

**GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND
COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE**

Wednesday, 6th November, 2024

2.00 pm

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**



AGENDA

GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

Wednesday, 6 November 2024 at 2.00 pm
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone

Ask for: **Hayley Savage**
Telephone: **03000 414286**

Membership (17)

Conservative (12): Mr A Sandhu, MBE (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr S Holden, Mr S C Manion, Mr J P McInroy, Mr J Meade and Mr A M Ridgers and vacancy

Labour (2): Ms K Grehan and Mr B H Lewis

Liberal Democrat (1): Mr M J Sole

Green and Independent (2): Mr M Baldock and Mr M A J Hood

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcements
- 2 Apologies and Substitutes
- 3 Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
- 4 Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2024 (Pages 1 - 8)
- 5 Manston Airport (Presentation) (Pages 9 - 24)
- 6 Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director
- 7 Draft Revenue Budget 2025-26 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025-28 (Pages 25 - 60)
- 8 Introduction of the National Medical Examiner Process - Impact on Kent Coroners and Registration Services (Pages 61 - 68)
- 9 24/00092 - Kent & Medway Skills Bootcamps Programme (Pages 69 - 84)

- 10 Public Rights of Way and Access Service - Overview (Pages 85 - 94)
- 11 Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway (Pages 95 - 118)
- 12 Work Programme 2024/25 (Pages 119 - 120)

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

Tuesday, 29 October 2024

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

**GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES
CABINET COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 11 September 2024.

PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Vice-Chairman), Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr B H Lewis, Mr S C Manion, Mr J P McInroy, Mr J Meade and Chris Passmore

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D Murphy and Mrs C Bell

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Smith, Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Ms S Berdo (Strategic Programme Manager), Mr T Marchant (Head of Strategic Development and Place), Mr J Pearson (Head of Libraries Registration and Archives), Mr M Reeves (Project Manager), Mr M Riley (Project Manager), Mr G Rusling (Head of Public Rights of Way & Access), Mr S Samson (Interim Head of Economy), Mrs S Thompson (Head of Planning Applications Group) and Mr M Wagner (Chief Analyst)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

214. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mrs Binks, Mr Ridgers, Mr Sandhu and Mr Sole. Mr Passmore was present as substitute for Mr Sole.

Mr Manion was present virtually.

215. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

216. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 May 2024 were a correct record.

217. Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 5)

Mr James Pearson (Head of Libraries, Registrations and Archives) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, provided an update on the following:

Libraries Registration and Archives

- (a) The annual summer reading challenge, 'Marvellous Makers', took place over the summer holidays with over 16,000 children taking part.
- (b) The public consultation on Folkestone Library was taking place with public drop-in sessions being delivered. The consultation closed on 11 September and a report on the findings of the consultation would be produced.
- (c) The Hope Project was a free exhibition at the Kent History and Library Centre in Maidstone inspired by the Inclusive Arts Practitioner Elaine Foster-Gandey.
- (d) Works at Dover Discovery Centre were due to be completed in March 2025 and a temporary library service was being delivered from the Dover Gateway.

Trading Standards

- (e) Mrs Bell attended a Trading Standards Checked briefing with officers from the service. Trading Standards Checked, in partnership with Kent Police, aimed to protect residents from criminals and provided a list of safe local traders. The service also helped legitimate businesses to thrive and supported the local economy.
 - (f) The vapes team continued to be active and had in the last year conducted 800 visits to businesses where 143 were selling illegal products. Over 23,000 illegal vapes had been seized.
 - (g) Trading Standards officers had been conducting border controls on the safety of goods.
 - (h) Community Wardens and Trading Standards carried out a doorstep crime information day in Gravesend engaging with the community to improve resilience.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - Information in relation to illegal vape prosecutions could be provided.
 - The Cabinet Member would consider writing to the Secretary of State regarding the banning of single use vapes.

3. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Work on the Kent & Medway Economic Framework's five ambitions was underway including: the submission of a bid to the Department for Education to run a series of skills bootcamps to tackle employment needs in different sectors; the establishment of a new 'Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy'; making the case to government about the lack of

international passenger rail services at Ebbsfleet & Ashford and; initial work on the development of a place-based Innovation Partnership.

- (b) A Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway was being developed to tackle barriers that prevented people from succeeding in employment due to health issues.
 - (c) Since the re-launch of the Kent & Medway Business Fund in November 2023, nineteen new business loans had been approved and were projected to create approximately 130 full time equivalent jobs. Among recipients was an environmentally friendly dry cleaners based in Medway, a Children's Nursery in Swale, two Life Science businesses in Sandwich and arts and recreation business in Tonbridge & Malling.
 - (d) The annual Taste of Kent Awards took place on 13 June and celebrated winners and finalists from Kent's food & drink sector across 27 categories.
 - (e) The Kent Foundation, which supports young entrepreneurs through mentoring, had produced, thanks to support from the KCC Helping Hands Fund, a new free six part online course with videos, useful documents and materials to help individuals start their own business, and move from Idea to Income.
 - (f) The No Use Empty scheme had brought more than 8,300 empty properties back into use since 2005. Since April, 15 empty home loans had been approved worth £1.7m and 7 new-build loans worth £4m. A number of current projects were nearing completion including the former Police Station in Deal.
 - (g) Following a procurement process earlier in the year, Visit Kent would continue to deliver activities in support of the local Visitor Economy for a further two years.
4. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
- The Kent Foundation, as part of their business plan, are reviewing the possibility of supporting entrepreneurs of all ages.
 - Kent Ambassadors were volunteers from the public and private sector.
 - Members would have opportunities to discuss the Team Kent brand at future meetings of the cabinet committee.
5. Mr Jones, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport, provided an update on the following operational matters:
- (a) During June and July the Registration Service supported approximately 650 civil partnership and marriage ceremonies, along with providing the registration service for the London Borough of Bexley.
 - (b) Green Libraries Week would take place between 7 and 13 October. Sustainability was at the heart of library services, for example the provision of 'swap shops', energy efficient infrastructure, and recycled materials for

craft activities. The event was a good opportunity to learn about sustainability and how to be more energy efficient.

- (c) The Emergency and Resilience Planning Team had made good progress with recruitment and there were currently three vacancies in the team. The main focus for the team was the impact of the Entry/Exit System (EES). The Council was the lead agency for preparations for the EES for the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum and had been working to review the risks and develop plans, whilst recognising community concerns. Internally the team was focusing on delivering Council services with minimal disruption and to continue to meet the needs of customers and residents. The team had also been implementing a new business continuity system.
 - (d) The coronial service had been successful in appointing a new area Coroner for the Mid Kent and Medway, and north west Kent coroner areas.
 - (e) Within Kent Scientific Services unregulated vapes testing had taken place and vapes were found to contain nicotine, cannabis and CBD. Mr Jones highlighted the risks involved for residents in buying uncontrolled and unregulated products.
 - (f) Within the Community Safety Service domestic homicide reviews identified lessons that may prevent future deaths. In June an online seminar was hosted by the team for professionals within the field and focused on the issue of coercive control.
 - (g) Community Wardens had engaged with the community following recent events at the Gravesend Gurdwara and the Thanet Community Warden team attended an annual event at Minnis Bay assisting with road safety and traffic management.
6. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
- Libraries would provide a warm and welcoming environment for residents over the winter months to browse books and use the services available.
 - Gateway services currently being delivered at Tonbridge Castle would be welcomed at Tonbridge Library in due course.

7. RESOLVED to note the verbal updates.

218. Performance Dashboard

(Item 6)

1. Mr Matthew Wagner, Chief Analyst, introduced the report which set out the performance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and activity indicators for Quarter 1 of 2024/25. Mr Wagner highlighted the seven new indicators that had been added and the four that had been removed. He explained of the 22 KPIs for this quarter 17 had been RAG rated green, three were RAG rated amber, two were RAG rated red, and three new KPIs were still awaiting confirmation of funding before they could be reported.

2. Following a comment from a Member it was agreed the target for CST01 would be reviewed.
3. RESOLVED to note the performance report for Quarter 1 of 2024/25.

219. 24/00080 - Amendments to the Highways Act 1980 - Sections 118ZA & 119ZA

(Item 7)

1. Mrs Bell and Mr Graham Rusling (Head of Service Public Rights of Way and Access) introduced the report regarding the amendments to the Highways Act 1980 (included in the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000) to provide a right for landowners to apply for public path diversion and extinguishment orders. Agreement was sought for the Council to accept the delegation by Kent district councils of their functions in this area.
2. RESOLVED that the committee endorses the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the acceptance by Kent County Council of the delegation by Kent District Councils of their functions in respect of public path orders and applications made under the Highways Act 1980 sections 118ZA and 119ZA.

220. Playground Early Years Programme

(Item 8)

Ms L Keely (Principal Project Officer) and Ms S Bedingfield (Service Manager – Innovation, Digital & Libraries) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Bell introduced the report and explained that the project was funded by the Arts Council and the sessions were free of charge and were inclusive as much as possible for children from all communities and parts of the county.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The project had been delivered well and the potential development of a five year strategy was encouraging.
 - Members expressed their support for the project and thanked all those involved in its delivery including the welcoming nature of library staff.
3. RESOLVED to note and endorse the report.

221. 24/00082 - Kent Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme Update

(Item 9)

1. Mr Murphy and Mrs Sharon Thompson (Head of Planning Applications) introduced the report regarding proposed changes to the timetable for the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan (KMWLP) and the Kent Mineral Sites Plan (MSP).
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:

- It was not uncommon for a minerals and waste local plan to have a plan that sets out the strategy and a second that sets out allocations. In the case of Kent, the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan sets out the strategy and, the current review work is proposing to address national and local policy changes since 2016. The Mineral Sites Plan set out allocations where development is acceptable in principle.
 - If the final version of the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF) (which was at the consultation phase) made significant changes that affected the Minerals and Waste Local Plan then this would need to be considered in future plan reviews. The NPPF is also considered as part of the determination of a planning application.
3. RESOLVED that the committee endorses the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development who is responsible for the Minerals and Waste Local Plan on the proposed Kent Minerals and Waste Local Development Scheme 2024.

222. 24/00083 - Old Rectory Business Centre Management Contract
(Item 10)

1. Mr Murphy and Mr Mark Reeves (Project Manager) introduced the report regarding the next steps for the Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet which was a KCC-owned facility offering high quality office space to local businesses. Five options were outlined in the report and in light of 'Securing Kent's Future' it was proposed that the asset would be disposed of as a going concern.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
- The building was a significant asset to the Gravesham community both historically and commercially.
 - Full legal advice was being sought to protect the current use and ethos of the building. Should legal advice indicate that there was not adequate protection for businesses, further discussions and evaluations would take place.
 - Gravesham Borough Council's bid to secure £370,000 of Getting Building Fund funding to refurbish empty retail units and create new flexible workspace in the town centre was an independent process.
 - The income of £25,000 profit was after refurbishment and staff costs. The total income was approximately £60,000 a year.
3. Mr Hood proposed and Mr Lewis seconded that the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee recommends that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development extends the current contract for a duration of 2 years exercising the full extension clause within the existing contract, so the Council could explore all options further. The motion was lost.
4. RESOLVED that the committee endorses the proposed decision by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development to

- (i) APPROVE and DELEGATE to the Director of Growth and Communities to extend the current contract period for a period of nine months to allow time to undertake the disposal.
 - (ii) AGREE that the necessary steps can be taken to dispose of the Old Rectory Business Centre in Northfleet as a going concern.
 - (iii) DELEGATE authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.
5. In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the Constitution Mr Hood and Mr Lewis wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that they voted against the motion.

