating on public beaches. Inappropriate cultural norms have become commonplace, such as cousin marriages, which have poor health (and subsequent cost) outcomes for offspring.

(e) Partner Organisations

20. Some district councils have declared that they are 'sanctuary districts' welcoming 'refugees' e.g. Thanet. Other districts have noted a steep increase in the number of 'Homes of Multiple Occupancy' in their areas. There is also an increase in demand for social housing. (For reference, 47.6% of social housing in London is occupied by immigrants – Migration Watch 2026).

21. Bodies such as Kent Police, the NHS and the UK Border Force are having to use their limited resources in dealing with the impact of illegal migration (and more generally, all immigration). The reputation of some charities such as the RNLI have suffered due to them being diverted to assist with the migrant influx.

Sources:

Oxford Dictionary - Invasion: The arrival/intrusion of an unwanted large number of people (int)

The Migration Observatory (2025) – 'Asylum, Refugees and Enforcement – Small Boats'.

The Centre for Migration Control (2026) – 'Britain's 2025 Asylum Crisis: The Numbers'.

Migration Watch (2025) – 'Response to the Home Office Immigration Statistics of 2024'.

Office for National Statistics 2021 Census – 'Country of Birth and Tenure of Households'.

The Henry Jackson Society (2021) – 'Modern-Day Britain's Terror Threat'.

The Henry Jackson Society (2024) – 'Prison Break: Reforming Britain's Prison System'.

MI5 Security Service (2026) – 'The Joint Terrorist Analysis Centre. Web content'.

Jordan S. (2025) – 'Stat of the Nation'.

Institute for Fiscal Studies (2024) – 'Home Office Budgetary and Asylum Overspends' – article by Werner M. and Zaranko B.

Evans H. (2024) – article in The Independent entitled, 'Home Office repeatedly Overspends Billions on Asylum due to Woeful Budgeting, Fiscal Watchdog Reveals'.

UK Parliament – Hansard Vol 735 (2023) – 'Illegal Migration Bill: Economic Impact Assessment'.

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Motion for Time Limited Debate
Strengthening Water Infrastructure and Resilience

Submitted by the Green Political Group

Proposer: Mr Stuart Heaver

Seconder: Mr Mark Hood

Motion:

This Council resolves to:

1. Call on the Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects to write Secretary of State for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities to request a change to planning legislation requiring the assessment of water resource availability as part of the determination process for planning applications.
2. Call on the Deputy Leader, as the portfolio holder for emergency planning, to provide an update to the relevant Committee on water-resource resilience in the context of KCC's role within the wider Kent Resilience Forum.
3. Call on the Executive to write to South East Water and Southern Water to request a report on their future prediction of Combined Sewer Overflow spills per year from all Kent wastewater Sewage Treatment Works based on current population growth, climate forecasts and Disinfection Level Period information.
4. Call on the Executive to write to the Environment Agency to ask that they report which wastewater facilities they have inspected in Kent on a quarterly basis and that the Executive provide this information as part of performance reporting to the Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee.
5. Request that the Executive investigate the feasibility of setting up, facilitating and promoting citizen science testing teams on key bathing water areas and rivers.
6. Recommend that the Scrutiny Committee consider asking for a report on the how the impact, from a public health and economic perspective, of water outages and waterborne pollution is managed or considered where relevant to the effectiveness of and requirement for KCC Services.
7. Call on the Executive to incorporate waterborne pollution in the Kent Environment Plan and in the Biodiversity Recovery Programme.

Background Information provided by the Green Group:

Kent has experienced a growing number of incidents that highlight the vulnerability of the county's water infrastructure and the real world consequences for residents when systems fail. ¹ Water outages, contamination events, and wastewater spills have caused significant disruption to daily life, placed added pressure on local services, and raised legitimate concerns about public health. ² These failures can limit access to safe drinking water, increase risks of waterborne illness, and reduce hygiene standards in homes, schools, and care settings, placing vulnerable groups at higher risk. ³

National reviews have warned that ageing water infrastructure and under-investment create increasing risks of leaks, service failures and sewage discharges, emphasising the need for more proactive, coordinated planning across the sector. ⁴

The Royal Academy of Engineering has also highlighted that failing wastewater systems can expose communities to harmful pathogens in rivers and coastal waters, reinforcing the need for improved infrastructure planning to protect public health.⁵ Exposure to contaminated water can lead to gastrointestinal illness, skin infections, and other preventable health impacts, making the resilience of wastewater systems a core public health concern. ⁶

Whilst planning applications consider the impact on existing utility services, water companies are currently not classified as statutory consultees. Under Section 106 of the Water Industry Act 1991, developers have a right to connect to the water network on 21 days' notice. This does not allow water and sewerage companies sufficient time to plan, design, and deliver any required reinforcement works.⁶ As the number of developments increases, the pressure on existing water supply and demand also increases.⁷

If planning applications required developers to identify the proposed source of their water supply, this would allow water companies to plan any necessary reinforcement

¹ **Kent Online**. Streams in Hawkhurst polluted by Southern Water. Available at: <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/the-kent-village-polluted-by-247-spills-in-one-year-306921/>

² **The Guardian**. South East Water could lose operating licence after outages in Kent. Available at: <https://www.theguardian.com/business/2026/jan/14/south-east-water-operating-licence-ofwat-review-outages-kent-sussex>

³ **Royal Academy of Engineering / National Engineering Policy Centre**. Testing the Waters Priorities for mitigating health risks from wastewater pollution. Available at: <https://nepc.raeng.org.uk/testing-the-waters>

⁴ **Gov UK**. Water and sewerage companies in England: pollution incident report 2016 to 2024. Available at: <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/water-and-sewerage-companies-in-england-pollution-incident-report-for-2016-to-2024>

