



## AGENDA

## CABINET

**Monday, 30th November, 2020, at 10.00 am**  
**Virtual**

Ask for:  
Telephone

**Emily Kennedy**  
**Tel: 03000 419625**  
**emily.kennedy@kent.gov.uk**

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1. Apologies and Substitutes
2. Declaration of Interests by Member in Items on the Agenda for this meeting
3. Minutes of the Meeting held on 12 October 2020 (Pages 1 - 8)
4. 'Setting the Course' - Kent County Council's Interim Strategic Plan (Pages 9 - 40)
5. EU Transition Preparedness - Update (Pages 41 - 56)
6. Covid -19 Update -presentation
7. Budget Consultation 2021-22 (Pages 57 - 60)

### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Benjamin Watts  
General Counsel  
03000 416814

**Friday, 20 November 2020**

This page is intentionally left blank

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

---

### CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Online on Monday, 12 October 2020.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Miss S J Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr P J Oakford, Mr M D Payne, Mrs S Prendergast and Mr M Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs B Cooper (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr E Bourner (Asset Manager Drainage, Structures and Safety Barriers), Nikola Floodgate (Schemes Planning & Delivery Manager), Mr S Jones (Director of Highways, Transportation and Waste) and Mr M Tant (Flood and Water Manager)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **170. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 1)*

There were no apologies or substitutes.

#### **171. Declaration of Interests by Member in Items on the Agenda for this meeting**

*(Item 2)*

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **172. Minutes of the Meeting held on 21 September 2020**

*(Item 3)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 21 September 2020 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **173. Cabinet Member Updates**

*(Item 4)*

- (1) Mrs Bell reported that the flu vaccination programme was to be expanded and Kent residents were encouraged to get flu vaccines. It was reported that flu kills, on average, 11,000 people in England each year. New research suggested that people infected with both Covid-19 and flu were more at risk of severe illness and death. The full list of people to be called for a free vaccination was available on the NHS website.

Mrs Bell reported on World Mental Health Day and signposted to Kent.gov website, a specific website for children and families and to a 24-hour helpline available to people struggling and in need of immediate help.

Andrew Scott Clark, the Director for Public Health, was to hold a briefing to update on the situation for Kent and to give a reminder about national guidelines ahead of school half term. It was reported that there was an upswing in Covid-19 cases in Kent and a reminder was given to follow the government guidelines in order to keep Kent 'open for business'.

- (2) Mrs Chandler reported that KCC was unable to change the position around Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) without a significant impact on the safe care of the children and young people already in their care.

Work was being undertaken by Mrs Chandler and the Leader with Children, Young People and Education to ensure the government moved to make the National Transfer Scheme (NTS) mandatory. This would mean that the burden of dealing with new arrivals did not fall unfairly on Kent or on other port of entry authorities. They responded to the government's consultation on the NTS on 30 September to this effect. The Leader also wrote to Minister Chris Philp on this issue; saying it was essential to ensure there was no repetition of the current crisis and the similar one which occurred in 2015.

It was reported that Headstart Kent, a programme which has enhanced the mental health and wellbeing of children and young people since 2016, had been awarded additional funding from the National Lottery to continue its work for another year.

- (3) Mr Long reported that recent returns from Kent's schools indicated attendance of pupils at school was just under 94%, which was an increase from when schools first reopened in September. There had been a number of cases since schools reopened where large numbers of individuals in schools had to self-isolate. Public Health, Education, and Health and Safety officers continued to work closely with schools providing advice and guidance as required.

Arrangements for the Kent Test had been significantly impacted by Covid-19. Plans were in place for Kent pupils to sit the Kent Test on Thursday, 15 October and for out of county applicants to sit the test from Saturday, 17 October. The Fair Access team in the Children Young People and Education directorate had been working on arrangements for many months to ensure contingency plans were in place for a range of different scenarios and that pupils and staff remain safe throughout the testing process.

Detailed guidance was issued to schools on 21 September to ensure the test was conducted fairly and safely in line with Covid-19 guidance. The whole process had been designed to ensure there was an opportunity for a child's wider circumstances to be considered before their assessment was finalised, which would help minimise the chance of any child being at a disadvantage when compared to their peers. The Kent Test Head Teacher Assessment had always been available for pupils who did not perform as well as expected on the day of the test and this would remain the case this year. Work with schools would continue up to the date of the test and once the results start to become available.

A record number of late applications for the Kent Travel Saver had been received for this year, however, Education have worked diligently with the

Public Transport Unit to clear the backlog. Application levels were returning to normal and, while challenging, sufficient capacity had been maintained. Thanks were given to officers, in particular the Public Transport Unit for their hard work.

- (4) Mr Payne reported that it had been 50 years since the formation of London County Buses and their green liveries were now being re-created by Arriva and Go Coach. Arriva were contracted to deliver the successful fast-track service in the Ebbsfleet area and Go Coach had been working on the demand responsive transport system, in and around Sevenoaks. Both companies are looking into the next generation of electric buses.

The 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Kent Rail Summit was due to launch the Kent Rail Strategy 2021 which was already out to consultation. Eminent speakers from Southeastern, Network Rail and HS1 were on the programme for the summit which was being held online.

- (5) Mr Whiting attended a virtual meeting of the Straits Committee, which was hosted by colleagues from the Département du Nord. They were seeing young people and employment emerging as the strongest themes for action by the committee. As the UK leaves the EU, the end of the transition period was also considered a key area. Ten Kent MPs had written to President Macron and the Prime Minister calling for a smooth transition.

The East Kent Opportunities LLP, a partnership company between KCC and Thanet District Council, had agreed further land disposals and drawn down funds by way of a dividend to each council amounting to £600,000.

The planning white paper had been front and centre at a number of meetings attended by Mr Whiting.

He reported that visits had been made to three excellent No Use Empty projects in Dover, including new build homes, commercial development and the refurbishment of a town centre church into a number of apartments. Congratulations were given to Steve Grimshaw and his team for the growing success of this scheme, which was discussed with Essex CC at the regular bilateral meeting, and they expressed an interest in the scheme and details of how the scheme works would be shared with them.

- (6) Miss Carey reported on the response to the Solar Together project which used KCC's procurement expertise and the collective buying power of Kent residents to get the best possible price with reliable Kent businesses for new solar panels or extra battery storage for those who already have panels. 3,650 Kent households had registered an interest in the scheme and were waiting to be contacted with their quote.

There had been a strong response to the invitation to the Plan Bee pollinator conference on 16 November. As an online event, it would be able to accommodate the several hundred people who had already said they would like to attend.

This would be followed by the formal launch of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy at the Kent Environment Strategy Conference on 27 November which would also be online. Lord Debben, the chairman of the UK's Climate Change Committee would be the keynote speaker.

It was reported on how Household Waste Recycling Centres had been coping since the cap was raised on bookings from two visits per household a month to four. The booking system enabled control over the number of visitors at each site without creating queues outside and it was also helping to understand where demand was greatest so efforts could be made to match that demand with more capacity.

Overall, there was 67% increase in usage compared with before the lockdown, but the booking system meant demand could be spread throughout the day. Within that figure were three sites in Kent where demand was still very high for available slots. These included the Tovil site at Maidstone where work was being undertaken with the contractor to try to speed up throughput. Tovil had been under extra pressure because Medway had not yet reopened their Cuxton site. In the long term the new Household Waste Recycling centre planned for Allington would also relieve pressure at Tovil. Similarly, a new site was planned for Folkestone which was another of the exceptionally busy sites and this would expand capacity in the long term. Overall, the new booking system was working well, and the sites were able to offer a safe environment for both visitors and staff.

(7) Mr Hill reported on National Libraries Week and the focus was on how libraries allow people to discover a world of reading. Initiatives that had allowed libraries to support the community and build on the success of the libraries' online presence were highlighted. It was reported that online readership had increased significantly since the Covid-19 crisis. Libraries, Registration and Archives had offered a large variety of online events and activities on Facebook and Twitter, including information on support available to customers in lockdown and a mini book festival with author events. The Home Library Service had been re-started following a pause. Contact had been maintained with customers by telephone. Despite the restrictions imposed by Covid-19, Kent Libraries were able to make a vibrant contribution to National Libraries Week.

(8) Mrs Prendergast encouraged participation in the Budget Consultation which was open to Kent residents, businesses, voluntary and public sector organisations as well as KCC staff and would run between 14 October and 24 November on the public website and on other formats. It was acknowledged that KCC would be facing its biggest budgetary challenges in the last decade and it was considered vital to take account of as many people's views as possible in making the difficult decisions around balancing the budget.

Public Health messages have been very important as the cases of Covid-19 had increased. The Communications and Engagement Teams had been working closely with Public Health and Health & Safety professionals to keep messaging for both residents and staff consistent and clear.

- (9) Mr Oakford reported that budget amendments had been finalised for this financial year, which were approved in September by the County Council but work was being done on the Budget for the next financial year. There were enormous levels of spending pressure whilst still operating in a climate of uncertainty. It was considered more important than ever that residents take time to look at the survey as for the first time, they were being asked to help to look at where money can be saved and not just where money should be spent.
- (10) Mr Gough reported that work was accelerating on the proposed Interim Strategic Plan which replaced the 5 year plan that was in the process of being brought forward to County Council in March 2020 when lockdown started and some of the assumptions that were in the plan were brought into question. Work was being done with members on the proposed Interim Strategic Plan and the feedback from the Budget Consultation would also inform the work on the Plan.

Work was continuing on preparations for Brexit and a briefing would be held for Members on 13 October 2020. There would also be an item for the County Council meeting on Brexit preparations in order that members and the public would have clarity on what KCC were seeking to do to ensure that Kent residents and businesses were not disrupted under those circumstances.

#### **174. Mitigating Surface Water Flood Risk on the Highway** (Item 5)

- (1) Mr Payne introduced the report which had been requested at the Cabinet meeting of 22 June 2020 due to increased incidences of flash flooding. The report sought to identify issues regarding managing surface water flood risk and the actions taken in order to mitigate these risks. Thanks were given to the Drainage Asset Team for both their proactive work and reactive responses in recent times. Thanks were also given to the team managing the Blue Green Infrastructure Project.
- (2) Mr Jones reported that in June 2020, it had been identified there had been a number of incidences of significant surface flooding across the county and plans had been made in the following areas:
- Mapping and understanding the drainage network;
  - Feeding this information into updated Surface Water Management Plan;
  - Operational considerations around the network maintenance and changes to the way assets were managed;
  - New and innovative ways such as Live Labs, using a managed monitoring approach to looking after assets rather than a preventative approach, giving better productivity;
  - Improvements to the network using technology such as smart gullies, sustainable and natural ways of managing surface water such as Blue Green schemes.
  - Looking at the root cause of surface water flooding on the highway as in many cases the water is coming from elsewhere;
  - Looking at how work could be done with organisations, the off-takers of the surface water on the highways.

(3) Resolved that the report be noted.

**175. Emergency Active Travel Programme**  
(Item 6)

(1) Mr Payne introduced the report referring to comments made at the previous meeting, the schemes had been implemented to the government's deadlines and as a result, residents had not been consulted due to the timescale given. Where the schemes that had been implemented were not working properly, it was agreed that they would cease, and this had been the case with several of the trials. However, it was noted that the majority of the schemes had been well received. Further changes would need to be made but this was part of testing the concept schemes on behalf of the government. The schemes that had been well received included school streets, public rights of way improvement and 20mph areas in towns. If awarded, Tranche 2 funding would be for strategic cycleways separated from the main carriageway and these would need to be subject to full public consultation.

(2) Mr Jones reported that it had been a difficult situation with public consultation and the nature of the programme had meant that some individuals and groups felt insufficiently consulted. Going forward, this will be rectified.