223. 24/00081 - Investment Advisory Board Terms of Reference and Recruitment of Volunteer Board Members to the Investment Advisory Board and Investment Advisory Board Sub-Groups
(Item 11)

1. Mr Murphy and Ms Susan Berdo (Strategic Programme Manager) introduced the report regarding the Investment Advisory Board (IAVB) Terms of Reference and the voluntary appointments made to the board, including the IAB Sub-Group and the IAB Debt Recovery Group.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members, it was noted that:
 - The Kent and Medway Business Fund was government funding ringfenced to support and promote local businesses in Kent by way of loans.
3. RESOLVED that the committee endorses the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development on the Investment Advisory Board Terms of Reference and the voluntary appointments made to the Boards: The Investment Advisory Board, ("IAB"), IAB Sub-Group and the IAB Debt Recovery Group.

224. Kent and Medway Business Fund Bi-Annual Monitoring - Q4 2023-24
(Item 12)

1. Mr Murphy and Mr Martyn Riley (Project Manager) introduced the report summarising the results of KCC's monitoring returns from businesses that have received loans and equity from KCC managed government funded Business Investment Schemes including the Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) and the former Regional Growth Fund (RGF) schemes.
2. RESOLVED to note the report.

225. Developing Discovery Park: Sandwich Task Force
(Item 13)

1. Mr Murphy and Mr David Smith introduced the report regarding KCC's support for Discovery Park, the work of the Sandwich Task Force following Pfizer's

decision to exit from its facilities at the Discovery Park site, and the development of an action plan using local potential to meet national challenges.

2. RESOLVED to endorse to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development the suggested actions described in paragraphs 7.6 – 7.8 of the report.

226. Work Programme 2024/25

(Item 14)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.



A state-of-the-art airfreight
hub for London & the
Southeast of England

RSP | Manston Airport

"I can certainly say with confidence that we would consider recommending Manston to our customers as a viable regional option"

Rob Buda, Senior Director, Atlas Air



The global market demand for global air freight is robust – and growing

Dedicated freighters carry over 50% of the world's air cargo. Sensitive and just-in-time cargo need focused and dedicated services to meet shipper timing needs



Boeing forecasts global freighter fleet to grow more than **60%** to 3,260 over the next two decades

Ecommerce giants TRANSFORMING the air freight market. Ecommerce share of total sales will reach 25% very soon

Cargo hubs are resilient: COVID-19 showed increasing critical importance of dedicated air cargo in protecting supply chain dependability

Continued growth of specialist freighter hubs. Amazon is expected to have 200 aircraft in its fleet by 2028; its daily flights had increased from 85 in May 2020 to 205 in August 2023



There is increased demand in the UK for air freight

Brexit has motivated UK importers and exporters to cease the practice of trucking through the Channel crossings to and from airports in Northern Europe.

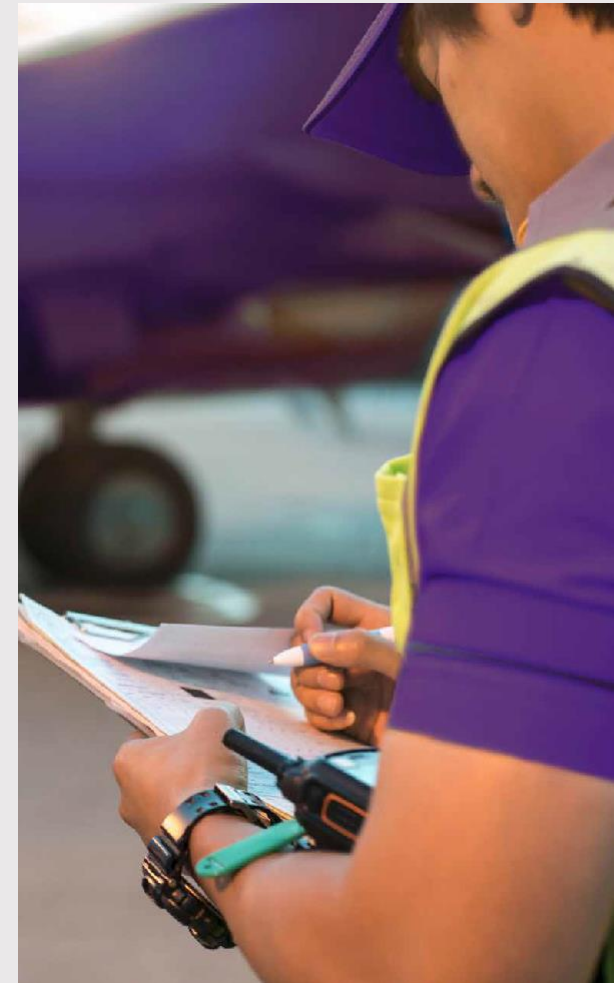
Manston will be the only airport offering substantial numbers of slots and capacity



The promotion of trade with countries outside the EU - particularly Africa, Asia and the Americas - will stimulate additional growth in long haul air cargo which Manston alone will be able to accommodate

COVID has reinforced the cargo sector - and created a cultural shift that underpins the Manston strategy.

Air cargo provides the immediacy that we rely on for perishables, medicines and other time-sensitive goods

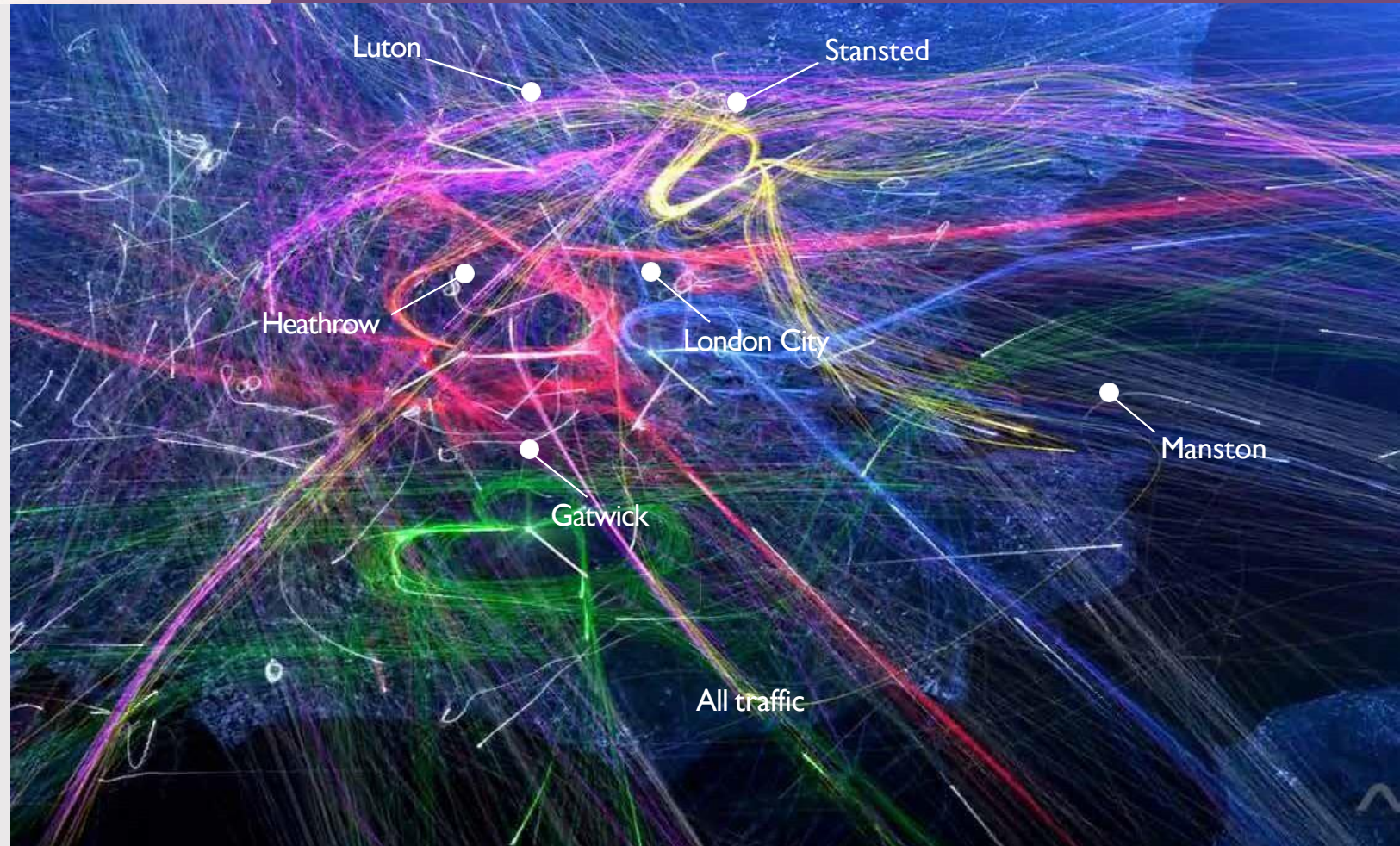


There's a capacity crisis in the air over London

The airspace over London and the South East is among the busiest and most congested in Europe - except for over Manston.

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To the west, aircraft using Heathrow, Gatwick, Stansted, Luton, Southend and London City airports plus Biggin Hill and Farnborough airfields fill runway slots with passenger aircraft

The airspace above Manston is much less congested, with capacity for significant future growth



There is a capacity crisis on the ground too

Runways slots at existing London airports are prioritised for lucrative passenger traffic, with almost no capacity for vital all-freighter aircraft to deliver just-in-time goods and services into and out of the UK.

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Passenger traffic growth is absorbing almost all UK runway capacity

There has been no new runway in the UK since 2001. Heathrow third runway first proposed in 2006

Airfreight – unable to access slots – is regularly trucked through the Channel Tunnel or via ferry to airports in mainland Europe, to fly long-haul

Delays at the ports, post-Brexit, is leading to queues of lorries waiting to access ships or the tunnel

The nearest air cargo hub from London with capacity is four hours away

Boeing categorises congestion in London as serious



Manston provides the perfect solution – and the UK Government agrees

Freight forwarders and cargo airlines will be able to avoid the congested London airports - and delays at the ports - and fly direct.