⁵ **Royal Academy of Engineering**. Wastewater Risks. Available at: <https://nepc.raeng.org.uk/wastewater>

⁶ **Southern Water**. Briefing Note for Local Planning Authorities: Infrastructure Provision. Available at: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/media/pb5nd4ux/briefing-note-for-lpa-on-infrastructure-provision-1.pdf>

⁷ **Kent County Council**. Development of a Kent Water Resources Strategy. Available at: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/documents/s132938/Water%20Resource%20Strategy%20Report.pdf>

⁸ **Kent County Council**. Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039. Available at: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/service-specific-policies/economic-regeneration-and-planning-policies/planning-policies/minerals-and-waste-planning-policy/kent-minerals-and-waste-local-plan-kmwlp>

works in advance, helping to ensure that water infrastructure capacity is considered and supporting the mitigation of potential supply issues. Similar to how the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan is essential for evaluating planning applications relating to mineral supply and waste management,⁸ water infrastructure considerations in the planning process would strengthen decision making and ensure that impacts on water infrastructure are formally assessed.

Incorporating changes to the current measures would help safeguard residents by trying to mitigate risks of supply shortages, contamination incidents, or insufficient wastewater treatment capacity.

Regular reporting from local authority public health officers and water companies can further strengthen preparedness. Public health teams can highlight trends in water-related complaints, identify emerging risks to vulnerable populations, and advise on the likely impact of outages or contamination events. At the same time, water companies can provide operational data on network pressures, asset failures, and areas of concern. Adopting a revised approach to Kent's water infrastructure will mean these reports are routinely shared and incorporated so that the council will be better equipped to anticipate problems, collaborate with other agencies and protect community health, the local economy and the environment.

¹ **Kent Online**. Streams in Hawkhurst polluted by Southern Water. Available at: <https://www.kentonline.co.uk/kent/news/the-kent-village-polluted-by-247-spills-in-one-year-306921/>

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³ **Royal Academy of Engineering / National Engineering Policy Centre**. Testing the Waters Priorities for mitigating health risks from wastewater pollution. Available at: <https://nepc.raeng.org.uk/testing-the-waters>

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⁵ **Royal Academy of Engineering**. Wastewater Risks. Available at: <https://nepc.raeng.org.uk/wastewater>

⁶ **Southern Water**. Briefing Note for Local Planning Authorities: Infrastructure Provision. Available at: <https://www.southernwater.co.uk/media/pb5nd4ux/briefing-note-for-lpa-on-infrastructure-provision-1.pdf>

⁷ **Kent County Council**. Development of a Kent Water Resources Strategy. Available at: <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/documents/s132938/Water%20Resource%20Strategy%20Report.pdf>

⁸ **Kent County Council**. Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039. Available at: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/service-specific-policies/economic-regeneration-and-planning-policies/planning-policies/minerals-and-waste-planning-policy/kent-minerals-and-waste-local-plan-kmwlp>

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Motion for Time Limited Debate

Supporting the Merchant Navy and Flying the Red Ensign

Submitted by the Liberal Democrat Group

Proposed by: Mr Antony Hook

Seconded by: Mr Tim Prater

Motion:

This Council resolves to:

1. Recognise and support Merchant Navy Day on 3rd September each year.
2. Call for the Red Ensign to be flown alongside the Union Flag at Sessions House, Maidstone, and any other appropriate KCC civic buildings on 3rd September annually, as has been done in some previous years.
3. Recommend that the Chairman of the Council host a formal flag-raising ceremony to mark the occasion, inviting local maritime charities, companies working in this sector, trade unions representing Kent seafarers and other appropriate organisations.
4. Ask the relevant Cabinet Member to ensure KCC's education and skills teams actively highlight maritime careers and the broader maritime sector to young people as part of our local economic growth strategy.

Background Information Provided by the Liberal Democrat Group:

- The 3rd September is officially recognised as Merchant Navy Day, chosen to mark the anniversary of the sinking of the SS *Athenia*, the first British merchant casualty of the Second World War.
- The United Kingdom is a maritime country that relies on seafarers to transport over 90% of our imports, including half of the food we eat, our fuel, and vital supplies.
- Kent has a proud and extensive maritime heritage, with ports at Dover, Folkestone, Sheerness, Ramsgate and many others having a historical or ongoing cornerstone role in the Kent and UK economy.
- There are an estimated 24,550 UK working seafarers with a significant number living in Kent as well as many Kent residents working in a wide range of jobs connected to ports and maritime transport.
- Kent hosts, among other related training facilities, the National Maritime Training Centre at Gravesend.
- The modern Merchant Navy faces unprecedented contemporary challenges, including severe geopolitical security threats to international shipping lanes, and global economic difficulties.
- The Seafarers Charity leads a national campaign calling on local authorities and public bodies to fly the Red Ensign—the official flag of the British Merchant Navy—ashore on September 3rd.

- Several hundred councils in the UK recognise Merchant Navy Day including, in Kent, Dover District Council, Faversham Town Council, and Sevenoaks District Council.

This Council believes that:

- The sacrifices made by Merchant Navy crews during both World Wars and other conflicts since 1945 must never be forgotten.
- Modern merchant seafarers are the unsung heroes of our economy, often facing dangerous, uncomfortable conditions, extended periods away from their families, and increasing global security risks to keep our imports, exports and wider supply chains functioning.
- Recent years have highlighted the urgent need to protect seafarers' rights. It is vital that operators utilising Kent's ports adhere to high standards of fair pay, safe working conditions, and job security for their crews.
- Given Kent's geographical position as the Gateway to the UK and its deep economic ties to the sea, Kent County Council has a distinct civic duty to visibly recognise and champion the contribution of the Merchant Navy.