(3) The Leader thanked the teams involved for their work on the Emergency Active Travel Programme as it was difficult to manage concerns around public consultation under the time constraints involved.

(4) In response to questions, it was noted:

- Some communities had felt that the Emergency Active Travel Programme measures had been imposed. The intention for the future would be for schemes to be planned and permanent with considered public consultation.
- The schemes part of the Emergency Active Travel Programme had been supported by borough and district councils.
- Concerns were raised around cycle lanes occupying lanes which had previously been for traffic and emergency vehicles and the impact this has on the movement of traffic.
- Cycle routes off of the highway and leisure cycling would be part of Tranche 2 works.

(5) Resolved that the report be noted

**176. "Planning for the Future" White Paper**  
(Item 7)

*(Sarah Platts, Strategic Planning and Infrastructure Manager was in attendance for this item)*

(1) Mr Whiting introduced the report. KCC and many other colleagues from local government across the country had responded very strongly to the



government consultation regarding changes to current planning system. Kent MPs had raised concerns in the Commons around the same issues. Concerns were raised about the provision of strategic infrastructure.

- (2) Ms Platts gave an overview of the White Paper and outlined the key reforms and considerations for KCC. The White Paper included many sweeping reforms which would have a massive impact on how growth is planned and how the supporting infrastructure would come about. It was noted that the White Paper was lacking in detail.

The White Paper was mainly focussed on housing and argued that house building was being slowed down by the planning system. There was little detail around reforms that could affect KCC.

The White Paper was stated to put more focus on design and digitise the planning process. Land use plans would be introduced, with three types of land categories: “growth areas”, “renewal areas” and “protected areas”.

It was raised as a concern that arbitrary timescales are being proposed to be set without due consideration to statutory consultees such as KCC and without due regard for the level of detail that would be required at an early stage during the Local Plan process in order to categorise land uses.

The Duty to Cooperate, which has been important in strategic planning (including of minerals and waste management), was to be lost but there was no detail around what would replace it.

Transport and Highways are integral to planning for growth but are hardly mentioned in the White Paper.

One of the key areas of concern is the funding of infrastructure. The current way of securing funding through Section 106 agreements and the Community Infrastructure Levy are due to be scrapped and would be replaced with an infrastructure levy which would be a proportion of the value of the development, set above a fixed threshold. Again, details around how this would operate are limited.

- (3) In response to questions, the following points were raised:

- Developers hold responsibility for housing delivery, not councils, but this is not properly captured in the White Paper
- Concerns were raised around the potential loss of employment land being re-allocated for housing sites and that this could result in areas of housing development without local employment.
- Comments were made regarding the potential for a reduced level of public consultation in an attempt to streamline the process to accelerate the delivery of housing.
- Proposals about authorities being able to borrow against infrastructure levies were of concern.

- Where the White Paper is 'silent' on a number of issues, it was suggested that the response from KCC could seek to put forward solutions and produce a solution focussed response.

(4) Resolved that the comments made be included in KCC's response and that the signing of KCC's response to the White Paper be delegated to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development.

### **177. Congratulations**

The Leader congratulated the former Leader of KCC, Mr Carter, and announced that Mr Carter had been named in the Queen's Birthday Honours list and would receive a knighthood.

**From:** Roger Gough, Leader

**To:** Cabinet, 30 November 2020

**Subject:** ‘*Setting the Course*’ – Kent County Council’s Interim Strategic Plan

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway:** Cabinet Members (26.10.20 and 16.11.20)

**Future Pathway:** County Council (10.12.20)

**SUMMARY:** The development of a new 5 Year Plan for Kent County Council has been postponed due to the COVID-19 crisis. ‘*Setting the Course*’ is Kent County Council’s Interim Strategic Plan and sets out the immediate challenges and opportunities Kent is faced with and the actions we will prioritise to address them over the next 18 months. It has been informed by Member priorities, as well as recent public engagement and consultation for the draft 5 Year Plan. The final plan is due to be approved by County Council on 10 December 2020.

**Recommendation:**

Cabinet is asked to:

- (1) **Endorse** the Interim Strategic Plan for Kent County Council and **recommend** it to County Council for approval.

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has traditionally developed a series of strategic plans which set out the administration’s ambitions and priorities. This is a part of the Policy Framework in the KCC’s Constitution and influences our strategy, budget, commissioning and service delivery. The current strategic statement ‘*Increasing Opportunities, Improving Outcomes*’, approved by County Council in March 2015, ended in 2020.
- 1.2 In summer 2019, KCC began developing a new 5 Year Plan which could replace the previous strategic statement. ‘*Kent’s Future, Our Priority*’ – Kent County Council’s 5 Year Plan 2020-25 was developed, informed by nine months of engagement and consultation with residents, businesses and partners. It was endorsed by Cabinet on 2 March 2020 and was due to be approved by County Council later that month.
- 1.3 In March 2020, the country entered the first national lockdown due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The March County Council meeting was cancelled, which meant that the 5 Year Plan was not taken for approval. The development of the 5 Year Plan was paused to allow KCC to focus on the immediate response to the COVID-19 crisis and take stock of the changing circumstances.

- 1.4 As the crisis developed, it became clear that its impacts would be significant, and a new interim strategic plan would be needed to respond to this in the short- to medium-term. '*Setting the Course*' Kent County Council's Interim Strategic Plan explains the immediate challenges Kent is facing and the actions KCC will prioritise to lead Kent through the next 18 months. The Plan sets out the challenges and vital opportunities we will focus on addressing to support the county to recover, build resilience and reset.
- 1.5 Development of a new 5 Year Plan will begin in 2021 to set KCC's longer-term priorities and ambitions for the county.

## 2. THE INTERIM STRATEGIC PLAN

- 2.1 The Interim Strategic Plan is attached as **Appendix A**. This is a Word document, which will be developed into a simple designed version when it is presented to County Council. The design version of the 5 Year Plan will be available as an electronic copy only to improve accessibility and minimise environmental impact.
- 2.2 The Plan is structured around the five key challenges. These are:
  - **Financial** – KCC is facing a significant budget gap and difficult decisions to make in the short- to medium-term, while maintaining a longer-term view of what is best for the county.
  - **Economic** – the economic downturn caused by COVID-19 is causing widespread economic impacts, while attracting investment and putting infrastructure in place to support growth remains a priority.
  - **Demand** – there is increasing demand for some of KCC's key services, which will be exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19 on Kent's residents, particularly those that are vulnerable.
  - **Partnership** – the crisis presents important opportunities to build on strengthened relationships and rethink how KCC works with partners to better manage demand and improve efficiency.
  - **Environmental** – tackling the climate emergency and protecting the natural environment continues to be an urgent priority, as well as investing in the built environment and creating communities to be proud of.
- 2.3 For each challenge there is an introductory narrative that explains why it is important, followed by the priority actions KCC will deliver to help address the challenge.
- 2.4 While the challenges facing the county are significant, there are also important opportunities presented by the current situation to improve the

services we provide and support the county to emerge stronger and more sustainable. The priority actions set out in the Interim Strategic Plan seek to balance the overriding need to balance the budget and set a sustainable medium-term financial plan, meet people's needs, and seize opportunities to embed positive change for the future.

- 2.5 The priority actions set out in the Interim Strategic Plan have been shaped through cross-party engagement with KCC Members and with senior officers.
- 2.6 The priority actions have also been strongly informed by nine months of extensive engagement and consultation on the 5 Year Plan during 2019 and early 2020. Engagement included qualitative workshops with a representative sample of Kent residents and meetings and workshops with KCC Members and staff, young people in the county, voluntary and community groups, Town and Parish Council representatives, business representatives and key public sector partners. Engagement focused on understanding priorities to improve quality of life in the county and this shaped the draft of the 5 Year Plan. A six-week public consultation was held over January and February 2020 to test the draft, which received an unprecedented level of engagement for a high-level strategic document of this nature. A *'You Said, We Did'* document was created to show how engagement shaped the draft and how formal consultation resulted in substantive improvements to the final version.
- 2.7 The Interim Strategic Plan has benefitted from the scale and strength of this previous engagement and consultation. Although the context in which KCC is working has changed, many of the priorities that residents and other stakeholders identified to improve quality of life in the county are still relevant and have been carried forward into the Interim Strategic Plan.
- 2.8 Development of the plan has also drawn on the findings of the public budget consultation during summer 2020 and emerging findings of the public consultation on the 2021/22 budget which has been underway during development of the Interim Strategic Plan. This has provided an insight into the current priorities and views of residents and provided important context for the plan.

### **3. EQUALITY CONSIDERATIONS**

- 3.1 An extensive Equality Impact Assessment was carried out during the development of the 5 Year Plan and was revisited and updated throughout its development. The draft Equality Impact Assessment was consulted on as part of the public consultation on the draft 5 Year Plan, and resulted in multiple improvements being made, which were set out in the Equality Impact Assessment and *You Said, We Did* document.
- 3.2 The equality considerations for the 5 Year Plan concluded that there were no negative or adverse impacts on protected groups and there was potential for positive impact on people from all of the protected characteristic groups through aiming to improve quality of life. It also

concluded that any specific proposals or changes arising from the delivery of the plan would be subject to separate equality analysis and consideration of equality impacts.

- 3.3 Over the summer of 2020, KCC lead the development of an Equality Impact Assessment for the development of the Kent Resilience Forum COVID-19 Recovery Strategy. This drew upon the intelligence and experience of all partners involved in recovery to start understanding the emerging impact of the crisis on people from different protected characteristic groups and how adverse impacts could be mitigated.
- 3.4 The development of the Interim Strategic Plan has been influenced by the findings of the recent Equality Impact Assessments for these documents, which like the Interim Strategic Plan also consider a broad range of actions across all service areas and cover the whole of the Kent population.
- 3.5 As was proposed for the 5 Year Plan, all specific proposals of changes arising from the Interim Strategic Plan will be subject to separate, specific consideration of equality impacts and consultation in line with KCC policy.

#### **4. NEXT STEPS**

- 4.1 Subject to Cabinet endorsement, the Interim Strategic Plan will be recommended for approval at County Council on 10 December.
- 4.2 Following County Council approval, the Interim Strategic Plan will be published on KCC's website and promoted to residents, partners and staff through KCC's usual communication channels.
- 4.3 The final section of the Interim Strategic Plan explains how it will be delivered through the Strategic Reset Programme and Divisional and Service Level Business Plans. Monitoring will be through KCC's usual governance channels, including through regular Cabinet updates and oversight by Cabinet Committees.
- 4.4 Development of the new 5 Year Plan for KCC will begin in 2021. As before, this will be shaped from the start by engagement with residents, businesses, community groups and partners and subject to formal consultation and equality considerations.

#### **5. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 5.1 The recommendations are as follows:

Cabinet is asked to:

- (1) **Endorse** the Interim Strategic Plan for Kent County Council and **recommend** it to County Council for approval.

## 6. BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

6.1 Appendix for this item:

Appendix A – *Setting the Course* Kent County Council's Interim Strategic Plan

8.2 Background items:

- *'Kent's Future, Our Priority'* 5 Year Plan Equality Impact Assessment
- *'Kent's Future, Our Priority' 'You Said, We Did'* – How your feedback has helped shape KCC's 5 Year Plan
- Kent Resilience Forum COVID-19 Recovery Strategy Equality Impact Assessment

**Author:**

Jenny Dixon-Sherreard, Policy Adviser  
Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance  
[Jenny.dixon-sherreard@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Jenny.dixon-sherreard@kent.gov.uk), 03000 416598

**Relevant Director:**

David Whittle, Director, Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance  
[david.whittle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:david.whittle@kent.gov.uk), 03000 416833

This page is intentionally left blank



# Setting the Course

## Kent County Council's Interim Strategic Plan

**December 2020**



## **Contents**

To be added in designed version

## Foreword

In March this year the council was ready to adopt its new 5 Year Plan '*Kent's Future – Our Priority*' - a strategic plan developed over many months in consultation with the public, our partners and our staff which set out our commitment to make Kent the best place to live, work, play, learn and invest in.