✓ **Outside congested London airspace zone** and with space to expand

✓ **Planning permission granted** by the Department for Transport – and tested through the courts

✓ **Strategic Location** by road, rail freight, air – and water

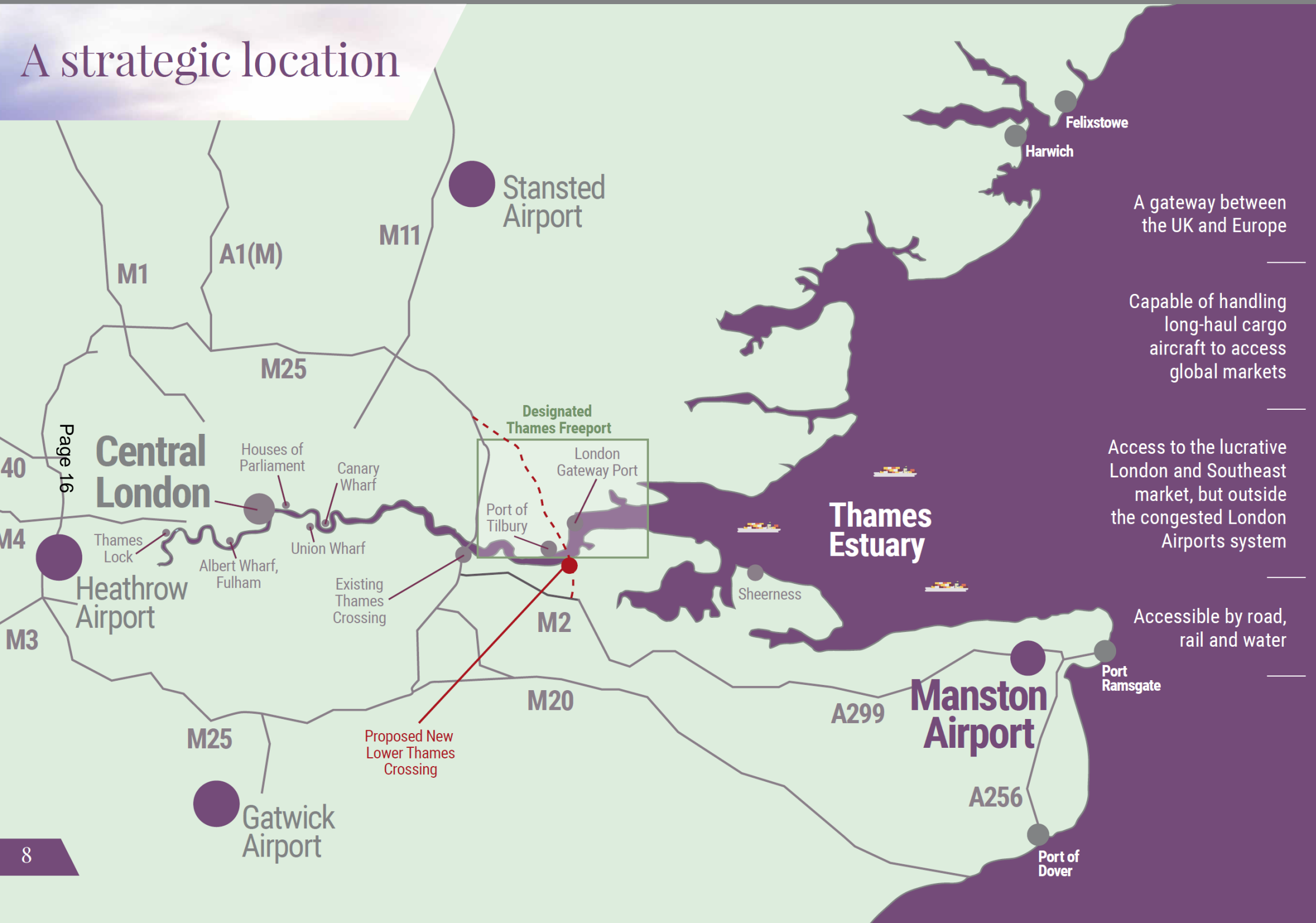
✓ **Phased construction** - Manston Airport will be open for business from 2028

✓ **300 hectares (nearly 800 acres)** Airport site under RSP ownership

✓ **Full length, existing runway 2,748m (9,016 feet)** capable of handling all widebody freighters



A strategic location



A gateway between the UK and Europe

Capable of handling long-haul cargo aircraft to access global markets

Access to the lucrative London and Southeast market, but outside the congested London Airports system

Accessible by road, rail and water

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Market demand for Manston

Manston Airport enjoys considerable support among both airlines and freight forwarders.

Likely to become a hub for inbound perishables such as fruit, vegetables, fish, seafood and cut flowers, carried via chartered all-freighter

A dedicated business development team for Manston Airport would secure export loads for these aircraft

Potential to also handle outsized freight, express freight, Formula One and luxury cars, live animals and time sensitive cargo

Opportunities exist to explore the integrator market as well as chartered freighters

Manston also has a history of handling military and humanitarian operations; these are expected to return to Manston when the airport is operational



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Planning permission secured for:

19 widebody parking stands

4 narrow body passenger stands

15,000m² (750,000ft²)
of cargo terminal

100 ha of non aircraft
pavement (247 acres)

57 ha (140 acres) of
aircraft pavement

105,000m² (1.1m ft²)
of landside development

8 business
aviation hangers

3 recycling hangars
and aprons

When fully built, Manston will
be able to handle in excess of a
million tonnes of freight a year.

It will also support regional
regeneration, inward investment
and employment growth.
By Year 5: Manston will employ
2,150 people on the airport site
and 13,100 indirect/catalytic jobs
in the wider economy



A state-of-the-art, sustainable cargo hub

AI-powered systems which anticipate and resolve operational challenges

Smart and energy-efficient buildings

Autonomous vehicle technology and electric apron vehicles used to drive efficiency

Renewable energy surplus provided to local community

Equipped to provide a base for the new fleet of cargo drones

The use of river traffic in the Thames Estuary for onward shipment

No airspace congestion

Infrastructure designed in to support charging of next generation hydrogen and electric propulsion aircraft



Manston will be a Carbon Net Zero operation by 2035

Developing the cargo market at Manston

The characteristics of the UK air freight market work in Manston's favour:

Impending capacity constraints at all other London Airports and in the medium term at East Midlands.

The historic imbalance in the UK between belly hold and freighter operations and lack of suitable slots/facilities

The challenges for those airports in securing major capacity expansion

The inferior profitability of airfreight operations at passenger dominated airports

The four major market segments that Manston is well placed include:

Capturing existing traffic from existing London and UK regional airports

Attracting new eCommerce focused airlines to set up an operation serving London and the Southeast rather than rely in cross-Channel trucking to serve the UK market

Clawing back a substantive element of the 1-2MT of UK originating or destined air freight currently crossing the English Channel to use airports in near Europe

Capturing a healthy share of future UK air cargo growth, estimated to be c2.8MT over the next 25 years



Manston Airport Cargo Terminal 2028



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“Congratulations on receiving the approval for the redevelopment of Manston Airport.

“As you will be aware, the Government recognises the importance of the aviation sector to the economy and is dedicated to ensuring the long-term future of the UK aviation sector by supporting domestic sustainable aviation fuel production and promoting airspace modernisation.

“Air freight too is vital to the UK economy, particularly for supporting export-led growth in sectors such as advanced manufacturing where goods are often high value or time critical.


The growing importance of air freight in the UK supports the Government’s ambition to drive economic growth and increase the UK’s global impact through unlocking trading opportunities. Manston Airport will play a critical role in advancing these initiatives.”

Gareth Thomas

Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State
Department for Business and Trade



“The growing importance of air freight in the UK supports the Government’s ambition to drive economic growth and increase the UK’s global impact through unlocking trading opportunities.”



Manston is getting ready
for take-off in 2028 –
Come on board

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From: Roger Gough, Leader of the Council
Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services
Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee
6th November 2024

Subject: Draft Revenue Budget 2025-26 and Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2025-28

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report sets out key policy considerations within the administration's draft revenue budget proposals for 2025-26 (together with any full year consequences in subsequent years) for the Cabinet portfolios and directorates relevant to this committee for scrutiny. Unlike recent years this is a tailored report for each committee with the overall draft budget proposals contained within appendices and in particular choices about spending growth and savings/income. The draft proposals have been prepared before the Chancellor's Autumn Budget based on assumptions about future spending requirements, government grant settlement, and council tax referendum levels. These assumptions are likely to change but overall it is still likely that a balanced budget can only be achieved with significant savings and income generation as spending growth is likely to continue to exceed the funding available from the government settlement and local taxation.

Recommendations:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) NOTE the administration's draft revenue budgets including responses to consultation
- b) SUGGEST any changes which should be made to the administration's draft budget proposals related to the Cabinet Committee's portfolio area before the draft is considered by Cabinet on 30th January 2025 and presented to Full County Council on 13th February 2025

1. Background and Context

1.1 The setting of the budget is a decision reserved for Full Council. The Council's Budget and Policy Framework requires that a draft budget is issued for consultation with the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to allow for their comments to be considered before the final budget proposals are made to Full Council.

1.2 The Council is under a legal duty to set a balanced and sustainable budget within the resources available from local taxation and central government grants and to maintain adequate reserves. This duty applies to the final draft budget presented for Full Council approval at the annual budget meeting. The overall strategy for the budget is to ensure that the Council continues to plan for revenue and capital budgets which are affordable, reflect the Council's strategic priorities, allow the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and continue to maintain and improve the Council's financial resilience.

1.3 A MTFP covering the entirety of the resources available to the Council is the best way that resource prioritisation and allocation decisions can be considered and agreed in a way that provides a stable and considered approach to service delivery and takes into account relevant risks and uncertainty.

1.4 The administration's initial draft budget proposals have been prepared in advance of the government's Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2024 (announced 30th October 2024) and in the absence of a provisional local government finance settlement or detailed spending plans inherited from the previous government. This draft budget is based on an assumed grant settlement and council tax referendum limits.

1.5 The administration's draft budget 2025-26 and MTFP over the three years are not yet completely balanced. The factors causing the plans to be unbalanced are principally due to undelivered savings within Adult Social Care and the timing of the £19.8m policy savings previously agreed to replace the use of one-offs to balance 2024-25 budget. These two factors are covered in more depth in Appendix A. Other than these issues, the 2025-26 budget is broadly balanced within acceptable tolerances, given the number and range of forecasts within the plan at this stage. Other than adult social care, the MTFP is broadly balanced over the three years, but as yet not necessarily in each individual year. The Adult Social Care challenge will be covered in more depth in the report for the relevant Cabinet Committee. These factors do not preclude scrutiny of the remainder of the Administration's draft budget plans. There is a balance to be struck between planning for what is currently known (which are the factors cited above) and the likelihood of an improvement in the financial position via any additional Government support or improved tax take, with the risk being managed through reserves.

1.6 This report focuses on the key policy considerations within the administration's draft budget proposals for each Cabinet portfolio in a timely manner in November. This is a more focussed report to address previous concerns that presenting the entire budget proposals for the whole Council does not allow for sufficient scrutiny on key service issues by individual Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees. To assist this, a summary of the 2025-26 proposals for the relevant Cabinet portfolio is included in this report, together with a more detailed table setting out the key policy considerations and accompanying narrative (in the next section of this report). An interactive dashboard is also provided to Members, enabling the details of all proposals to be examined and scrutinised.

1.7 Separate appendices are included which set out:

- the key assumptions within the administration's overall initial draft budget (appendix A)
- how the proposals are consistent with the Council's strategic priorities and legal requirements (appendix B)
- a summary of the responses from the recent budget consultation (appendix C)
- a summary of the Administration's Draft Budget proposals (appendix D)
- a high-level summary of the overall MTFP covering 2025-28 (appendix E)
- a summary of the proposals for GET directorate for 2025-26 (appendix F)
- a detailed list of the key policy considerations for GET directorate (spending and savings proposals) (appendix G)
- an assessment of financial resilience (appendix H)

This provides the same level of background information as presented to Cabinet and Scrutiny committees in previous years. A more detailed report on the budget consultation, which closed on 7th August 2024, is provided as a background document.

1.8 Following the November scrutiny process, a revised draft of the administration's final budget proposals will be published in January for further consideration prior to final approval at County Council in February 2025. This will include:

- resolution of the outstanding issues in this draft
- the outcome of the Chancellor's Autumn 2024 Budget and Local Government Finance Settlement for 2025-26
- the provisional council tax base information for council tax precepts
- any other updates since this initial draft

Wherever possible, draft key decisions will be presented for consideration by Cabinet Committees in principle (pending final budget approval) in January together with the opportunity for scrutiny of the key changes arising from the above points, with those draft key decisions that cannot be considered in January reported to the March round of meetings.