That plan was never adopted. The County Council meeting in March was cancelled as the first COVID-19 national lockdown began. As we worked with our partners to support Kent's immediate response to the pandemic, it became clear that COVID-19 would leave a huge social and economic legacy long after it has ended and that any plan would have to take account of that.

We accepted that a post COVID-19 strategic plan would be required and postponed work on our 5 Year Plan. But we are still living in uncertain times. Trying to plan ahead too far into the long-term is unrealistic when so much can change so quickly. In a few short weeks while this plan was in its final stages, the level of COVID-19 infections within the county rose dramatically and a second round of national restrictions was announced, but the availability of an effective vaccine, with all its longer-term implications, also became a stronger possibility. Nonetheless, there is still a need to provide a framework against which the council will support our residents, businesses, service users and local communities to emerge from the pandemic stronger and more sustainable than before.

This Interim Strategic Plan explains the immediate challenges we face and the actions we will prioritise to lead Kent through the next 18 months. These actions will in many cases be the groundwork for longer-term change. The Plan sets out the challenges and vital opportunities we will focus on addressing to support the county to recover, build resilience and reset.

We are not starting from a blank page. The views, experiences and suggestions we heard during our 5 Year Plan consultation have informed the priorities we have set. People told us that their quality of life is greatly impacted by things like how easy it is to travel around the county, how well looked-after their local area is and how safe it feels. These day to day experiences make a big difference. And they will make a bigger difference in a post-COVID-19 world where people work more from home, commute less and invest more time in their local neighbourhoods and communities.

How we will respond to the long-term structural opportunities emerging from COVID-19 will be central to a new 5 Year Plan which we will begin developing in the latter half of 2021. Once again, we will develop that long-term strategic plan through listening to and engaging with the residents and businesses of Kent that we serve.

**Roger Gough**  
**Leader of the Council**

## **Background and context**

This Interim Strategic Plan has been developed during a time of significant and continuous change and uncertainty for our county. The COVID-19 crisis has affected virtually all aspects of life and its impact will continue to be felt for months and years to come. Individuals, families, businesses and community groups are all feeling the strain and some of the most vulnerable people have been affected the most. Through these difficult times, people in Kent have shown incredible strength in quickly adapting to new ways of doing things, keeping in touch and supporting each other.

From the start of the crisis, Kent County Council (KCC) has taken emergency action to protect the safety and wellbeing of Kent residents. With our partners we launched Kent Together which has so far taken over 7,000 requests to provide urgent help and supplies to vulnerable people. We have made additional payments to care homes to help them cope and have bulk bought personal protective equipment (PPE) for key workers. We have found new ways to deliver our services including online support and activities for young people and adults with learning disabilities. Our Public Health teams are continuing to provide expert advice to help people protect their health. We have safely adapted and reopened the services we can, including Household Waste Sites and some of our libraries. Working with our partners, we have set up an emergency helpline for businesses which we have funded to continue to the end of the year and established an Employment Task Force.

The impacts of the COVID-19 crisis and the economic downturn it has created will have a significant impact on demand for our services and on the budget we have available. Demand for some services continues to rise each year due to changes in our population, but new pressures from the crisis will add to this. We are also seeing a big reduction in our income as the money we usually collect from Council Tax and Business Rate collection falls. We have received some additional grants from Government, and we are continuing to stand up for Kent's interests and seek further essential financial support and clarity on future funding so we can plan ahead.

During this challenging time, we have also seen great strengths and opportunities for the future. All over the county, people have stepped up to help those in need and look out for their family, friends and neighbours. Public sector and community services have worked more closely together than ever before to find ways to continue supporting those that rely on them, thinking innovatively through the challenges. Some of the new ways of doing things have proven to work well and have demonstrated how we can make improvements to the way we deliver our services. KCC's staff are always our greatest asset and it is important that we acknowledge and thank them for their ongoing hard work, dedication and resilience.

The COVID-19 crisis is not the only factor affecting Kent in the near future. Our geographical position as the gateway to the UK means that the transition from the European Union will have a greater impact on us than other parts of the country. Our preparations are driven by the twin objectives of minimising disruption to local communities and keeping the county open for business.

Our joint planning with partners is as robust as it can be against a continuously evolving landscape, and there are still various strands of work to be delivered which are dependent on Government decisions and actions. Our proximity to London has also always had a big impact on the county and can be an advantage to attract investment and connect people to the opportunities that the capital offers. The changes in working and living patterns caused by COVID-19 may provide new advantages for our county.

The next 18 months will undoubtedly be a challenging time for Kent, but there are also exciting and unique opportunities available to improve the services we provide and accelerate the county's success and prosperity in the future. Our primary and overriding priority now is to balance our budget for 2021/22. The council has a significant number of statutory duties placed upon it and the requirement to balance the budget is pre-eminent. Without a balanced budget we will not be in a position to provide the vital services that our residents rely upon, nor will we be able to position the council and our services to be sustainable in the medium term.

We must take difficult decisions in the short-term to balance our budget and continue to protect and support people who are vulnerable and in need. While we do this, we will continue to lay the foundations for what is best for Kent in the longer-term. This means we will continue to attract investment into the county and seek to maintain valued universal services that make a big difference to quality of life. We will also seize opportunities available to us now so we can benefit from positive changes in years to come. The diagram below explains how we will balance these factors to navigate the county through the next 18 months. The priority actions set out in this Interim Strategic Plan aim to achieve this balance.



Delivering change in an organisation as large and as complex as KCC is difficult and it is essential that we take our service users, residents, staff, partners and providers with us. In July 2020, the County Council agreed to the creation of the Strategic Reset Programme to design and deliver a cohesive, modern public service offer for all Kent's residents, businesses and communities. This will bring together change projects consistently across the council and create opportunities to transform the way we work, including our people, assets, technology, structures and service delivery. The delivery of many of the priorities in this plan will be through the Strategic Reset Programme.

## The challenges we face

This Interim Strategic Plan sets out the five main challenges that KCC is facing over the next 18 months, and what we will do to help address them. Within the challenges there are also important and unique opportunities to improve the way we do things.

### The Five Challenges

The infographic is set against a light blue background and features five distinct challenge cards. Each card is separated by a thin vertical line of a matching color. The 'Financial Challenge' card is at the top left and includes a circular icon of stacked coins. The other four cards are arranged in a row below it. Each card contains a circular icon, a bold title, and a descriptive paragraph.

Challenge	Description
<b>Financial Challenge</b>	KCC is facing a significant budget gap and difficult decisions to make in the short-to medium-term, while maintaining a longer-term view of what is best for the county
<b>Economic Challenge</b>	The economic downturn caused by COVID-19 is causing widespread economic impacts, while attracting investment and putting infrastructure in place to support growth remains a priority
<b>Demand Challenge</b>	There is increasing demand for some of KCC's key services, which will be exacerbated by the impacts of COVID-19 on Kent's residents, particularly those that are vulnerable
<b>Partnership Challenge</b>	The crisis presents important opportunities to build on strengthened relationships and rethink how KCC works with partners to better manage demand and improve efficiency
<b>Environmental Challenge</b>	Tackling the climate emergency and protecting the natural environment continues to be an urgent priority, as well as investing in the built environment and creating communities to be proud of

The next sections explain why it is important that we focus on these challenges and the priority actions we will take to help address them.



## Financial challenge

### **Why it matters**

We are facing the greatest financial challenge in recent years. Despite the pressures of the COVID-19 crisis, we have ensured a balanced budget for the year to March 2021 through one-off funding sources and savings. However, the biggest financial challenge is still ahead of us. At the start of our budget consultation in October 2020, we estimated that we could need to find between £62-143 million from spending reductions and savings during 2021-22, although the outcome will depend on the scale of Government financial support. This is more than we have had to find in a single year through any of the last ten years of austerity.

One side of the challenge is that our income is expected to be reduced. The funding we receive from Council Tax and Business Rates usually covers around half of our annual spending and we are already seeing reductions in how much is collected. Grants from Government also make up a large proportion of our budget and we are continuing to make the case for further funding, as well as lobbying to address long-standing funding gaps. The other side of the challenge is that demand for services including Public Health and children's and adults' social care is increasing. We will also need to take a range of actions to support businesses, communities and families to cope and recover, building their resilience for the future.

All of this means that we have some extremely difficult decisions ahead, including on possible spending reductions. At the same time, we must continue to plan for and invest in the county's future. To manage the multiple demands on our budget, we will need to be clear and focused on our priorities so that every penny spent makes the greatest difference. To help us do this, we will need to improve our financial management so that we can get a more detailed understanding of how the money we spend leads to positive outcomes, particularly in areas where we have discretion around what we provide. We will also continue to pursue ways to serve the people of Kent more effectively to save money where we can.

Given the pressures we now face and the efficiency savings we have already delivered over recent years, we will need to go further and make fundamental changes to the way we operate. Through our Strategic Reset Programme, we are bringing together the major change projects which are critical to help shape the future of the council. The programme will ensure our operating framework is fit for the future and can respond to the challenges and opportunities set out in the Interim Strategic Plan.

The COVID-19 crisis has shown that new ways of delivering services can be more efficient and better for the people who use them. Many of our services have used digital technology to continue providing services to customers including through video conferencing and online transactions. Many people



have found this to be a more easy and convenient way to work with us, although we will always strive to provide face to face service where this is needed. We must be ready to make use of advances in technology as they evolve. Our staff have also shown great adaptability in adjusting to working from home as much as possible and this presents an opportunity to accelerate changes to how we use our buildings, while supporting staff wellbeing and productivity.

### **Priority actions to help address the financial challenge**

#### **Deliver a balanced budget and develop a sustainable medium-term financial plan**

- Use evidence and resident feedback to take difficult decisions to find the necessary savings for the 2021/22 budget, while maintaining a longer-term view on our priorities and ambitions for the county. These will be developed in our new 5 Year Plan during 2021 in consultation with residents.
- Over the medium-term, deliver the Strategic Reset Programme to improve our efficiency and the quality of experience for service-users, residents and staff.
- Learn from other Local Authorities where the spend is lower and they achieve similar outcomes to Kent.
- Review our capital strategy and deliver a sustainable 10-year capital programme that reflects our strategic priorities, so we invest in the right infrastructure for the future, including highways, economic development and technology.

#### **Stand up for Kent's residents**

- Continue to work closely with Government to ensure Kent receives full funding to meet the county's needs, including where there are specific and unique pressures on the council, such as:
- Additional funding needed to cover the costs and lost income due to COVID-19, working with Kent Districts and other public service partners.
- Adequate funding to cover the impact and additional costs of EU transition for Kent, including the impact on our communities and businesses.
- Historic costs of Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children coming into the UK through the channel ports who are legally required to be placed in the care of the County Council as Looked After Children.
- Address the capital and revenue funding gap for education given Kent's significant demographic challenge, including provision for children with special educational needs and disabilities.

#### **Target resource where it has the greatest impact**

- Transform financial management, modelling and forecasting to inform our future budget strategy and medium-term financial plan.
- Develop and implement Outcomes Based Budgeting to inform policy and service decisions.

- Target our discretionary spend (spending on non-statutory functions) where evidence shows it will have the greatest positive impact.
- Set a clear strategic direction for our trading companies focussed on maximising best value for the council.

**Use technology to improve efficiency and reduce cost**

- Embrace technology and opportunities to be more efficient in how we provide services, moving towards digital access where this is convenient and appropriate, while maintaining face to face provision where this is needed.
- Provide better digital solutions for Kent residents, improve accessibility and lower our cost to serve.
- Refresh the Technology Strategy to maximise our investment in existing technology and put in place the right capabilities for the future.
- Support staff who can work from home to continue to do so for some of their working time to reduce travel and support staff wellbeing and productivity.
- Rationalise our estate and assets to support new working practices and service delivery arrangements and achieve our target of net-zero emissions from our estate and operations by 2030.



## **Economic challenge**

### **Why it matters**

The economic cost of the COVID-19 crisis is severe and far-reaching. Unemployment has more than doubled in Kent and Medway between March and September this year. Many of the business sectors that Kent's economy relies on have been significantly impacted, including hospitality, construction, and transport. The Kent and Medway economy could potentially see a total output loss of between £5 billion and £7 billion by the end of 2020. Without mitigating action, the economic challenge could create hardship and disadvantage which could take years to reverse. The impact is greatest for those in a weaker position in the labour market and for young people it could permanently damage their career prospects and life chances.

In the face of this challenge, we are working with our partners to deliver the Kent and Medway Economic Renewal and Resilience Plan. This will support businesses, help people access work and skills, attract investment into the county and build confidence. We will do everything we can to support jobs and businesses now, while also taking action to build a greener, fairer and more resilient economy for the future.

COVID-19 has presented a significant opportunity for many businesses and organisations to change their business model and this will likely drive a permanent shift away from requiring staff to commute, with some organisations now actively seeking to move their operations out of London. This reversal of the London pull effect on the home counties presents a significant opportunity for Kent, given our strategic location, transport infrastructure, affordability and opportunities in the creative sector and life sciences which could attract companies and organisations to base their operations in the county.

This would mean that more economic activity would take place locally, with more people spending time and money in their local community rather than in London. If we actively embrace this change it presents an opportunity to create vibrant local towns that are accessible and attractive, become better places to live and work, help businesses to succeed, attract high-quality employment and keep our home-grown talent here.

Kent's population is growing quickly, and it is essential that development is well-planned and well-supported to protect and enhance the unique identity of local areas and quality of life. We need to use our influence to improve the planning system so it better meets the needs of local areas. There are also opportunities to work more closely with our partners to take a strategic approach to planning across the county.

Growth requires investment in infrastructure and there is a gap of around £4 billion for essential infrastructure to support the necessary housing growth in

Kent and Medway to 2031. This is why we are taking an 'infrastructure first' approach, to allow us to secure funding to put necessary infrastructure, like road improvements, more school places and wi-fi, in place before housing is completed. There are also current opportunities to bring forward investment in new infrastructure to stimulate economic growth and instil confidence in key sectors like construction. The COVID-19 crisis has emphasised the need for homes and businesses to have access to high-speed broadband and mobile data and we need to ensure this is available in all parts of the county.

Another key component for a successful economy is a workforce with the right skills. Skills levels in Kent are below the South East and national average and we have skills gaps in key sectors including construction and the creative industry. The current economic crisis brings into sharper focus the need to support young people and all working age adults to develop skills that are relevant to the job opportunities available and that will help them fulfil their potential.

### **Priority actions to help address the economic challenge**

#### **Deliver the Kent and Medway Economic Resilience and Renewal Plan**

- Work with our partners to deliver essential support for local businesses, including further funding for Kent and Medway Growth Hub's COVID-19 Helpline for businesses and the Kent and Medway Business Fund, offering loan support for businesses with growth potential.
- Promote Kent's key business sectors and visitor economy and promote confidence among visitors and residents that our county is 'open' within Government guidelines.
- Working with our partners, deliver the Kent and Medway Employment Plan to help the existing workforce develop relevant skills, quickly signpost people who are made redundant to advice and support to find work and encourage growing businesses to employ more local people.
- Represent and lobby for the interests of Kent, including the financial challenges of key sectors (including the voluntary and community sector, cultural sector, logistics and life sciences) and how government policy may impact on this.
- Understand the risk and mitigate the long-term impact of failure of businesses on particular locations, sectors and groups of people, focusing support for people at particular risk, including younger and lower-skilled workers.

#### **Create sustainable local economies**

- Seize the opportunities of the reversal of the 'London pull effect' on Kent's economy and encourage and attract more London-based firms to consider relocating to Kent.
- Work with partners to enable the necessary physical, social and cultural infrastructure to make Kent an attractive place to live, work and invest in.
- Work with partners to support and reimagine Kent's high streets and town centres as economic, social and cultural centres.

- Consider how KCC assets can be used to anchor regeneration and renewal of high streets and town centres.

### **Champion the rural and green economy**

- Promote the low carbon goods and services sector and opportunities for reskilling and job creation in the green economy, including in high opportunity sectors such as solar and hydrogen.
- Explore opportunities to maximise investment in building retrofit programmes, supporting the local retrofit industry.
- Build on the success of Kent's leading centres of research and development in horticulture, plant science and life science which offer potential for high value employment and wider economic growth for the county.
- Develop a Rural Strategy for Kent – a holistic whole-council strategy to support our rural communities and businesses to meet the specific challenges that arise through living and working in rural communities, such as increased costs, social isolation and access to services.

### **Shape planning reform**

- Continue our policy position of 'Infrastructure First' to create balanced housing and employment growth, with high-quality and timely infrastructure as an essential pre-requisite.
- Influence Government's planning reform legislation so that local needs and views are taken into account in planning for new housing development, particularly on funding for the required infrastructure to support sustainable new communities.
- Develop our strategic planning capacity so we can work together with our partners to enable the development of sustainable, connected, safe and healthy communities.
- Progress the Affordable Housing Select Committee action plan including developing a proposal to set up a virtual Housing Growth Unit with partners and exploring ways to release more of our surplus land for building affordable housing.
- Refresh our innovative Growth and Infrastructure Framework to understand the county's infrastructure requirements and the associated funding gap.
- Update our approach and guidance on developer contributions to ensure the right investment in local infrastructure and develop a stronger relationship with both developers and local planning authorities.

### **Bring forward infrastructure projects to stimulate economic growth**

- Progress the Infrastructure Proposition with Government to leverage national investment in the infrastructure, quality housing and economic development the county needs.
- Maximise the benefits of major capital investment projects into Kent, such as a Lower Thames crossing, Ebbsfleet Garden City and the London Resort development.

- Develop a pipeline of 'shovel-ready' infrastructure projects to act as a catalyst for the construction industry which also deliver a step-change in green infrastructure, helping Kent deliver its zero-carbon ambition.
- Further progress the 'No Use Empty' initiative which provides loans to bring properties that have been empty for a long time back into use as quality housing for sale or rent.
- Accelerate the delivery of the Kent Broadband Programme and continue to work with broadband providers to maximise market-led investment including roll out of 'fibre-to-the-premise' technology.
- Work with mobile network operators to provide enhanced mobile services across Kent.

**Empower people with the right skills to compete and succeed**

- Work with employers to protect jobs through the upskilling of the workforce and the supply chain, particularly in jobs that require 'Level 3' skills (roughly equivalent to A-Level), which will help people to increase their earning potential.
- Lead the Employment Taskforce which will maximise the local benefit of national employment schemes and ensure the Kent workforce gains from new inward investments and growth in the Kent economy.
- Work with the Employment Taskforce to develop an 'all-age' approach to skills, supporting people to learn and retrain throughout their life so that individuals, businesses and the wider economy are well-equipped to seize economic opportunities.
- Complete the review of Post -16 education and training provision and feed the findings into the work of the Employment Taskforce.
- Intensify efforts to engage employers to offer a range of apprenticeship opportunities, including by continuing to share our Apprenticeship Levy.
- Provide more KCC apprenticeship opportunities in-house and through our trading companies.
- Work with our partners to support young people into work, including maximising benefits from the Government's Kickstart scheme, and developing a network of hubs where young people facing barriers to employment can access work and skills advice.



## **Demand challenge**

### **Why it matters**

Demand for many of KCC's services is rising every year. This is partly caused by changes in the needs of our communities; for example there are more older people who require social care, and more children with special needs and disabilities that we need to support. We anticipate that COVID-19 will have a long-term impact on the demand for KCC services for many years to come. For example, the economic and psychological distress of lockdown on our residents will likely increase demand for our social care and support services. The crisis has also seen many of our providers face rapid acceleration of previously long-term and incremental changes in their market, which challenges their operating model. An example of this is the shift away from residential care to increasing demand for Extra Care housing capacity. This creates new and additional pressure as well as opportunities to redesign and shape services with a range of partners.

The COVID-19 crisis has changed the current patterns of demand we would normally see for some of our key services like children's and adults' social care, and we need to ensure that vulnerable people are receiving the support they need. It is also likely that new demand will emerge as people who would not normally need our support are pushed into crisis. It is important that we have a thorough understanding of the changing needs that lead to demand for our services, taking an intelligent data-led approach. This will allow us to more accurately forecast demand so we are well prepared to respond. The approach will work best if we share intelligence, both across KCC departments and with our partners, and make use of all the information available so we can get a complete picture. We can use digital tools to help us do this, and also make use of digital technology to help meet lower-level needs more efficiently, for example making it easier for people to find advice and complete simple transactions online. For people with complex needs or those that require additional support, we will continue to engage with them face-to-face and provide important human contact.

Children and young people have been particularly impacted by the COVID-19 crisis and the restrictions it has brought. Many have missed out on education, social and development opportunities, while those moving into adulthood may have experienced disruption to plans for their future. Children from disadvantaged backgrounds and those with additional needs are likely to have missed out the most from schools and services being closed or restricted. Our children's social care teams are seeing an increase in more complex and serious cases. Without additional support, gaps in outcomes and attainment between vulnerable children and their peers will grow, impacting on their life chances. The mental and emotional wellbeing and resilience of children and young people is a growing priority and we will need to ensure that support for this is built into recovery planning for all children and young people and that specialist support is readily available for those that need it.

The crisis has also been challenging for older people and vulnerable adults, and the family and friends that care for them. The adult social care system is already under growing pressure as funding is increasingly stretched to manage greater demand. Now more than ever, we need to make it easier for people to find advice and support including from community organisations that provide informal support and contact, to reduce the need for complex interventions later. We are also working to improve our social care practice and make use of innovations in care so we can support people better. During the COVID-19 crisis we have developed stronger working relationships with providers of adult social care, and we have an opportunity to build on this to develop a stronger market providing good quality care options around the county.

There has been a short-term reduction in demand for transport services as a result of COVID-19, but the long-term growth of the county means that pressure on our transport infrastructure will continue to grow over the coming decades. As well as working with transport providers around their short-term sustainability, we need to work with them to meet the long-term transport needs of a growing county and support our environmental objectives.

While we are meeting current needs, we must also act to safeguard the future by continuing to invest in preventative action and early intervention. Whether this is investing in the quality of our highways to avoid bigger costs later, finding sustainable ways to help families tipping into financial crisis or supporting people to avoid the damaging effects of social isolation and loneliness, we need to know what works most effectively so we can invest in the right actions. We will take an evidence-based approach and focus on the preventative activity that leads to a proven reduction in future needs so that individuals experience better quality of life and demand for our services is reduced.

### **Priority actions to help address the demand challenge**

#### **Develop a stronger evidence-based approach to managing demand**

- Strengthen our data-led approach to model and forecast demand, so we have the right evidence to adapt and respond quickly.
- Ensure the views and experiences of residents, staff and providers are part of a holistic evidence base to inform decisions about service redesign and commissioning.
- Understand and manage changes in behaviour, new vulnerabilities and increase in complexity of demand caused by the COVID-19 crisis and its impact on service provision.
- Develop a shared data, analytics and intelligence approach across KCC and with our partners.
- Create digital self-service solutions to manage demand and resolve resident issues quickly and intuitively.