2. Key Policy Considerations

2.1 Medium Terms Financial Plan (MTFP) KCC overview – the draft budget proposals for KCC are shown in Appendix E in the usual format e.g. growth pressures (to be funded) as well as savings (efficiency, transformation policy) and income proposals (to be delivered/implemented) to fund/offset the growth pressures across the Council.

2.2 Unavoidable Growth Pressures – a significant proportion of GET's growth pressures are linked to contracts and the inflationary **price** uplifts associated with commissioned services. There are also annual fluctuations in activity or **demography**, as well as **legislative** changes that need to be funded. All of these are deemed 'unavoidable' given current policy and/or contractual arrangements. **Service improvement** is the final category, which can relate to new services/initiatives, or improvements to existing services through changes in policy or service standards. The other growth pressure category is **pay**, and at this stage KCC holds the pay provision centrally, pending negotiations with the Unions and decision on the quantum. This gets allocated subsequent to County Council.

2.3 MTFP overview for this Committee – to allow more informed debate prior to the Full Council meeting in February 2025 (where the Budget is approved), Appendix F and Appendix G outline the high level overview of the growth pressures and savings/income proposals for the services within the remit of this Committee. These are split per Cabinet Member and also indicate where there is an element of choice (blue italic font).

Growth pressures, combined for both portfolios, equate to +£113k, with savings and income proposals of -£625k, meaning that the net budget requirement to be funded by KCC is -£512k e.g. no net ask. KCC's is predominantly funded through Council Tax, Business Rates and general grant, so this is how the net budget requirement is funded e.g. growth pressures have to be funded through growth in Council Tax and Business Rates, or by new savings or increased income across the authority Within each budget line, services then also receive specific grants as well as generate income from sales, fees and charges.

2.4 Local Choices within the MTFP – the focus of the November Cabinet Committees is to outline and debate the policy choices with respect to both growth pressures and savings/income proposals. Those where a decision needs to be made and where there is ‘local choice’ in terms of funding the growth pressures, to which degree/standard, and in terms of savings/income, whether there is support to progress the proposals.

In terms of any savings/income proposals that are not supported, an offsetting viable proposal would need to be identified, as removing a saving/income proposal would cause an imbalance.

The table below outlines the key growth pressure and savings/income proposals for each portfolio where there is ‘local choice’ (only):

SPENDING & SAVINGS PROPOSALS REQUIRING A DECISION - CLAIR BELL

Headline description of spending increase	Brief description of spending increase	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Base budget for context (£k) *		
		£k	£k	£k	Gross	Income	Net
2025-26 LOCAL CHOICE SPENDING PROPOSALS							
Trading Standards	Increased income from Trading Standards Checked service, previously delayed due to economic climate.	-45.0	0.0	0.0	92.0	-115.0	-23.0
		-45.0	0.0	0.0			
2025-26 POLICY & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS PROPOSALS							
Community Wardens	Review of Community Warden Service to deliver a £1m saving which has resulted in an overall reduction in wardens This is the residual budget once pension liabilities expire	-10.0	0.0	-57.0	1,709.2	0.0	1,709.2
Trading Standards staffing	Reversal of previous one-off delay to recruiting food qualified officer.	48.0	0.0	0.0	4,122.8	-573.8	3,549.0
		38.0	0.0	-57.0			

* The contextual gross & income budget information includes both core and externally funded but the budget proposal figures focus just on core funded

**SPENDING & SAVINGS PROPOSALS REQUIRING A DECISION
- DEREK MURPHY**

Headline description of spending increase	Brief description of spending increase	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	Base budget for context (£k) *		
		£k	£k	£k	Gross	Income	Net
2025-26 POLICY & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS PROPOSALS							
Regeneration & Economic Development - Cyclopark	A reduction in the KCC contribution to the operational costs of the Cyclopark sports and community facility in Gravesend. The park is owned by KCC and operated on KCC's behalf by the Cyclopark charitable trust.	-12.5	-35.0	0.0	155.6	-30.6	125.0
Regeneration & Economic Development - Produced in Kent	Reduction of KCC funding to support the operational costs of Produced in Kent, the county's food & drink sector business membership organisation and promotional agency.	-58.0	0.0	0.0	108.4	0.0	108.4
Regeneration & Economic Development – Support for Business	Reduction in the budget for the Straits Committee whilst continuing to meet the committees commitments	-15.0	0.0	0.0	130.0	-15.0	115.0
		-85.5	-35.0	0.0			

* The contextual gross & income budget information includes both core and externally funded but the budget proposal figures focus just on core funded

2.5 Capital programme – The only new project within the remit of this committee where KCC borrowing is required is Essella Road bridge (Public Rights of Way), which now has funding identified to replace the bridge to secure its use into the long term, whereas previously funding had been identified to repair it. Since that point, costs for the repair have increased significantly, plus it has been acknowledged this would only act as a sticking plaster repair and would be a short-to-mid term option that would need revisiting in the future. In addition, the replace option is now more attractive in terms of cost benefit analysis once more intrusive surveys were undertaken.

2.6 Corporate Director overview – the Corporate Director will give a verbal overview of the key growth pressure cost drivers (price inflation, increasing demand) that the Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) directorate have faced in 2024-25 and the continuing impacts into 2025-26.

2.7 Cabinet Member overview (Clair Bell) – each Cabinet Member will likely give a verbal introduction to the key aspects of their portfolio and will answer questions on the report/appendices accordingly.

2.8 Cabinet Member overview (Derek Murphy) - each Cabinet Member will likely give a verbal introduction to the key aspects of their portfolio and will answer questions on the report/appendices accordingly.

3. Contact details

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Background documents

Below are click-throughs to reports, more information, etc.
Click on the item title to be taken to the relevant webpage.

- 1 [KCC's Budget webpage](#)
- 2 [KCC's Corporate Risk Register](#) (Governance and Audit Committee 16th May 2024)
- 3 [KCC's Risk Management Strategy, Policy and Programme](#) (Governance and Audit Committee 19th March 2024)
- 4 [KCC's approved 2024-25 Budget](#)
- 5 [2025-26 Budget Consultation \(Let's Talk Kent\)](#), which includes a report summarising the responses to the recent Budget Consultation
- 6 [Summary of budget engagement exercise with KCC management cohort \(known as T200\)](#)
- 7 [2024-25 Budget Monitoring Report](#) (Cabinet 26th September 2024 – item 5)
- 8 [Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy](#)
- 9 [Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Report](#)
- 10 [Member Budget Dashboards](#) (access restricted and available from 2pm on 30 October)

Key Budget Assumptions

1.1	Current plan includes high-level assumptions for 2025-26 and 2026-27	The 2024-27 medium term financial plan (MTFP), presented to County Council in February 2014, was based on assumptions regarding the funding settlement, spending growth, savings and income, and contributions/drawdowns from reserves. These included a combination of corporate and directorate assumptions. At the time the plan was prepared the later years (2025-26 and 2026-27) it represented a high-level balanced position, and it was acknowledged that the full detail of some elements e.g. £19.8m of policy savings necessary to replace the use of one-offs to balance 2024-25 budget, would be developed for subsequent updates.
1.2	Initial update as at 30th September 2024 in advance of Chancellor's Autumn Budget 2024	The plans have been updated based on the latest available information as at end of September 2024. The timetable for updating the plan and publishing draft 2025-26 budget proposals for scrutiny was agreed before the announcement that Chancellor of the Exchequer's Autumn Budget would be on 30 th October 2024. This date is too late to include the impact in the draft budget for scrutiny and any consequences will have to be included in the final draft budget in January. The Chancellor's Autumn statement is unlikely to have a significant impact on KCC spending or savings/income plans for 2025-26. It is more likely to impact on the funding settlement and the need to balance the budget from reserves and one-off measures.
1.3	Corporate assumptions for Business Rates, Council Tax and funding settlement	<p>On Council Tax income, the plans for each of the three MTFP years assume an increase of 5% (3% general referendum limit and 2% adult social care levy), alongside a taxbase increase of 1.5% plus an additional assumption from the introduction, from 1 April 2025, of 100% premiums on 2nd Homes. There are no assumed impacts from changes to discounts or premiums.</p> <p>On Business Rates, the plan assumes no growth in the taxbase.</p> <p>We have assumed that Government Grants which attracted an inflationary uplift in 2024-25 will continue to receive an inflationary uplift in each year, and we have based these increases on the Bank of England's forecasts.</p>
1.4	Corporate assumptions for spending growth	<p>Inflation is based on May 2024 Bank of England CPI forecasts</p> <p>Demand and cost drivers based on same methodology as 2024-25 assuming current trends continue.</p> <p>Pay costs are based on transition to the new pay strategy approved for April 2025 plus assumed pay award (which is subject to bargaining with the recognised trade unions) and maintaining the link to the Foundation Living wage for the lowest pay rate.</p>

1.5	Corporate assumptions for reserves	<p>Assumes general reserve is restored to 5% of net revenue.</p> <p>No assumed replenishment of reserves drawn down to balance 2023-24 outturn.</p> <p>Treatment of safety valve contributions is consistent with the latest external audit advice, which was received in April 2024, after the final 2024-25 position was reported to Cabinet on 21st March 2024. The advice in March was to show these contributions as spending growth within the government and legislative category. The latest advice from our external auditors is to show these as contributions to reserves rather than spending increases. The impact of this latest advice means that our core funded spending growth in 2025-26 of £117.2m has been reduced by £15.1m to remove the 2024-24 contribution, and our contributions to reserves for 2025-26 includes the safety valve planned contribution £14.6m. Had this advice been received in time for the final 2024-27 plan, the core funded spending growth for 2025-26 forecast would have been £132.2m (as opposed to the £147.3 in the published plan) and contributions to reserves would have been £33.1m (as opposed to £18.5m in the published plan). To compare like with like, the movement between the original published plan for 2025-26 and this latest draft needs to be based on these revised calculations taking account of the latest guidance e.g. core funded spending growth has reduced from £132.2m to £117.2m.</p> <p>Priority over medium term needs to be given to restoring reserves closer to average for similar authorities as % of net revenue and to better reflect enhanced risks.</p>
1.6	£19.8m policy savings	<p>The 2024-25 budget was balanced by three one-offs (£9.1m from reserves, £7.7m from capital receipts and £2.0m from New Homes Bonus grant) which was acknowledged at the time must be replaced by sustainable and ongoing savings/income in subsequent years.</p> <p>The administration's draft budget includes £5.7m of additional policy proposals as part of this replacement impacting in 2025-26. These proposals are set out in detail in the papers for the Children's Young People & Education Cabinet Committee, Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee, and Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee. Some of the policy options which were originally flagged for 2025-26 are now recommended not to be pursued until 2026-27 for contractual and legal reasons.</p> <p>The savings proposed for 2025-26 relate to removing subsidies from partner organisations where there is no statutory requirement or to secure full cost recovery through charges on discretionary services.</p>