**Support children and young people with the highest needs**

- Manage overall demand and deliver better outcomes for children, young people and their families, support more children to remain with their families where it is safe to do so, and children in care to remain in family based homes, through the Change for Kent Children programme.
- Improve access to emotional and mental health support for children and young people and commission high quality and timely child and adolescent mental health services.
- Work with schools to recover lost learning due to disruption caused by the COVID-19 crisis and close attainment gaps between vulnerable children and their peers.
- In partnership with parents and schools, deliver the required improvements to services for children with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities as set out in the Written Statement of Action.
- Consider opportunities for providing support and activities for young people online, including youth outreach work.

**Support older and vulnerable adults to maintain a good quality of life**

- Deliver the Making a Difference Every Day Programme to transform the quality of practice in Adult Social Care to better address the needs of service users, drive innovation and ensure we have meaningful measures of success.
- Explore taking forward a strategic review of in-house adult social care services to determine the most effective ways to provide these services, considering all options available.
- Build on the closer relationship with all care providers developed through the COVID-19 crisis to build resilience and shape a sustainable care market.
- Understand the impact of the COVID-19 crisis on adult and young carers and refresh the Carers Strategy where appropriate.

**Understand and meet long-term demand for transport**

- Work with Transport for the South East to understand the changes in demand for transport services and infrastructure as part of the development of a 2050 Transport Strategy for the South East.
- Develop a new Local Transport Plan for Kent to reflect changes to transport policy as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and the climate change emergency, working closely with residents, businesses, local transport providers and local, regional and national partners.
- Consider the appropriate use of active travel schemes (walking and cycling) within the development of the new Local Transport Plan.
- Approve the Kent Rail Strategy 2021 to influence the new South Eastern Rail concession or contract so that it meets Kent's transport and environmental needs.
- Work with bus providers to understand the long-term impact of the COVID-19 crisis on demand for bus travel and assess the viability of particular bus routes.

**Invest in effective prevention**

- Take an evidence-based approach to understand the impact of investment in preventative services, to ensure we invest in activity that improves the resilience and wellbeing of residents.
- Continue to deliver our highways asset management approach (roads and public rights of way) to improve quality, reduce costs and maximise capital funding into the county.
- Review and refresh the Social Isolation Select Committee action plan in light of the impact of COVID-19, including considering digital options that work to keep people connected with others.
- Work with partners and Government to develop a sustainable solution for supporting households in financial crisis, food and fuel poverty.
- Work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of our population, building on new behaviours and understanding developed during COVID-19 of the impact of lifestyle choices on health outcomes. This will recognise the important role that arts, sports and green spaces play in preventative health care.
- Meet our new statutory duties within the Domestic Abuse Bill working with our partners, including planning to ensure accommodation based Domestic Abuse support is available when and where it is needed.



## Partnership challenge

### **Why it matters**

One of the great positives of the COVID-19 crisis is that people have come together to support and help each other. This has also been the case for public and community services across Kent. Councils, local NHS services, care providers, schools, voluntary and community groups are coordinating their efforts and breaking down barriers so they can provide the best support for the people that need it. We have an opportunity now to sustain these strengthened relationships to make real and lasting improvements and efficiencies in the services we provide.

Improving our partnership working arrangements will help us manage demand better and make the best use of our resources. It will make it easier for people to find the support they need and for us to help them more efficiently. By working with other organisations that support Kent communities, we can get a better understanding of the causes of demand and how we can best address them. There are opportunities to think differently about how public services in Kent are provided, joining up with some of our closest partners, like Kent's District, Borough and City Councils. We will explore options to share some of our property estates where this could result in savings and provide flexibility for how we work in the future. As we develop and expand our use of digital technology, there are opportunities to align this with our partners to help make it easier for KCC services to work with other public sector organisations.

During the COVID-19 crisis, Kent's Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector has been more of a lifeline than ever, helping people and communities stay safe, well and connected. The VCSE plays a vital role in helping individuals and communities support themselves and each other and build a sense of collective identity. The crisis has been extremely challenging for the VCSE and has accelerated the need for us to improve the way we work with and support VCSE organisations. Together with our public sector partners, we want to work with the sector to build its capacity and resilience so it can continue to play a vital role in life in Kent.

The VCSE is also a provider of many services that KCC commissions. Whilst the council and VCSE providers worked extremely well together during the COVID-19 crisis, it also highlighted challenges within our commissioning model. In particular, there is a need to make better and more consistent use of VCSE knowledge and skills in designing solutions and better ways to meet people's needs. This means collaborating earlier on in the commissioning cycle to inform our strategy development. Many of the most challenging issues facing our communities, including mental health problems and homelessness, cannot be tackled in isolation and we need to work with the VCSE and other key partners to find sustainable and effective solutions.

We have a long history of working closely with health partners and aligning health and social care support. KCC is part of new partnership structures for health and social care that aim to take forward improved ways of working together and it is important we get these arrangements right. COVID-19 recovery work has exposed many opportunities to work together to improve services, including to better manage demand for care and residential homes.

As we work through all of the challenges facing us, we are committed to keep talking to Kent's residents, communities and businesses so we understand what is most important for them and what their experiences and views are. We will be honest and open about the choices ahead and report our progress clearly so we can be held accountable. Parish and Town Councils and other local community groups provide invaluable insight into local issues and solutions and we will find better ways to engage with them, including making use of digital technology where this works well.

### **Priority actions to help address the partnership challenge**

#### **Support the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise Sector**

- Agree a Civil Society Strategy to support the sector in its wider role in building individual and community resilience and to recognise the importance of social infrastructure.
- Establish a Strategic Partnership Board with the VCSE to create a strategic engagement mechanism between the sector and public sector partners. This will provide a forum to develop our strategy where the VCSE is a key partner and to better understand our collective interaction with the sector.
- Develop a support offer for the VCSE which responds to the challenges identified during COVID-19 recovery to help maintain the local VCSE network whilst supporting it to be sustainable and revitalised within a post-COVID-19 environment.

#### **Better align our service design and commissioning plans with partners**

- Work together with the VCSE and other partners to develop a shared strategy around key population-based issues including deprivation, mental health, older people and homelessness.
- Define our Commissioning Strategy to inform the way we work with the VCSE to meet the needs of our communities and to identify potential new partnership models.
- Implement a KCC/NHS programme of partnership work including reviewing partnership arrangements for people with Learning Disabilities and autism, managing care home demand and delivering a plan to mitigate the impact of COVID-19 on the Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic population.
- Play an active role in the Integrated Care System for health and social care across Kent and Medway, and ensure the council has the right level of engagement to successfully support the development of Integrated Care Partnerships in East Kent, West Kent, North Kent and Medway & Swale.

**Work with other public sector partners to improve our efficiency**

- Explore and continue to promote opportunities with partners to work across the public estate in Kent.
- Explore opportunities to develop multiagency working to tackle some of the most challenging problems facing our communities, including mental health crisis response and tackling serious and organised crime.
- Support and explore opportunities to align our technology and digital aspirations across the public sector to enable more efficient ways of working between public sector agencies.

**Better engagement with residents and local communities**

- Create a new resident engagement platform so we can prioritise our budget and activities on what is important to Kent's residents.
- Explore joint communication with partners to explain how to access key services.
- Work with Parish and Town Councils to better understand and respond to local issues.
- Use digital opportunities to better engage with Parish and Town Councils and Amenities Societies.



## Environmental challenge

### **Why it matters**

Kent's beautiful and iconic natural environment is one of the county's greatest assets. Our growing population and our location as the UK's gateway to Europe creates particular challenges around carbon emissions, air quality and resource consumption. KCC has formally recognised the UK Climate Emergency, which poses a very real threat to quality of life now and for future generations. This is why, whilst tackling the climate emergency, it is also important to ensure our communities are resilient and adapting to climate change. Protecting our natural environment is a priority for many reasons; not only to act against climate change and enhance biodiversity, but also to support our health and wellbeing and grow our economy.

KCC has an important role to lead on how the county addresses environmental challenges and opportunities. We have committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in Kent to net-zero by 2050 and to achieve this will require every resident, community and business in the county to take simple steps. These include retrofitting buildings so they are more energy efficient, promoting renewable energy generation and planting more of the right tree species in the right places. As the number of households in the county increases, we need to be sure that we have sufficient water, energy and waste disposal infrastructure and promote careful and sustainable use of these resources.

To deliver on our community leadership role for the environment, we will firstly need to lead by example in our own property estate and operations, delivering our target to achieve net-zero emissions by 2030. We will also seek to influence others who provide public services in the county, for example working with transport operators to introduce electric buses and supporting schools to operate in more energy efficient ways. Finally, we will provide advice and expertise so that residents and businesses can take their own actions to reduce emissions. There are unique opportunities now to encourage people to continue changes in behaviours that have emerged during the COVID-19 crisis that have had a positive environmental effect, such as continuing to avoid unnecessary journeys.

With our partners, we want to deliver a 'green recovery' from COVID-19, which means we will consider the environment and rebuild in a way that is sustainable for the future and reduces climate risks. There are significant opportunities to boost our economy and create jobs by attracting investment in activities that will support the environment, such as insulating more homes and developing renewable energy. Kent has a growing low carbon goods and services sector and is home to world-leading research in horticulture and plant science which are important to our economy and must be supported to grow.

The way we live and work is changing, in part accelerated by the COVID-19 crisis which has seen many of us work from home more and travel less. To accommodate these changes we will need sustainable, well-designed homes and communities that support us all to live well. This means homes and communities that 'design in' ways for us to be physically and mentally healthy and resilient, avoid social isolation and build a sense of community identity and belonging. Innovations in technology and design can help ensure that people can safely stay in their own home as they get older with minimal adaptations required. Homes and communities need to be well-connected, both to convenient transport networks and active travel options and through high quality broadband and mobile connection. Access to green spaces, sport, leisure and cultural activities enhances quality of life and should be available in all communities. New homes and buildings must be energy efficient, environmentally sustainable, resilient to climate change and protect biodiversity so we do not create future problems. Residents have told us that they want their local area to feel safe, clean and well-looked after so they can feel proud of where they live.

### **Priority actions to help address the environmental challenge**

#### **Deliver net-zero for Kent by 2050 and promote climate resilience**

- Refresh the Kent Environment Strategy to deliver implementation plans and projects which will improve environmental standards, tackle climate change and support growth in the green economy.
- Consider environmental impacts in all our decision making.
- Deliver the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy to contribute to net-zero commitments with our partners and improve air quality.
- Deliver on our commitment to plant a tree for every person in Kent, which totals just over 1.5 million, and enhance other natural assets which increase the storage of carbon, support the recovery of the county's wildlife and benefit residents.
- Deliver the shared priorities in Kent Nature Partnership's Biodiversity Strategy to protect and recover threatened species and enhance wildlife habitats.
- Deliver the Local Flood Risk Management Strategy and the Flood Response Plan.
- Manage increasing demand in waste disposal and take action to reduce demand by promoting reuse and recycling.

#### **Deliver net-zero for KCC's estate and operations by 2030 and influence others**

- Lead action on our own estate and operations and those of our Trading Companies to reach Net Zero by 2030 through investing in renewable energy generation, shifting to electric vehicles and energy rationalisation across the estate.
- Accelerate delivery of green infrastructure and renewable energy projects including the installation of solar photovoltaic panels on public buildings and retrofitting of public sector estates.

- Provide advice and guidance for businesses to reduce their carbon emissions including through Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) projects that provide free support to help businesses become more profitable while protecting the environment and encouraging low carbon solutions.
- Reduce fuel poverty and carbon emissions by championing adaptations to homes including through the Kent and Medway Warm Homes Programme that helps residents install insulation and reduce bills for energy and water in their homes.
- Incorporate green technology in new school buildings and expand opportunities for schools to invest in energy saving initiatives.

**Build sustainable, liveable homes and communities**

- Refresh the Kent Design Guide to promote high quality, sustainable development in Kent's communities that meets current and future needs.
- Plan to deliver high quality accommodation solutions for older people and those with support needs and encourage housing design that allows older people to stay safely in their home for as long as possible.
- Actively promote and monitor access to green spaces, sport and healthy activities to improve health and wellbeing.
- Work with local communities to promote access to safe places to walk and cycle as an alternative to travelling by car.
- Champion the need for climate resilience and flooding risk to be considered in planning for new developments.
- Work with District Councils and partner agencies to help keep residents and businesses safe including through our community safety teams and Community Wardens and the work of Trading Standards.
- Build on the coordinated response with partners to issues that damage the public realm, for example KCC's investment and joint working to tackle fly tipping with district and borough councils, Kent Police and other partners.



## How we will deliver the Interim Strategic Plan

The Interim Strategic Plan is the corporate business plan for the council for the next 18 months. The priorities within it will be taken forward through either:

- **Strategic Reset Programme:** A number of priorities set out within this plan are within the scope of the council's Strategic Reset Programme (SRP). The SRP is intended to draw together a number of the significant change projects across the council and bring them into a single programme so that overlaps, interdependencies and resources can be better coordinated and managed to ensure successful delivery.
- **Divisional and Service Business Plans:** The development of divisional and service level business plans was paused as a result of the pandemic, with immediate response and recovery plans being used as business plans over the last year. Normal divisional and service level business planning will resume for 2021/22, and where not included within the scope of the SRP, priorities within this plan will be included in the relevant business plan.

Monitoring of this plan will be through the usual governance channels. Cabinet will receive regular updates on performance and Cabinet Committees are able to oversee the delivery of specific priorities within the plan that are within scope of their remit. A close-down report to County Council of this plan as the new 5-Year Plan is approved will also allow Members to scrutinise performance against this plan.

As noted, this interim plan will be replaced by a new 5 Year Plan for the council. The diagram below sets out the timeline for the period of this interim plan and the start of developing the new 5 Year Plan from the latter part of 2021 onwards.



This page is intentionally left blank

From: Roger Gough, Leader

Barbara Cooper, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Cabinet, 30 November 2020

Subject: **EU Transition Preparedness – Update**

Summary: This report updates Cabinet Members on the work Kent County Council (KCC) is undertaking, internally and with local and national public agencies through the Kent Resilience Forum, to prepare for EU Transition on 31 December 2020. This update builds on the County Council reports from July 2018, December 2018, March 2019, September 2019 and October 2020, and several Member briefings.

**Recommendation:**

**Cabinet is asked to:**

**(1) Note the KCC and local preparations for the end of the EU Transition phase.**

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Cabinet will recall that Members have previously received reports on Kent County Council's EU Transition preparedness, in July and December 2018; March and September 2019; and October 2020. This is alongside several Cabinet Committee reports, and All Member briefings on 5 August and 13 October 2020.
- 1.2 The EU Transition period ends on 31 December 2020. As has been stated previously, Kent's position as the gateway to Europe means that the UK's readiness for the end of the EU Transition phase relies to a great extent, on Kent's readiness. KCC along with our national and local partners is continuing to review and refine out preparations, which are being shaped by national planning assumptions. Consequently, our planning is as robust as it can be against a continuing evolving landscape, and there are still various strands of work to be delivered which are part of our ongoing dialogue with Government. These strands of work will be addressed in a paper to the December County Council.
- 1.3 This paper seeks to assure Cabinet Members that KCC is working with our partners to plan for the potential combined impacts of EU Transition, the continued response to COVID-19, and winter pressures. All Directorates are actively involved in ensuring that the Council can meet its statutory obligations and Kent's public services can continue to be delivered. Importantly, our EU

Transition plans have been strengthened and tested by our response to COVID-19.

## **2. Local Resilience and Preparedness**

### **2.1 County Infrastructure and the Traffic Management Plan**

#### Operation Fennel

2.2 A Traffic Management Plan has been developed by the multi-agency Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) to deal with the Government's reasonable worst-case scenario (RWCS) of up to 7,000 HGVs delayed within Kent. The plan allows for various 'triggers' depending on the overall quantity of HGVs that are delayed in crossing the short straits:

- Between 27 and 29 December, Highways England (HE) will install the Quick Movable Barrier (QMB) on the M20 between Junction 9 at Ashford and Junction 8 at Hollingbourne, thereby ensuring M20 Brock is ready to be used should it be necessary from 1 January.
- On Day One (1 January 2021) Freight will initially continue to use existing routes to the ports via M2/A2 & M20/A20. New Inland Border Facilities (IBF) will be open at Ebbsfleet and Sevington to enable HMRC checks as required. KCC is managing the construction works at the Sevington site on behalf of the Department for Transport (DfT).
- The first trigger will be the requirement for TAP A20 approaching Dover, which can hold up to 500 HGVs. All Port Traffic will be directed to use M20/A20.
- All port-bound freight will use the coastbound carriageway between M20 J8 & J9 in 'free flow' within Brock.
- The second trigger will be when TAP20 is filling and/or Eurotunnel freight is likely to queue onto M20 at J11A, at this point Brock will become 'active' with HGVs held at traffic lights prior to J9 with Port of Dover traffic using lane 3 and Eurotunnel freight using the hard shoulder. In addition, the IBF at Sevington can hold freight; total capacity for the two locations is around 3,200.
- If Brock is reaching capacity, then Dover-bound HGVs will be diverted to Manston. Manston can hold up to 4,000 HGVs, with an additional 300 held at TAP256, on the A256 at Whitfield.

#### Traffic Compliance and Enforcement

2.3 Key to the Operation Fennel Traffic Management Plan is compliance and enforcement. To ensure that any impact on local communities, the local road network and key NHS locations is minimal, HGVs heading to the ports will only legally be allowed to use specified routes to the ports and the following measures will be in place:

- All freight heading to the ports must be border ready and have a Kent Access Permit (KAP). Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) cameras will be located on the M2 & M20 to monitor port-bound freight. Non-border ready freight can be stopped by Kent Police or DVSA and fined up to £300 per offence.
- KCC will work with local District, Borough & Parish councils to identify locations where non-compliant HGVs may be leaving the prescribed routes and parking anti-socially on residential roads. KCC is currently exploring a scheme with the DfT for those areas particularly impacted by Brock, TAP20, the route to Manston and TAP256, to tackle anti-social HGV parking on residential roads during the first six months post-EU Transition. We have asked the DfT to grant KCC a temporary power that would enable KCC to provide a robust deterrent to HGVs parking on residential roads.
- Haulage companies based in East Kent and around Faversham and Teynham will be supplied with a Local Haulage Permit (LHP) to enable them to travel directly to the ports without having to travel through M20 Brock. LHPs are supplied by KCC to all local companies that have registered vehicles that are licenced to travel to Europe, however they must be compliant with a KAP.

#### Prioritised Freight

- 2.4 Plans are being developed to enable Scottish fish and day-old chicks that must arrive in France within a specified time to be allowed to avoid the queues at Brock.
- 2.5 Kent Resilience Forum Multi-Agency Activity**
- 2.6 A programme of events in support of preparedness is being undertaken by the Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) partners, including KCC, to train, test and exercise the plans which will continue until the middle of December. These events include:
- Peer review briefings and challenge on all aspects of the Operation Fennel plan, involving KRF partners including KCC, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service, NHS, Department for Transport, and the Cabinet Office.
  - Constant review of the plans and cross linkages with other plans, for example winter weather plans
  - Command and control walk-through to validate structures and operational communications
  - Media and communications exercise
  - Driver welfare exercise
  - Stress test of what would happen were there to be a COVID-19 outbreak in a lorry park
  - Exercise Lundy IV, a comprehensive virtual exercise with small breakout groups working through scenarios to test the deployment of the plan and the various tactical options available to commanders

### **3. KCC Readiness**

#### **3.1 Cross-Directorate Resilience Forum**

- 3.2 The Cross-Directorate Resilience Forum (CDRF) continues to meet monthly and consists of the chairs of each of the four Directorate Resilience Groups as well as other key officers from across the organisation including Emergency Planning, Risk, Procurement, Infrastructure, People & Communications, Internal Audit, and Health and Safety. It is chaired by the Director for Environment, Planning and Enforcement, who is the Director with responsibility for Emergency Planning. Its purpose is to ensure the whole organisation's preparedness and resilience for any type of emergency or incident that may impact KCC as an organisation, the residents and businesses we serve, or the outcomes we deliver.
- 3.3 When necessary, daily meetings of 'Extraordinary CDRF' are stood up informed by the prevailing risk level. This would also usually trigger and/or meet daily reporting requirements into both the KRF and from there into Government, depending on the nature of the incident.
- 3.4 With professional advice and assistance provided by KCC's Resilience and Emergency Planning Team, the CDRF is responsible for securing and ensuring robust Business Continuity Plans (BCPs) across all KCC services, and ensuring that robust and timely Situation Reports ('Sit Reps') are produced daily/weekly depending on the incident. These in turn create the KCC 'Common Operating Picture' which is shared with partner and Government agencies, as appropriate.

#### **4. Resilience and Emergency Planning**

- 4.1 KCC's Resilience and Emergency Planning Service (REPS) has operated the County Emergency Centre (CEC) at County Hall throughout the pandemic, ensuring an appropriate level of tactical command and control across KCC services and single point of contact for partners.
- 4.2 The REPS team co-ordinate Business Continuity Planning, ensuring all services are prepared for any disruptions to service delivery, with a current particular focus on the pandemic, EU Transition, and winter pressures.
- 4.3 To ensure preparedness across KCC for EU Transition, the REPS team has facilitated seven EU Transition themed emergency planning exercises since 1 April 2019. A 'virtual' EU Transition exercise has also been developed and is accessible via KNet. 210 colleagues from across KCC participated in these exercises, which have focused on both response and recovery from foreseeable potential challenges from EU Transition.

## **5. The Cumulative Impacts**

- 5.1 The REPS team have proposed an enhanced corporate emergency planning and business continuity model, to ensure optimal preparedness for impacts arising from the pandemic, EU Transition, and winter pressures. This includes enhanced County Emergency Centre (CEC) operation, the introduction of a 24/7 Senior Duty Officer (SDO) function, increased frequency of situation reporting, and establishment of a corporate EU Transition/Pandemic/Winter Pressures Business Continuity Group.
- 5.2 The REPS team's proposed model also includes the following:
- that an enhanced CEC operation rota starts from 28 December 2020 and runs, if required, until 31 March 2021. The rota identifies a REPS emergency co-ordinator as single point of contact for any urgent EU Transition, pandemic and winter pressures related issues.
  - that the CEC will operate between 08:00 and 20:00 from Monday to Friday and transfer to the Duty Emergency Planning Officer and proposed Senior Duty Officer overnight, at weekends and on Bank Holidays.
  - the REPS emergency co-ordinator will be added to the established weekly Command Rota
  - a rota will be compiled by REPS and populated by key individual KCC services, identifying an on-call resilience single point of contact between 08:00 – 20:00 from Monday to Friday, with overnight, weekend and Bank Holiday periods covered by routine/existing duty, standby and call out systems.
- 5.3 The REPS team currently collate data from individual services into weekly situation reports (Sit Reps) relating to COVID-19, EU Transition and winter pressures. Sit Reps will more than likely move to daily reporting once EU Transition initiates, which the REPS team will continue to manage, making sure any issues which arise are responded to appropriately and swiftly. These Sit Reps provide KCC's Corporate Management Team (CMT), Kent Resilience Forum (KRF) partners, and Government Departments with an informed overview of KCC's current position and issues.
- 5.4 Daily meetings of the KCC EU Transition/Pandemic/Winter Pressures Business Continuity Group will be reinstated in December. Individual Directorate Resilience Groups will also establish increased meeting frequencies informed by individual operational requirements.