		<p>This leaves a balance of £14.1m which is still to be agreed. At this stage this has been shown in the draft plan as a temporary loan from reserves in 2025-26 which must be replaced with sustainable and ongoing savings/income in 2026-27 to replace the use of reserves. The loan must be repaid, which will require further savings or alternative solutions, which at this stage is shown as an unresolved balance in the plan for 2026-27. Potential further savings are still being assessed and we will still be exploring all avenues to reduce the amount needed to be loaned from reserves in 2025-26.</p>
1.7	Adult Social Care	<p>The Adult Social care budget in recent years has included significant transformation, efficiency and policy savings, as well as income generation from client charges and health. The 2023-24 ASC directorate budget included £22.3m of new savings and income, and the 2024-25 ASC directorate budget included a further £53.2m of savings and income.</p> <p>Delivery of savings plans of this magnitude has proved to be challenging and some savings need to be rephased into subsequent years, whilst others have been deemed irrecoverable. This has contributed to an in-year overspend and, in the case of irrecoverable savings, require the base budget to be increased in subsequent years. Rollovers increase the in-year savings that need to be achieved in subsequent years.</p> <p>Savings of this magnitude are necessary to balance the significant year on increases in costs for and demands on adult social care services. These costs largely arise from annual increases in the fees paid to providers for care services for all clients, increased costs for the fees for new clients compared to average fees for existing clients (partly due to complexity and partly due to availability of placements), increasing numbers of clients or increases in hours per week to meet client needs.</p> <p>These costs have been increasing significantly in excess of the specific funding available through social care grants in the local government finance settlement and the adult social care council tax precept, as well as a pro rata share of general grants in the settlement and general council tax precept. In recent years the pace of growth and under delivery of savings has meant adult social care has accounted for an increasing share of the council's overall budget.</p> <p>The challenge is whether, over the medium term, spending on adult social care can be contained within the available specific, and share of general, funding available. Targets have been set for each year of the MTFP based on this principle. This is shown as a savings target in the 2025-26 budget plan. The targets for subsequent years are reflected as an adult social care "challenge" (reflecting the unpredictability of forecasts into later years of the</p>

	<p>plan).</p> <p>The 2025-26 ASCH draft budget shows a net total of savings and income proposals of £24.0m. This comprises of £38.7m new savings and income proposals, netted off by realignments to reflect delays or reductions to previous years' savings. A further £12.9m of savings from 2024-25 are forecast to be rolled forward for delivery in 2025-26. This forecast roll forward together with the £38.7m of new savings and income for 2025-26 described above would mean that the adult social care directorate would need to find over £50m of savings and income in a single year.</p> <p>At this stage the forecast irrecoverable savings from 2024-25 of £8.65m are shown as the adult social care challenge for 2025-26, whilst further options to recover the original savings plans and / or identify other alternatives are explored.</p>
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Strategic Context

The setting of the budget is a decision reserved for Full Council. The Council's Budget and Policy Framework requires that a draft budget is issued for consultation with the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to allow for their comments to be considered before the final budget proposals are made to Full Council.

The overall strategy for the budget is to ensure that the Council continues to plan for revenue and capital budgets which are affordable, reflect the Council's strategic priorities, allow the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and continue to maintain and improve the Council's financial resilience. This is consistent with the objectives set out in Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy. However, these aims are not always an easy combination and involves some difficult decisions about service levels and provision both for the forthcoming year and over the medium term. In reaching this balance it is essential that the Council has regard to bearing down on future spending growth (price uplifts, other non-inflation related cost increases, and demand increases), delivering efficiency & transformation savings, generating income to offset cost of services, and agreeing changes in policies to reduce current recurring spending and/or avoid future spending while making the necessary investments to support service improvement. In this context it is worth clarifying that savings relate to reducing current recurring spend whereas bearing down on future growth is cost avoidance, both amount to the same end outcome of reducing future spending from what it would otherwise have needed to be without action and intervention. The draft budget should be assessed against these aims recognising that the draft is based on assumptions which could subsequently change.

The Council is under a legal duty to set a balanced and sustainable budget within the resources available from local taxation and central government grants and to maintain adequate reserves. A MTFP covering the entirety of the resources available to the Council is the best way that resource prioritisation and allocation decisions can be considered and agreed in a way that provides a stable and considered approach to service delivery and takes into account relevant risks and uncertainty. At this stage the later years of MTFP is set out as a high-level plan showing the forecast strategic trajectory for changes in funding, spending, savings and income, and reserves with a focus for scrutiny on the detail for 2025-26 together with any full year impacts in subsequent years.

This first draft budget has been prepared in advance of the government's Autumn Budget and Spending Review 2024 (announced 30th October 2024) and in the absence of provisional local government finance settlement or detailed spending plans inherited from the previous government. This draft budget is based on an assumed grant settlement and council tax referendum limits. This means that funding forecasts for the forthcoming year are speculative, consequently planning has to be sufficiently flexible to respond accordingly. Even so, it is likely that 2025-26 and medium term to 2027-28 are likely to continue to be exceptionally challenging and will require real terms reductions if forecast spending continues to grow at a faster rate than available resources. The lack of a settlement does not prevent scrutiny of spending and savings plans at this stage and it likely that any changes in the settlement following the Autumn Budget 2024 will impact on one-off measures and reserves in the final draft budget rather than materially changing spending and savings plans.

As the Council develops its detailed proposals it must continue to keep under review those key financial assumptions which underpin the Council's MTFP particularly in the context of

wider public spending and geo-economic factors. Over the previous decade the Council had to become ever more dependent on locally raised sources of income through Council Tax and retained business rates, and it is only in recent years that additional central government funding has been made available to local authorities, primarily to address spending pressures in social care (albeit at a time when the national public sector deficit has been increasing). However, there is no certainty that this additional central government funding will be baselined for future years until the local government finance settlement is announced and multi-year settlements are reintroduced.

The administration's draft budget for 2025-26 (core funded) includes £117.2m (8.2% of 2024-25 approved budget) of forecast spending growth, funding is assumed to increase by £67.5m (4.7%). The £49.8m difference needs to be closed from savings, income and changes in reserves. At this stage the difference is not fully closed largely due to outstanding issues in adult social care which are still being resolved. Spending growth and savings/income are net and include new amounts for 2025-26 as well as some partially offsetting reversals of one-offs and realignment of current/previous plans. The vast majority of the spending growth (gross) is on adult social care (£67.3m, 10.8% increase), children's social care (£16.2m, 7.2% increase) and home to school transport (£16.9m, 17.7% increase). Spending pressures on these services are common across all upper tier councils. These services currently account for 71.0% of the 2024-25 budget (excluding non-attributable costs), the net increase in the 2025-26 draft budget for these services after savings and income (including assumed share of centrally held amounts, excluding unresolved issues) accounts for 83.3% of the overall net increase, as these three services continue to account for an ever increasing share of the Council's budget.

In the Council's submission to HM Treasury in advance of the Autumn 2024 budget we highlighted that this trend of spending growth exceeding the available funding from local taxation and central government cannot continue. We urged that either funding needs to increase to better reflect spending demands or the statutory requirements on councils need to be reduced as otherwise councils' role would be reduced to solely providing care services with no scope to provide community services which help make local places vibrant for residents and businesses. Council tax increases on their own cannot be expected to solve the shortfalls in funding.

In accordance with Financial Regulations, a medium-term capital programme and financing plan is prepared on an annual basis. Where capital estimates are included, funding must be secured and approved prior to any expenditure being incurred.

Setting the annual budget is one of the most significant decisions the County Council takes each year. It sets the County Council's share of council tax and the overall resource framework in which the Council operates. The administration's budget is the financial expression of the Council's strategic priorities. The budget gives delegated authority to manage the budget to Corporate Directors and Directors within the parameters set out in the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations. Corporate Directors and Directors are accountable for spending decisions within delegated powers reporting to the Chief Executive, and these are monitored through the Council's budget monitoring arrangements regularly reported to Cabinet. The draft budget is developed, scrutinised and ultimately approved in compliance with the following six key considerations:

A) Strategic Priorities – Strategic Statement

In 2022, KCC published [Framing Kent's Future](#) (FKF) the council's high-level strategic statement. It sets out the challenges and opportunities Kent is faced with and the actions the Council will prioritise to address them over the next four years, focussing on four key priorities. Since this strategy was approved there has been a significant shift in the financial and operating landscape.

KCC's Budget Recovery Strategy, [Securing Kent's Future](#), was agreed at a Cabinet meeting on 5th October 2023. This updated the Council's ambitions in light of the changed landscape and given the significance of adults and children's social care within the Council's budget, and that spending growth pressures on the Council's budget overwhelming (but not exclusively) come from social care, that the priority of delivering New Models of Care and Support within FKF must take precedence over the other priorities.

The 2024-25 budget was based on the revised strategic ambitions set out in Securing Kent's Future (SKF) approved by Cabinet in October 2023 which recognised the necessity of the ambition to deliver New Models of Care and Support which must take precedence over the other priorities. This creates an expectation that council services across all directorates must collectively prioritise delivering the new models of care and support objective as a collective enterprise. All of the net growth in the 2024-25 budget went into adult social care, children's care and home to school transport consistent with the revised prioritisation of the Council's strategic objectives.

This does not mean that the other objectives of Levelling Up Kent, Infrastructure for Communities, and Environmental Step Change are not still important and all work on these must stop. However, the scope of these other three objectives will have to be scaled back in terms of additional investment and funding, and management time and capacity that can reasonably be given to them. It also does not mean that we can ignore unavoidable spending in other areas of council activity but policy ambitions in these areas may have to be limited.

The administration's draft budget for 2025-26 continues to prioritise the objectives set out in SKF. All of the adult social care council tax precept is passed into social care spending (along with an appropriate share of the general precept and other general sources of funding). Other spending increases focus on unavoidable costs and all local choices are clearly linked to the Council's strategic objectives. All areas of discretionary spending have been explored for savings again linked to the Council's strategic objectives.

B) Best Value

The Council has statutory Best Value duty to secure continuous improvement having regard to economy, efficiency and effectiveness. The latest guidance explicitly states that this covers delivering a balanced budget, providing statutory services, including adult social care and children's services, and securing value for money in all spending decisions. Those councils that cannot balance competing statutory duties, set a balanced budget, deliver statutory services, and secure value for money are not meeting their legal obligations under the Local Government Act 1999. The statutory Best Value duty must frame all financial, service and policy decisions and the council must pro-actively evidence the best value considerations, including budget preparation and approval.

C) Requirement to set a balanced budget

The Local Government Finance Act 1992 requires the Council to consult on and ultimately set a legal budget and Council Tax precept for the forthcoming financial year, 2025-26. This requirement applies to the final draft budget presented for County Council approval. It does not apply to interim drafts. Whilst there is no legal requirement to set a balanced MTFP, this is considered good practice with an expectation that the financial strategy is based on a balanced plan in the medium term (albeit based in planning assumptions)

Setting the Council's revenue and capital budgets for the forthcoming year will be incredibly challenging due to the fiscal environment with the government's stated objective to adhere to limit the annual budget deficit (borrowing) and for overall debt both to be falling as percentage of GDP. These fiscal targets are likely to restrict the scope for increased central government funding for local government. The current year's budget was balanced through a significant level of planned savings, income and one-off use of reserves/capital receipts. Delivery of these savings is crucial to delivering a balanced outturn without further draw down from reserves. A similar scenario is predicted for 2025-26 and subsequent years with forecast spending growth exceeding the likely funding requiring further significant annual recurring savings and income to balance the budget. The scope for savings of the required magnitude is increasingly limited unless the statutory obligations are changed...