## **6. Business Continuity Plans (BCPs)**

- 6.1 The REPS team monitors all KCC Business Continuity Plans (BCPs). The REPS team are currently contacting all plan owners, with BCPs due to be reviewed early next year, to ensure they are updated ahead of EU Transition.

6.2 The REPS team has advised that BCP plan owners learn lessons from the initial pandemic response, assess and critique how their team worked and ensure this is reflected in their BCPs. Work has also been undertaken with the Internal Communications team to develop messages for KMail and KNet, encouraging Business Continuity Planning, and sharing various forms of support and assistance.

## **7. Directorate Preparedness**

### **7.1 Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH)**

7.2 Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH) undertook extensive planning in preparation for EU Exit during 2019/20, including tabletop exercises with all ASCH services and business partners, and creating the ASCH EU Exit Management Action Plan which contributed significantly to the Directorate's response capabilities leading up to COVID-19. Further work in preparation for the end of EU Transition includes:

- The Directorate's resilience programmes have been reviewed against the UK government's Reasonable Worst-Case Scenarios for the end of EU Transition. ASCH is reflecting on operational and strategic lessons arising from the response to COVID-19 and a recent internal audit. This looked at the Directorate's response to the pandemic. Key strengths identified included the effectiveness of ASCH's System Resilience Plan, and the extensive preparations for the UK leaving the European Union on 31 January 2020, which benefitted the response, as well as effective communication between the System Resilience Group and the connectivity with KCC's and KRF's systems. Areas for development included better recording of training, and closer links to Public Health.
- The annual review for all service BCPs will be completed by the end November 2020 and the Senior Management Team will participate in the KRF's command and control training.
- ASCH's capacity and demand management plan has been reviewed and updated alongside the cold weather plan with the aim of reducing pressure and managing demand for critical services. The Directorate remains vigilant to the potential for short-term disruption to local deliveries and supplies including food and fuel across Dover, Thanet and the M20 corridor, including Ashford. Established structures will continue to be used to maintain a two-way flow of information between the Directorate Resilience Group and teams, services and providers operating within the communities most likely to experience local transport disruption.
- The Directorate continues to engage in multi-agency testing opportunities, for example, Exercise Lundy III and the upcoming Lundy IV.



## Public Health

7.3 The Coronavirus pandemic is making planning for the end of EU Transition more complicated as all operations related to EU Transition are now required to be conducted in a COVID-19 secure way and existing infrastructure related to the provision of testing for the virus is able to continue to function through ongoing COVID-19 impacts. Currently the whole country had been put into a national lockdown to manage a universal rising number of COVID-19 positive cases across the country.

7.4 Planning for EU Transition and the ongoing management of COVID-19 includes:

- Public Health England and local NHS input into ensuring local operations related to EU Transition are COVID-19 secure, especially provision of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to workforce and hygiene installations for drivers when queued
- Accessibility to testing for COVID-19, especially for the key infrastructure providers, such as the Port of Dover and Eurotunnel in order to maintain business continuity in the two critical operations
- Development of joint exercises to ensure shared understanding of how systems will work to keep staff and residents as safe as possible in relation to COVID-19 and EU Transition
- Working with the NHS to ensure the local infrastructure is protected from potential additional demands from the Inland Border Facility sites, such as the Queen Elizabeth The Queen Mother Hospital (QEQM) in Margate and near Manston, and the William Harvey Hospital in Ashford which is critical for a number of acute conditions including major trauma, heart attacks and stroke

## **7.5 Children, Young People and Education (CYPE)**

7.6 The CYPE Resilience Group, which feeds into the KCC cross-directorate group, has continued to keep the withdrawal from the EU as a standing item on the agenda. Many of the suggested actions and solutions that were advised to schools in KCC briefings last year have already been put in place due to COVID-19, particularly the implementation of some form of remote learning, and managing staff and student absenteeism.

7.7 The CYPE support and advice systems, as advised in last year's briefings remain in place, and link closely with the planning advice received from the KRF, for example, CYPE officers have participated in Exercise Lundy III and are fully apprised of the plans in Operation Fennel. CYPE has identified schools in the vicinity of the Inland Border Facility (IBF) sites, Manston, Ebbsfleet and Waterbrook sites - and remains ready to support these schools,

and any others, should they be impacted by the escalation of Operation Fennel.

- 7.8 A comprehensive briefing and FAQs will again be provided to schools as an update to guidance previously received. These will include the additional challenges of COVID-19 and winter weather. The guidance provides answers to questions that staff and parents may raise and encourages the schools to consider what further measures they may need to put in place. The Fair Access service is working with the Transport Integration Unit and Special Schools to ensure adequate transport provision for Special Educational Needs pupils. In addition, Integrated Children's Services are updating their guidance to their teams, including managing support to Unaccompanied Asylum Seekers, responding to Safeguarding and Child Protection cases and coordinating teams to have a presence at Manston and Sevington.
- 7.9 Any advice to schools and other education providers will be published on Kelsi and will be updated as additional intelligence is received.
- 7.10 Recently the Leader of the Council met with the Department for Education (DfE) Minister responsible for EU Transition planning; a member of the DfE's Transition Team has been invited to participate in the fortnightly CYPE Resilience Group meetings.

#### **7.11 Growth, Environment and Transport (GET)**

##### Highways and Transport

- 7.12 In addition to County Infrastructure and the Traffic Management Plan, there are BCPs in place for the services. These have all been reviewed to consider EU Transition as well as COVID-19 and Winter pressures within the last 30 days.
- 7.13 Congestion which might impact services remains the biggest risk from EU Transition; however, in conjunction with all partners, full plans have been drawn up to ensure that all statutory services can continue with a phased approach to reducing non-essential services in the event of continued disruption, if required.

##### Trading Standards

- 7.14 Kent Trading Standards have a number of workstreams in preparing for the end of EU Transition. This includes putting in place a permanently staffed Ports Imports Compliance Team in Dover, which has been in full operation since April 2019 and comprises five Import Compliance Officers and a Senior Import Compliance Officer. KTS has also been working directly with Government Departments on areas that include product safety, animal health and movement, and feeds.

- 7.15 Further information on Trading Standards' preparations is provided in the paper that was presented to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities (GEDC) Cabinet Committee on 17 November 2020. The paper can be accessed through this [link](#) to the Committee papers.

#### Kent Scientific Services (KSS)

- 7.16 There is likely to be at least one new border control point established close to the key Short Straits crossings at Dover and Eurotunnel. This new control point is likely to facilitate the importation of both food and feed of a high-risk nature via the Short Straits, and KSS provides the Public Analyst service to all those likely to be involved.
- 7.17 COVID-19 secure facilities and work practices have been introduced to enable the laboratory to continue to provide these services at the capacity likely to be required in a safe and sustainable way.
- 7.18 KSS continues to maintain stocks and supplies sufficient to provide continuous operations beyond the reasonable worst-case disruption period envisaged. The supplies are relevant to all aspects of KSS's work including that for the Kent Coroners.

#### Business Support from Economic Development and Public Protection

- 7.19 The Economic Development team is in contact with business support organisations via the 'Kent International Business' programme. This monitors and shares up-to-date information about likely changes affecting Kent exporters.
- 7.20 KCC is working with organisations such as the Federation of Small Businesses and the British Chambers of Commerce to cascade relevant information on preparing for the new arrangements to Kent businesses and will continue to do so as appropriate.
- 7.21 Businesses are also being signposted to 'gov.uk/transition' and a Kent.gov.uk site set up by Public Protection. Public Protection is implementing an End of Transition Campaign aimed at preparing exporters for the end of Transition. The campaign focusses on three main issues where it is likely there will be no concession to non-compliance and goods will be turned back at the border: authorised representation in the EU, labelling and testing. Further information about this campaign is provided in the 17 November GEDC paper.
- 7.22 Public Protection is also creating new content for Kent.gov.uk, using business Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn channels for the key messages, and working with partners (Produced in Kent, Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and others) using 'Live Events' on Zoom to give exporters very specific regulatory

advice. Short films explaining legislation and compliance are also being developed for the KCC website business hub.

### Community Safety

- 7.23 The Community Safety BCP has been updated in preparation for the end of EU Transition. The Community Warden Service is prepared to provide targeted support to vulnerable and isolated residents if required with the appropriate PPE and emergency supplies being put in place.
- 7.24 The emergency supplies consist of basic food and drink provision which can be utilised where wardens come in contact with those residents who have been cut off from supplies and the service can then directly link them into local community/food hubs and services as appropriate. Community Wardens are 'Bronze' level Community Liaison Officer trained and able to assist on the frontline if required.

### Coroners

- 7.25 The Coroners service is updating its BCP to ensure that it has a workflow for ongoing operational delivery in preparation for potential traffic disruption that could affect access to funeral directors' premises, scenes of death and mortuaries, leading to delays and a knock-on effect on mortuary capacity. It is also carrying out work on its contractual arrangements with funeral directors and mortuaries to address some of the potential risks.
- 7.26 Additionally, the KRF's Death Process Management Group which has representation from all the relevant agencies and partners, has oversight of mortuary capacity and temporary body storage, and has protocols and systems in place from its ongoing work on COVID-19 response.

### Libraries, Registration and Archives

- 7.27 Staff will continue to work flexibly, as developed in response to COVID-19 with front of house staff working at the closest/most accessible location. Registration of birth/death locations will also be prioritised, with District Hub libraries as the highest priority. Ceremonies could have timings disrupted so the service will engage with external venues and manage arrangements in our own Register offices to allow for flexibility if travel delays are an issue.

### Waste Management

- 7.28 Waste management have liaised with District Authorities to understand the extended collection requirements they may have and have conducted extensive preparation discussions with the Transfer Station operators, the Final Disposal Outlets, and waste off-takers. This will ensure continuity of service, with increased accessibility into the Transfer Stations and onward

movement of waste during the evening, as well as the late-night acceptance of the materials at the end destinations.

- 7.29 It should be noted that there is a risk associated with the resourcing of extended hours at the Transfer Stations which require specialist plant operators, hauliers and weighbridge personnel, all of which are in high demand throughout Kent. A period of intensive training is being undertaken to mitigate the risk where possible, however the operating hours will need to be determined by the availability of professional and trained resources.

### **7.30 Strategic and Corporate Services**

#### Infrastructure - Property

- 7.31 Many of the measures implemented to maintain business functionality during the COVID-19 lockdown have continued as measures to mitigate any disruption to property operations, particularly the capital programme delivery and facilities management services as a result of the EU Transition.
- 7.32 Established contingency plans are in place to ensure that key property contractors can continue to deliver services. There are regular communications with key supply chain partners to raise and discuss any issues throughout the supply chain of both labour and resources. Steps taken to support critical business activity include:
- stockpiling commonly required materials and consumables
  - seeking UK based suppliers and workforce
  - Devising logistics plans in the event of any disruption to the transport or road network.

#### Infrastructure - Technology

- 7.33 We continue to support a remote workforce with approximately 6,500 staff regularly using systems from home or remote locations rather than from designated KCC buildings. The systems are stable and all services report business continuity as being maintained. Systems are in place to enable the distribution and availability of IT kit.
- 7.34 The impact on data sharing between the EU and UK is being assessed. All existing contractual arrangements should be covered by previous data sharing regulations, but new contracts will need to be reviewed with data clauses reflecting the UK/EU Transition restrictions.