What is meant by 'balanced' is not defined in law and relies on the professional judgement of the Chief Financial Officer to ensure that the budget is robust and sustainable. A prudent definition of a balanced budget would be a financial plan based on sound assumptions which shows how planned spending and income equals the available funding for the forthcoming year. Plans can take into account deliverable cost savings and/or local income growth strategies as well as useable reserves.

The previous government had confirmed that the Statutory Override for the Dedicated Schools Grant deficits was extended for a further 3 years from 2023-24 to 2025-26. It is unclear at this stage whether the new government will provide a further extension. Under the Safety Valve agreement the Council has made budget provision for its contribution for 2024-25 and subsequent years in the MTFP for the duration of the agreement which together with planned actions to reduce the annual deficit and DfE contributions would see the accumulated DSG deficit cleared by 2027-28.

While there is no legal definition of a balanced budget, legislation does provide a description to illustrate when a budget is considered not to balance:

- where the increased uncertainty leads to budget overspends of a level which reduce reserves to unacceptably low levels, or
- where an authority demonstrates the characteristics of an insolvent organisation, such as an inability to pay creditors.

To avoid the risk of an unbalanced budget the Council has to be financially resilient. Good financial management is fundamental in establishing confidence in the budget and ensuring that savings plans are achievable, and the finances can withstand unexpected shocks.

The draft budget continues to include an assessment of financial risks. The 2025-26 budget also includes a new assessment of the financial resilience of the Council based on

latest CIPFA guidance on building financial resilience. Both of these measures show that the Council has some way to go to improve its financial resilience.

D) Equalities Considerations

The Equality Act 2010 requires the Council, in the exercise of its functions to have due regard to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, advance equality of opportunity and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

To help meet its duty under the Equality Act the council undertakes equality impact assessments to analyse a proposed change to assess whether it has a disproportionate impact on persons who share a protected characteristic. As part of our budget setting process an equality impact assessment screening will be completed for each savings proposal to determine which proposals will require a full equality impact analysis (with mitigating actions set out against any equality risks) prior to a decision to implement being made.

The amounts for some savings can only be confirmed following consultation and completion of an equalities impact assessment. Consequently, amounts are only planned at the time the budget is approved and can change. Any changes will be reported through the in-year budget monitoring reports which will include separate and specific consideration of delivery of savings plans.

E) Treasury Management Strategy

The Treasury Management Strategy Statement will be included as an appendix to the report for approval by full Council in accordance with the CIPFA Treasury Management Code of Practice. The Statement sets out the proposed strategy with regard to borrowing, the investment of cash balances and the associated monitoring arrangements.

The prudential indicators set out in the Treasury Management Strategy and Capital Strategy will be based on the first three years of the 10 year Capital Programme.

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Summary of Budget Consultation

The Council's 2025-26 budget public consultation ran from 13th June to 7th August 2024. It was hosted on the Council's Let's talk Kent website and can still be viewed via this link <https://letstalk.kent.gov.uk/budget-consultation-2025-26>.

In total, 2,389 people responded to the questionnaire, which is 8.8% lower than the response rate to last year's budget consultation. Responses were received from Kent residents, KCC staff, and a range of local businesses and organisations. 30% of respondents found out about the consultation via Facebook, and 25% via an email from Let's talk Kent or the Council's engagement and consultation team.

A supporting document was provided, which set out the background to the consultation including: key facts about Kent; KCC's strategic priorities; the financial challenges the council has had to address in recent years including areas of significant spending growth in particular in providing services for the most vulnerable residents; an overview of how the Council plans to spend the 2024-25 budget and how we are funded; and the 2025-26 financial challenge. The document included information on the council tax referendum principles, the assumed increases for 2025-26, and the impact on council tax bills. The document sets out the financial outlook for the forthcoming year and that difficult decisions will be needed to balance significant forecast spending increases with the forecast resources from council tax and central government settlement.

The consultation sought views on council tax proposals for both general council tax and the adult social care levy, and asked respondents to indicate their level of support for increases in line with, above (for general council tax only), or below the referendum level, or whether they are opposed to an increase. The consultation sought views on how services should be prioritised and savings should be made, by asking for levels of comfortableness with making spending reductions across the Council's different service areas, as well as which of these service areas to prioritise if there was only £1 of investment left to make. The consultation also sought views on some specific approaches to saving the Council money or generating more income and asked for any other suggestions on ways to make savings or increase income.

A detailed report setting out the responses received from the public consultation is included as a background document to this report along with feedback from engagement with VCSE sector. An exercise with KCC management cohort is reported separately from the public consultation.

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Summary of Administration's Draft Budget Proposals

The administration's initial draft budget proposals are subject to Cabinet Committee scrutiny process in November. The estimates in the draft budget at this stage are early forecasts which can, and in all likelihood will, change in the final draft budget. This includes the estimates for local government finance settlement and local taxation the details of which had not been announced in time for the initial publication.

Following the scrutiny process the administration's final draft budget for approval will be considered by Cabinet on 30th January 2025 and by full County Council on 13th February 2025. As required by the Council's Constitution and Financial Regulations, the final draft budget for County Council approval will be proposed by the Leader and published in a format recommended by the Corporate Director, Finance and agreed by the Leader.

The draft proposed ten-year capital spending plans for 2025-35 are being updated to reflect the recent monitoring position and are currently work in progress. The updated plans will also include the changes as detailed below, with the comprehensive refresh scheduled to be published in January:

- Roll overs from the 2023-24 outturn position,
- Addition of two fully funded bids: Ebbsfleet Development Corporation Landscaping and Manston to Haine Link Road,
- Addition of the invest to save proposal - Project Athena,
- To include pressures identified on Essella Road Rail Bridge and Tunnels

The presentation of the administration's draft revenue budget focuses on the key policy and strategic implications of the proposals, with much greater emphasis on the choices within each portfolio presented to the relevant Cabinet Committee for scrutiny. These choices are set out in the body of the report for each cabinet committee. In response to comments expressed by members the additional spending/savings/income have been put into context of the current budget. The full details of individual proposals can be examined through the member dashboard which is published alongside the reports. The dashboard provides a much more flexible tool to scrutinise proposals and includes a number of enhancements from last year (again including contextual budgets where there are choices) although until this process becomes fully embedded there will still be some variations in quality of information within the individual entries some fields.

The same high level overall council three-year plan is presented as an appendix for each committee. A separate appendix shows the individual elements for 2025-26 for the relevant directorate and Cabinet portfolios using the same spending and saving categories as the high level plan. The definitions for these categories are set out later in this appendix. The high level three-year plan shows KCC core funded and externally funded spending saving/income separately and individual directorate/portfolio appendix for 2025-26 shows just core funded.

It is not feasible or appropriate to produce a key service presentation in the initial draft budget for scrutiny as the scrutiny process needs to focus on the proposed changes from the approved budgets for 2024-25 before more detailed delivery plans are completed and these plans will inform the key service budgets for 2025-26.

Additional proposed spending growth includes the impact of decisions and activities already being delivered in the current year not included in the current base budget and

known future contractual obligations. It also includes forecasts for future cost or activity changes for the forthcoming year, or changes in Council policy. These are set out in fuller detail in dashboards including an explanation of the reasons for the change, key impacts and risks, dependencies and sensitivities.

The savings and income options in the tables in the reports and dashboards follow a similar pattern with amounts for the full year effect of 2024-25 plans; new savings and income for 2025-26 from the original 2024-27 MTFP (albeit updated); savings/income from the application of existing policies; new savings/income that do not require any changes in policy; and those that require policy changes presented as policy savings, efficiency/transformation savings, income or financing savings. Given the scale of the savings, enhanced detailed delivery plans will be required and monitored.

The table below sets out the high-level equation for changes in forecast spending for 2025-26 (growth, savings, income and net contributions to reserves) compared to forecast changes in funding. This shows the net balance still to be resolved of £11.4m, which includes the £8.65m ASC challenge from irrecoverable savings and small £2.8m remaining balance which is considered acceptable within tolerances at this stage.

Table – Net Change in Spending and Funding

Change in Net Spending	Core Funded	External Funded	Change in Net Funding	Core Funded
Change in forecast spending	+£117.2m	+12.6m	Estimated change in Social Care grants	-£5.3m
Proposed savings from spending reductions and future cost avoidance	-£34.5m	-£0.1m	Estimated change in other government grants	+£4.7m
Proposed changes in income	-£7.1m	-	Estimated change in council tax base	+£16.0m
Assumed changes in specific government grants	-	+£7.4m	Assumed increase in general council tax charge	+£28.5m
Base transfer between core and external	-£0.8m	+£0.8m	Assumed increase in ASC council tax charge	+£19.0m
Proposed net change in reserves	+£4.1m	-£20.8m	Estimated change in retained business rates	+£2.7m
			Estimated change in CT & BR collection fund balances	+£1.8m
Sub Total - Total Change in Net Spending	+£78.9m	£0m	Sub Total – Total Change in Net Funding	+£67.5m
Balance to be resolved including ASC challenge	-£11.4m	-		
Total Change in Net Spending	+£67.5m	£0m	Total Change in Net Funding	+£67.5m

Pressures arising from Special Education Needs & Disabilities (SEND) impact upon both the Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) and the General Fund. Pressures on DSG are addressed primarily by the Safety Valve mechanism, whereby Department for Education (up to £140m) and local authority (up to £82.3m) both provide a substantial contribution to resolve the accumulated deficit in return for improvements to the SEND system to bring annual recurring spending back to within the level of DSG high needs grant. Pressures on the General Fund are reflected primarily on the number of requests to assess, produce

and then annually review Education & Health Care Plans (EHCP) and the associated increased SEND home to school transport costs. There is already substantial work being undertaken to manage down this financial pressure and additional work will focus on identifying and reviewing changes to existing policy and practice so that we are meeting statutory minimum requirements, but ceasing discretionary services where they are not cost effective and only issuing EHCPs where they are necessary, and needs cannot be met by other means.

The additional assumed core funded spending growth (i.e. excluding the changes arising from external funding) of £117.2m for 2025-26 is set out in detail in the member dashboard and where there are local choices or a mixture of choice and unavoidable detailed in the tables in individual reports. It has been subdivided into the following categories:

Net base budget changes £11.2m	Changes to reflect full year effect of cost and activity spending variations in the current year's monitoring forecast compared to approved budget. These adjustments are necessary to ensure the draft budget is based on a robust and sustainable basis. The net base changes include both increases and reductions. The net base changes do not include variations on savings delivery as these are included as positive amounts within the savings section.
Demand and Cost drivers £71.2m	Forecast estimates for future non-inflationary cost and demand increases such as increased population & eligible clients, additional care hours, increased costs for new placements (complexity and availability of placements), increased journey lengths and vehicle occupancy, etc. across a range of services most significantly in adult social care, integrated children's services, home to school transport and waste tonnage.
Price uplifts £34.0m	Obligatory and negotiated price increases on contracted services, including full year effect of planned mid-year uplifts in current year, forecast future price uplifts. Also includes provision for price uplifts on contracts due for retender.
Pay £12.1m	Additional net cost of assumed Kent Scheme pay award that is subject to local bargaining with the recognised trade unions, transition to new Kent pay structure and increase to lower pay scales in line with Foundation Living Wage after savings from appointing new staff lower in pay ranges.
Service Strategies & Improvements £4.2m	Other assumed spending increases to deliver strategic priorities and/or service improvements and outcomes including most significantly replacing grant funding that has temporarily supported maintaining bus services, investment leading to increased divided from trading companies, mobilisation costs for new contracts
Government & Legislative -£15.5m	Additional spending to meet compliance with legislative and regulatory changes and, most significantly, a change in accounting treatment for the local authority contribution to High Needs Safety Valve which needs to be treated as contribution to reserve rather than revenue spending pressure.

The proposed savings, income and future cost increase avoidance of £41.6m for 2025-26 is set out in detail in the member dashboard and where there are local policy choices or transformation detailed in the tables in individual reports. It has been subdivided into the following categories:

Policy Savings -£8.1m	Comprises of £16.0m of new savings including £5.7m policy choices towards the £19.8m requirement to replace one off savings and £10.3m from full year effect of previous policy choices or policy choices which were already identified for 2025-26 in the original 2024-27 plan. New savings are partially offset by £7.9m realignment to reflect of previous savings now deemed unachievable.
Transformation Savings -£36.9m	Savings aimed at achieving improved or the same outcomes at less cost comprising £43.6m of new, or continuing, proposals and £6.7m partially offset from removing unachieved savings from previous years (part of the £8.65m irrecoverable ASCH savings from 2024-25, with the remainder being shown as reversals in policy and efficiency savings). The new proposals include the 2025-26 target for ASCH to contain spending growth within the available share of specific and general funding available. New proposals also include £10.3m transformation from cost avoidance on home to school transport, and £2.1m staffing through the Securing Kent's Future (SKF) objectives.
Efficiency Savings +£1.4m	Comprises £2.8m of proposals which are more than offset by £4.2m realignment for unachieved savings from previous years. This includes rephasing of savings previously identified for 2025-26 in the original 2024-25 budget plan, full year effect of 2024-25 savings and new proposals for 2025-26.
Financing +£9.0m	Comprises £1.5m of savings from the review of amounts set aside for debt repayment (MRP) and reduced base budget. These are more than offset by £7.7m removal of one-off use of capital receipts to support the costs of transformation activity in 2024-25 and £2.8m reduction in investment returns
Income Generation -£7.1m	Comprises £10m increased income from fees and charges for council services from applying existing policies on fee uplifts (including contributions from other bodies), application of full cost recovery policy and new income generation proposals. Partially offset by £2.9m reversal of one-off additional divided income in 2024-25 and removal of project grant income.

APPENDIX E - High Level 2025-28 Revenue Plan and Financing

2024-25				2025-26			INDICATIVE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES					
Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s		Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s
			Original base budget	1,429,506.8	0.0	1,429,506.8	1,496,958.2	0.0	1,496,958.2	1,566,679.1	0.0	1,566,679.1
			internal base adjustments	-836.6	836.6	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
1,315,610.6		1,315,610.6	Revised Base	1,428,670.2	836.6	1,429,506.8	1,496,958.2	0.0	1,496,958.2	1,566,679.1	0.0	1,566,679.1
			SPENDING									
31,721.5		31,721.5	Base Budget Changes	11,242.8	-744.1	10,498.7	-100.0	0.0	-100.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
35.0		35.0	Reduction in Grant Funding	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
10,798.4	505.1	11,303.5	Pay	12,112.5	626.9	12,739.4	12,340.2	0.0	12,340.2	11,901.7	0.0	11,901.7
49,568.4	1,695.6	51,264.0	Prices	33,987.2	1,944.4	35,931.6	28,618.5	0.0	28,618.5	21,216.2	0.0	21,216.2
85,349.7	284.7	85,634.4	Demand & Cost Drivers - Cost	48,209.4	0.0	48,209.4	46,631.1	0.0	46,631.1	46,631.1	0.0	46,631.1
		0.0	Demand & Cost Drivers - Demand	22,983.5	24,150.3	47,133.8	23,014.5	-15,600.0	7,414.5	22,968.7	-14,200.0	8,768.7
16,393.1	-10,327.3	6,065.8	Government & Legislative	-15,548.0	-13,687.9	-29,235.9	192.0	0.0	192.0	3,212.0	-1,898.1	1,313.9
15,712.2	-1,538.8	14,173.4	Service Strategies & Improvements	4,217.4	269.2	4,486.6	7,187.4	-836.5	6,350.9	173.9	-4,142.2	-3,968.3
209,578.3	-9,380.7	200,197.6	TOTAL SPENDING	117,204.8	12,558.8	129,763.6	117,883.7	-16,436.5	101,447.2	106,103.6	-20,240.3	85,863.3
			MEMORANDUM:									
			Unavoidable	20,004.6	887.6	20,892.2						
			Local Choice	2,612.9	423.8	3,036.7						
			Mixture of both	95,311.1	26,273.4	121,584.5						
			Removal of temporary changes	-723.8	-15,026.0	-15,749.8						
				117,204.8	12,558.8	129,763.6						
			SAVINGS, INCOME & GRANT									
-36,454.8		-36,454.8	Transformation - Future Cost Increase Avoidance	-32,375.9	0.0	-32,375.9	-10,788.7	0.0	-10,788.7	-10,300.0	0.0	-10,300.0
2,068.7		2,068.7	Transformation - Service Transformation	-4,500.0	0.0	-4,500.0	-1,900.0	0.0	-1,900.0	-400.0	0.0	-400.0
-16,195.0		-16,195.0	Efficiency	1,412.0	-65.0	1,347.0	-3,963.5	0.0	-3,963.5	-151.0	0.0	-151.0
-15,406.6	-281.3	-15,687.9	Income	-7,097.1	0.0	-7,097.1	-5,870.6	0.0	-5,870.6	-6,052.8	0.0	-6,052.8
-10,967.6		-10,967.6	Financing	9,022.0	0.0	9,022.0	-767.7	0.0	-767.7	-2,166.3	0.0	-2,166.3
-11,910.2	-9.2	-11,919.4	Policy	-8,094.1	0.0	-8,094.1	-17,078.1	0.0	-17,078.1	-9,586.0	0.0	-9,586.0
-88,865.5	-290.5	-89,156.0	TOTAL SAVINGS & INCOME	-41,633.1	-65.0	-41,698.1	-40,368.6	0.0	-40,368.6	-28,656.1	0.0	-28,656.1
	7,210.7	7,210.7	Increases in Grants and Contributions	0.0	7,435.8	7,435.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-8,729.7	-8,729.7
-88,865.5	6,920.2	-81,945.3	TOTAL SAVINGS, INCOME & GRANT	-41,633.1	7,370.8	-34,262.3	-40,368.6	0.0	-40,368.6	-28,656.1	-8,729.7	-37,385.8

2024-25				2025-26			INDICATIVE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES					
Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s		Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	2026-27			2027-28		
						Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	
RESERVES												
27,481.5		27,481.5	Contributions to Reserves	30,040.9	14,200.0	44,240.9	38,695.2	14,200.0	52,895.2	33,900.0	34,300.0	68,200.0
-24,739.6		-24,739.6	Removal of prior year Contributions	-26,524.8	-10,640.0	-37,164.8	-30,040.9	-14,200.0	-44,240.9	-38,695.2	-14,200.0	-52,895.2
-14,877.4	-1,350.5	-16,227.9	Drawdowns from Reserves	-14,255.2	-25,598.1	-39,853.3	0.0	-9,161.6	-9,161.6	0.0	-291.6	-291.6
5,318.9	3,811.0	9,129.9	Removal of prior year Drawdowns	14,877.4	1,271.9	16,149.3	14,255.2	25,598.1	39,853.3	0.0	9,161.6	9,161.6
-6,816.6	2,460.5	-4,356.1	TOTAL RESERVES	4,138.3	-20,766.2	-16,627.9	22,909.5	16,436.5	39,346.0	-4,795.2	28,970.0	24,174.8
113,896.2	0.0	113,896.2	NET CHANGE	79,710.0	-836.6	78,873.4	100,424.6	0.0	100,424.6	72,652.3	0.0	72,652.3
			UNRESOLVED BALANCE	-2,771.5	0.0	-2,771.5	-13,503.7	0.0	-13,503.7	16,566.3	0.0	16,566.3
			ADULT SOCIAL CARE FUNDING UNRESOLVED BALANCE	-8,650.5		-8,650.5	-17,200.0		-17,200.0	-15,300.0		-15,300.0
1,429,506.8	0.0	1,429,506.8	NET BUDGET	1,496,958.2	0.0	1,496,958.2	1,566,679.1	0.0	1,566,679.1	1,640,597.7	0.0	1,640,597.7
MEMORANDUM:												
The net impact on our reserves balances is:												
27,481.5	0.0	27,481.5	Contributions to Reserves	30,040.9	14,200.0	44,240.9	38,695.2	14,200.0	52,895.2	33,900.0	34,300.0	68,200.0
-14,877.4	-1,350.5	-16,227.9	Drawdowns from Reserves	-14,255.2	-25,598.1	-39,853.3	0.0	-9,161.6	-9,161.6	0.0	-291.6	-291.6
12,604.1	-1,350.5	11,253.6	Net movement in Reserves	15,785.7	-11,398.1	4,387.6	38,695.2	5,038.4	43,733.6	33,900.0	34,008.4	67,908.4

2024-25			2025-26			INDICATIVE FOR PLANNING PURPOSES					
Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s
Funding per the Local Government Finance Settlement & Local Taxation											
	11,806.0				12,195.6			12,390.8			12,564.2
	117,046.1				117,046.1			117,046.1			117,046.1
	26,969.4				21,703.9			21,703.9			21,703.9
	11,686.6				11,686.6			11,686.6			11,686.6
	1,311.9				1,311.9			1,311.9			1,311.9
	147,382.5				152,092.1			154,308.4			156,468.7
	50,014.7				50,014.7			50,014.7			50,014.7
	51,080.2				52,712.5			53,480.6			54,229.4
	2,058.5				0.0			0.0			0.0
	3,544.6				3,544.6			3,544.6			3,544.6
	65,740.7				68,463.6			69,392.1			70,297.0
	2,682.8				0.0			0.0			0.0
	800,320.3				842,537.0			885,560.8			931,219.7
	135,347.0				156,649.6			179,238.6			203,510.9
	2,515.5				7,000.0			7,000.0			7,000.0
	1,429,506.8	Total Funding			1,496,958.2			1,566,679.1			1,640,597.7

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APPENDIX F - GET DIRECTORATE (CORE ONLY)