#### Finance

- 7.35 As the detail of the arrangements post-EU Transition are established, impacts could emerge for government aid, grants and funding, i.e. sources of income

for KCC. The Finance Team has the relevant policies and processes in place and is well placed to manage and mitigate potential scenarios.

- 7.36 The government has provided grant to support authorities with the additional costs associated with planning for EU Transition. The initial grant was paid as flat rate per authority in 2018/19 and 2019/20. The amount for each county council was £87,500. Further grants were announced in August 2019 which provided an additional £87,500 for each county council and a targeted allocation for authorities with major ports; KCC's share of this targeted funding for ports was £1million. In total KCC has received £1,262,500 in EU Transition grants plus the £293,387 for Kent Resilience Forum. Total spending on preparations was £458,400 in 2018/19 and £1,710,800 in 2019/20. Forecast spending in 2020/21 on preparations is £619,100. This results in an overall shortfall of £1,232,400 compared to grants received which would need to be financed from the Council's reserves.

#### People and Communications

- 7.37 Planning is well embedded and additional staff are being recruited to Kent Communications to provide additional resources to support all communications relating to EU Transition in the county. A multimedia marketing campaign is planned in partnership with the Kent Messenger Group and a campaign co-ordinator is being recruited. It is anticipated that there will be additional pressures on the Contact Centre and plans are underway to recruit and train additional resources if required.
- 7.38 The work of People & Communications that has supported the transition to home working due to COVID-19 will also mitigate some of the potential impact on the workforce.

### **8. Increased Activity to Address Potential Scenarios**

- 8.1 The weekly KCC Command Rota now includes an out-of-hours contact from Public Health, and work is ongoing to incorporate a single point of contact for Trading Standards, with proposed changes to County Emergency Centre operation also to be reflected in this rota. This will be in conjunction with the proposed new rota for key contacts across individual KCC services, this will allow the REPS team to co-ordinate and address all foreseeable potential scenarios.
- 8.2 The enhancements of CEC operation, including the 08:00-20:00 working hours, increased out-of-hours cover and potential for assimilation of a REPS emergency co-ordinator, will help address potential scenarios, such as any unforeseen emergencies that will have to be dealt with simultaneously to Transition, winter pressures and issues arising from COVID-19.

- 8.3 As previously referenced, it is proposed that the existing 24/7 Duty Emergency Planning Officer function is supplemented and enhanced through the introduction of a new Senior Duty Officer role, provisionally operating from 28 December 2020 until 31 March 2021, when its operation will be reviewed. This proposed innovation reflects the system successfully operated by Kent Highways colleagues.
- 8.4 It is envisaged that daily Sit Reps will be reinstated in December, with the specific start date to be informed by the prevailing risk level and KRF/Government Common Operating Picture reporting requirements.

## **9. Impact on Supply Chains & Commissioning**

### Strategic Commissioning

- 9.1 Since the last update on preparedness for the end of the EU Transition period, Strategic Commissioning and Service Directorates have continued to work closely with the Council's partners, trade associations and providers across sectors, in order to develop a detailed understanding of potential impacts and to prepare for any new arrangements that may be required. Preparations have included a focus on the variety of potential impacts that could result from a convergence of the end of the EU Transition, national and local lockdowns, and winter events.
- 9.2 The continued supply of Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) has emerged as a new risk due to the outbreak of COVID-19. However, central government now has extensive supplies of PPE and the Council holds a 12-week stockpile at its Aylesford depot that will cover both KCC's own requirements and those of key services including, but not limited to, Adult Social Care services. To mitigate the risk of distribution from Aylesford being disrupted, the Council has been working closely with the Department of Health and Social Care to deliver additional quantities of PPE to key service providers during December to last several weeks. KCC is also making arrangements for stockpiles of PPE to be held at several locations across Kent that can be accessed locally.
- 9.3 Contingency plans for the continuation of key commissioned services have been developed with providers over some time and have now been used extensively in practice during recent major incidents, including the COVID-19 outbreak. There has been a particular emphasis on our vulnerable residents and the remote delivery of services, wherever possible. As a part of our ongoing engagement with providers, several scenario planning workshops have been run and further are planned in the future, with learning points from the impact of COVID-19 assimilated into business continuity plans across sectors.

9.4 As the end of the EU Transition period approaches, business continuity, the associated risks, and appropriate mitigations will continue to form a part of our contract management and regular conversations with providers. Recording and monitoring systems are also in place to ensure the earliest warning of any potential impact to the provision of key commissioned services, which will enable swift action to be taken, where required. In the future, we will continue to rely on our good and longstanding relationships with providers and, as necessary, we can take a flexible approach to contractual arrangements to ensure continuity as also evidenced during the COVID-19 outbreak.

## **10. Conclusion**

10.1 The County Council, along with our local and national multi-agency partners, is confident our preparations for parallel emergencies and incidents on, and after, 31 December 2020, are as robust as they can be against the current environment.

10.2 As detailed in the above sections, all Directorates have plans in place to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory obligations and Kent's public services can continue to be delivered. These plans have been strengthened and tested by our response to COVID-19 and from previous emergencies; for example, the joint learning across all partners who dealt with the 2015 Operation Stack event and winter pressures in previous years.

## **11. Recommendation(s)**

**Recommendation:**

**Cabinet is asked to:**

**(1) Note the KCC and local preparations for the end of the EU Transition phase.**

## **12. Contact Details**

Barbara Cooper  
Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport  
[barbara.cooper@kent.gov.uk](mailto:barbara.cooper@kent.gov.uk)

## **13. Background Documents**

- Brexit Preparedness - Kent County Council Position to County Council (July 2018)
- Business Preparedness for Brexit update to Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (July 2018)
- Trading Standards update to Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (September 2018)



- Brexit Preparedness - Kent County Council Update to County Council (December 2018)
- Preparations by HM Government and the European Commission for a No-Deal Brexit to Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (January 2019)
- Corporate Risk Register in relation to Brexit to Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee (January 2019)
- Supporting Kent Exporters to Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (March 2019)
- Brexit Preparedness - Kent County Council Update (March 2019)
- Risk Management: Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate to Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (March 2019)
- Brexit: Strategic and Corporate Services Business Continuity Arrangements to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee (March 2019)
- Brexit Preparedness – Kent County Council Update (September 2019)
- EU Transition Preparedness – Kent County Council Update (October 2020)
- Trading Standards Activity and Preparations for the end of Transition - Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (November 2020)

This page is intentionally left blank

From: Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,  
Corporate and Traded Services

Shellina Prendergast, Cabinet Member for Communications,  
Engagement and People

Subject: Budget Consultation 2021-22

Classification: Unrestricted

**Summary:**

This report sets out the approach taken for this year's Budget Consultation, how it was delivered, and the key question topics. It accompanies the presentation being given at Cabinet on 30 November 2020, which will provide a summary of the responses received for each consultation question.

**1. Budget Consultation Strategy**

- 1.1 Our annual budget consultation is a key part of our budget setting considerations and informs our strategy for setting the budget for the next financial year and our medium term financial plan. The previous two budget consultations have asked about priorities for spending. This year, however, given the scale of the financial challenge we face, the tone of this year's consultation shifted to focus on how comfortable people would be with spending reductions across service areas. The consultation material explained the context: 'We are potentially facing our biggest financial challenge in ten years. We are facing a combination of more growth in spending than in previous years (largely arising from the COVID-19 pandemic) and the potential reduction in how much income we receive from Council Tax and business rates.'
- 1.2 The consultation was aimed at reaching a wide audience of Kent residents and other interested parties to inform them of the budget challenge facing the council. As a result of the consultation we hoped to raise awareness of these issues and encourage residents, businesses and voluntary organisations to respond to the questionnaire with their views, specifically on spending reductions, Council Tax and doing things differently.
- 1.3 The consultation was for a six-week period, consistent with our previous Autumn budget consultations.

**2. Consultation Delivery**

- 2.1 The budget consultation ran from 14 October to 24 November 2020. The promotion was primarily through direct email and social media. Emails went to a range of voluntary and community sector organisations, Kent Association for Local Councils, and over 3,000 people that have signed up to KCC's consultation directory to hear about new consultations. It also

featured in our new residents' newsletter. Promotional postcards were available at some of our open sites prior to the 5 November lockdown (children's centres, country parks, libraries and gateways). Social media advertising has been an important and effective method of promoting the consultation. It was also promoted by Healthwatch Kent on their channels and with their forums for older people, mental health, physical disability, and the Food Bank.

2.2 A press release was issued on 14 October 2020 to mark the launch of the consultation, focusing on the budget challenge and encouraging residents to have their say. This release achieved coverage in the following: BBC South East Today, Radio Kent, Isle of Thanet News, Canterbury Journal, Times of Tunbridge Wells, Academy FM, The KM Group newspapers, Kent Online, Kent Live and Kent and Sussex Courier.

2.3 Hard copies and alternative formats of the consultation material were also publicised through the press release, with a telephone number, Text Relay facility and email address.

### 3. Consultation Questions

3.1 The full questionnaire can be viewed online at [www.kent.gov.uk/budget](http://www.kent.gov.uk/budget). The questionnaire focused on three areas:

- Spending reductions
- Council Tax and the Social Care Levy
- Doing things differently

3.2 Spending reductions:

Respondents were asked to consider the 14 major frontline service areas and state whether or not they would be comfortable with a reduction in spending. The response options to choose from were: comfortable, partly comfortable, not comfortable, and don't know/no opinion. Respondents were given the opportunity to tell us why they had selected their responses.

Respondents were also asked to identify the one area of frontline spending which would be their **priority to save £1**. As respondents could only choose one area to save £1, the responses may show a different pattern compared with the pattern for the degree of comfort on areas for savings. This is because respondents could be comfortable with savings in more than one area of frontline service.

The consultation deliberately focussed on frontline spending as the scale of the challenge means the Council is unlikely to be able to balance next year's budget without impact on frontline services. This does not mean that other areas of non-frontline spending will not be considered for savings.

### 3.3 Council Tax and the Social Care Levy:

Respondents were first asked whether they agreed or disagreed with raising Council Tax up to (but not exceeding) the referendum limit. The consultation deliberately did not specifically identify what the referendum limit might be as this is set by central government and approved by parliament. They were next asked what they felt the level of Council Tax should be if there wasn't a referendum limit. The response options ranged from 'no increase' up to 'I support an increase above 6%'. A subsequent free text box enabled respondents to tell us why they had chosen their answer. Finally, they were asked if they agreed or disagreed with having the Social Care Levy.

### 3.4 Doing things differently (linked with the Council's Strategic Reset Programme):

Respondents were asked whether or not they agreed with: reducing the number of buildings we have; delivering more than one service from our buildings; and delivering more services using online technology.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to identify other areas they felt could achieve savings and cost reductions (as a free text response).

## 4. Next Steps

- 4.1 The consultation period closed on 24 November and a summary of the consultation responses will be presented at the Cabinet meeting. A full consultation report will be available by 5 January 2021, when the draft budget is due to be published. This report will include a full analysis of the responses, including a demographic analysis. The report will accompany the draft budget plans through the scrutiny process in January, Cabinet on 25 January and County Council on 11 February.

### Contact details:

#### Report Authors:

- Simon Pleace, Revenue and Tax Strategy Manager
- 03000 416947
- [simon.pleace@kent.gov.uk](mailto:simon.pleace@kent.gov.uk)
- Charlotte Jones, Engagement and Consultation Development Officer
- 03000 416935
- [charlotte.jones@kent.gov.uk](mailto:charlotte.jones@kent.gov.uk)

#### Relevant Corporate Director:

- Zena Cooke, Corporate Director of Finance
- 03000 419205
- [zena.cooke@kent.gov.uk](mailto:zena.cooke@kent.gov.uk)

This page is intentionally left blank