PROPOSED 2025-26 BUDGET CHANGES BY CABINET MEMBER

	GET	Environment & Transport			Growth, Economic Development & Communities		
		Neil Baker	Robert Thomas	TOTAL	Clair Bell	Derek Murphy	TOTAL
	Core £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s
Original base budget	201,737.2						
internal base adjustments	-404.8						
Revised Base	201,332.4						
SPENDING							
Base Budget Changes	4,899.3	2,684.5	2,253.6	4,938.1	-38.8	0.0	-38.8
Pay	-122.6	-96.6	-15.4	-112.0	-10.6	0.0	-10.6
Prices	5,709.0	2,501.7	2,956.2	5,457.9	251.1	0.0	251.1
Demand & Cost Drivers - Cost	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Demand & Cost Drivers - Demand	1,057.0	27.5	1,079.5	1,107.0	0.0	-50.0	-50.0
Government & Legislative	-488.0	-500.0	0.0	-500.0	12.0	0.0	12.0
Service Strategies & Improvements	2,302.0	1,852.0	500.0	2,352.0	0.0	-50.0	-50.0
TOTAL SPENDING	13,356.7	6,469.1	6,773.9	13,243.0	213.7	-100.0	113.7
<i>MEMORANDUM:</i>							
<i>Unavoidable</i>	<i>12,436.5</i>	<i>5,324.5</i>	<i>6,789.3</i>	<i>12,113.8</i>	<i>322.7</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>322.7</i>
<i>Local Choice</i>	<i>1,822.0</i>	<i>1,867.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>1,867.0</i>	<i>-45.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>-45.0</i>
<i>Mixture of both</i>	<i>900.7</i>	<i>900.7</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>900.7</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>	<i>0.0</i>
<i>Removal of temporary changes</i>	<i>-1,802.5</i>	<i>-1,623.1</i>	<i>-15.4</i>	<i>-1,638.5</i>	<i>-64.0</i>	<i>-100.0</i>	<i>-164.0</i>
	13,356.7	6,469.1	6,773.9	13,243.0	213.7	-100.0	113.7
SAVINGS, INCOME & GRANT							
Transformation - Future Cost Increase Avoidance	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Transformation - Service Transformation	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Efficiency	450.0	0.0	450.0	450.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Income	-2,275.0	-1,576.7	-120.0	-1,696.7	-578.3	0.0	-578.3
Financing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Policy	452.5	0.0	500.0	500.0	38.0	-85.5	-47.5
TOTAL SAVINGS & INCOME	-1,372.5	-1,576.7	830.0	-746.7	-540.3	-85.5	-625.8
Increases in Grants and Contributions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL SAVINGS, INCOME & GRANT	-1,372.5	-1,576.7	830.0	-746.7	-540.3	-85.5	-625.8
RESERVES							
Contributions to Reserves	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Removal of prior year Contributions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Drawdowns from Reserves	-160.0	-160.0	0.0	-160.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Removal of prior year Drawdowns	475.0	475.0	0.0	475.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL RESERVES	315.0	315.0	0.0	315.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
NET CHANGE	12,299.2	5,207.4	7,603.9	12,811.3	-326.6	-185.5	-512.1
PROPOSED NET BUDGET	213,631.6						

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APPENDIX G - SPENDING & SAVINGS PROPOSALS REQUIRING A DECISION - GET DIRECTORATE (CORE ONLY)

Directorate Reference	Cabinet Member	Headline description of spending increase	Brief description of spending increase	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	MTFP Category	Base budget for context (£k) *			what is budget figure based on
				£k	£k	£k		Gross	Income	Net	
2025-26 LOCAL CHOICE SPENDING PROPOSALS											
Continuation of previously BSIP+ funded routes	Neil Baker	Transport - Supported Bus Services	During Autumn 2023, a number of local bus operators within Kent, gave notice that they intended to withdraw their local bus services. The vast majority of these services were school focused, carrying those holding a Kent Travel Saver or were provided with a season ticket by KCC. Using BSIP+ funding, KCC was able to secure the continuation of these services, at a significant cost, but that grant funding is due to end 31/3/24 and a decision to fund or cease the routes was needed	1,867.0	1,073.0	147.0	Service Strategies & Improvements	16,619.3	-10,858.2	5,761.1	supported buses core service
TOTAL NEIL BAKER				1,867.0	1,073.0	147.0					
TOTAL LOCAL CHOICE SPENDING PROPOSALS - ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT				1,867.0	1,073.0	147.0					
Income from Trading Stds Checked service	Clair Bell	Trading Standards	Increased income from Trading Standards Checked service, previously delayed due to economic climate.	-45.0	0.0	0.0	Base Budget Changes	92.0	-115.0	-23.0	Trading Standards checked scheme cost centre (2RB44261)
TOTAL CLAIR BELL				-45.0	0.0	0.0					
TOTAL LOCAL CHOICE SPENDING PROPOSALS - GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITIES				-45.0	0.0	0.0					
TOTAL LOCAL CHOICE SPENDING PROPOSALS - GET DIRECTORATE				1,822.0	1,073.0	147.0					
2025-26 MIXTURE OF LOCAL CHOICE & UNAVOIDABLE SPENDING PROPOSALS											
Subsidised buses inflationary uplift	Neil Baker	Supported Bus Services Inflation	Provision for price inflation, which results from the re-tendering of supported bus services, which reflects increases in operating costs over the life of a contract.	421.0	432.0	445.0	Prices	16,619.3	-10,858.2	5,761.1	supported bus services core service
KTS - inflationary uplift (offset by income)	Neil Baker	Kent Travel Saver	Provision for price inflation related to the Kent Travel Saver and Kent 16+ Travel Saver which is recovered through uplifting the charge for the pass - Kent Travel Saver	479.7	479.7	479.7	Prices	15,021.7	-9,946.2	5,075.5	KTS core service
TOTAL NEIL BAKER				900.7	911.7	924.7					
TOTAL MIXTURE OF LOCAL CHOICE & UNAVOIDABLE SPENDING PROPOSALS - ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT				900.7	911.7	924.7					
TOTAL MIXTURE OF LOCAL CHOICE & UNAVOIDABLE SPENDING PROPOSALS - GET DIRECTORATE				900.7	911.7	924.7					

Directorate Reference	Cabinet Member	Headline description of spending increase	Brief description of spending increase	2025-26	2026-27	2027-28	MTFP Category	Base budget for context (£k) *			what is budget figure based on
				£k	£k	£k		Gross	Income	Net	
2025-26 POLICY & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS PROPOSALS											
HWRC Sites review	Robert Thomas	Waste - Review Household Waste & Recycling Centres (HWRCs)	Review of the number and operation of HWRC sites - removal of prior year saving following decision to pause review.	500.0	0.0	0.0	Policy	10,569.6	0.0	10,569.6	HWRC service code (7WG)
TOTAL ROBERT THOMAS				500.0	0.0	0.0					
Review of on-street parking	Neil Baker	Highways - On-street parking	Review of on-street parking, which may involve insourcing and the need to invoke a 24 month notice period if an alternative cannot be agreed with Districts (now unlikely). Current arrangement being reviewed to see if synergies may exist and cost savings to be shared by KCC and its partners. (Decision needed in 2024-25 to enable net	0.0	0.0	-100.0	Policy	0.0	0.0	0.0	New service so there is no current contextual budget
TOTAL NEIL BAKER				0.0	0.0	-100.0					
TOTAL POLICY & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS PROPOSALS - ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT				500.0	0.0	-100.0					
Review of Community Warden Service	Clair Bell	Community Wardens	Review of Community Warden Service to deliver a £1m saving which has resulted in an overall reduction in wardens This is the residual budget once pension liabilities expire	-10.0	0.0	-57.0	Policy	1,709.2	0.0	1,709.2	Wardens service code (2CB)
Trading Standards staffing review	Clair Bell	Trading Standards staffing	Reversal of previous one-off delay to recruiting food qualified officer.	48.0	0.0	0.0	Policy	4,122.8	-573.8	3,549.0	Trading Standards service code (2RB)
TOTAL CLAIR BELL				38.0	0.0	-57.0					
List A Cyclopark - Open Spaces	Derek Murphy	Regeneration & Economic Development - Cyclopark	A reduction in the KCC contribution to the operational costs of the Cyclopark sports and community facility in Gravesend. The park is owned by KCC and operated on KCC's behalf by the Cyclopark charitable trust.	-12.5	-35.0	0.0	Policy	155.6	-30.6	125.0	Open Spaces service code (8EM)
List A Produced in Kent - Rural Economy	Derek Murphy	Regeneration & Economic Development - Produced in Kent	Reduction of KCC funding to support the operational costs of Produced in Kent, the county's food & drink sector business membership organisation and promotional agency.	-58.0	0.0	0.0	Policy	108.4	0.0	108.4	PiNK project code (N756)
List A Regen & ED - Support for Business	Derek Murphy	Regeneration & Economic Development - Support for Business	Reduction in the budget for the Straits Committee whilst continuing to meet the committees commitments	-15.0	0.0	0.0	Policy	130.0	-15.0	115.0	Support for Business service code (8EJ)
TOTAL DEREK MURPHY				-85.5	-35.0	0.0					
TOTAL POLICY & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS PROPOSALS - GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT & COMMUNITIES				-47.5	-35.0	-57.0					
TOTAL POLICY & TRANSFORMATION SAVINGS PROPOSALS - GET DIRECTORATE				452.5	-35.0	-157.0					

* The contextual gross & income budget information includes both core and externally funded but the budget proposal figures focus just on core funded

Building Financial Resilience

Financial resilience describes the ability of the authority to remain viable, stable and effective in the medium to long term in the face of pressures from growing demand, tightening funding and an increasingly complex and unpredictable financial environment.

The following table sets out the key 'symptoms' of financial stress identified by CIPFA and assesses the current position of the County Council against each indicator. Overall, the prognosis is that there has been a recent deterioration in resilience which needs to be reversed in particular on the delivery of savings and managing spending within approved budgets.

Symptom	KCC Assessment
Running down reserves/a rapid decline in reserves	<p><u>Evidence</u></p> <p>The council maintained a relatively stable level of usable revenue reserves between April 2016 to March 2018 of approx. £0.2bn (excluding schools and capital reserves) with small net movements between years. This comprised general reserve of around £0.037bn (3% of net revenue) and earmarked reserves of between £0.159bn to £0.166bn</p>
Score 6/10	
Scope for Improvement - Moderate	<p>Over the period April 2018 to March 2020 usable revenue reserves increased to £0.224bn at end of 2018-19 and £0.271bn end of 2019-20, although £0.037bn of the earmarked reserves in 2019-20 was the unspent balance of first tranche of Covid-19 emergency grant (general reserves remained around £0.037bn and all the increases were in earmarked reserves).</p> <p>There was a more rapid increase in usable revenue reserves in 2020-21 (largely due to underspends during lockdown and timing differences between the receipt of Covid-19 grants and spending, and impact of business rates reliefs/compensation for local taxation losses coming through from collection authorities) Usable revenue reserves at the end of 2020-21 were £0.398bn (of which general remained £0.037bn, earmarked reserves increased to £0.272bn, and Covid-19 reserves were £0.088bn).</p> <p>There was a further increase in total usable revenue reserves at end of 2021-22 up to £0.408bn. Most of the increase was in general reserve which was increased to £0.056bn (5% of net revenue) in line with agreed strategy to strengthen reserves due to heightened risks, with smaller increase in earmarked to £0.277bn, and small reduction in Covid-19 reserves to £0.075bn.</p> <p>This pattern of stable then increasing reserves over the period 2016-22 was despite between £0.009bn and £0.022bn drawn down each year to smooth delivery of revenue budget savings (£0.074bn over 6 years).</p> <p>In 2022-23 there was an overall reduction in usable revenue reserves to £0.391bn (£0.037bn general, £0.271bn earmarked, £0.047bn Covid-19 and £0.036bn in new partnership reserve from the excess safety valve contributions). The reductions included £0.047bn draw down from general reserves and earmarked reserves to balance 2022-23 outturn.</p> <p>In 2023-24 there was a further reduction in total usable reserves to</p>

	<p>£0.358bn (£0.043bn general, £0.268bn earmarked, £0.0.10bn Covid-19 and £0.036bn Safety Valve partnership reserve). The small increase in the general reserve reflected the overall increase in 2023-24 budget to maintain the reserve as % of net revenue but did not include any movement to restore the reserve to 5% of net revenue following the draw down in 2022-23. 2023-24 included a review of reserves to ensure balances in individual categories remained appropriate. This included transfer of £0.048bn from other earmarked reserves into the smoothing category which was partially drawn on by £0.012bn to balance the 2023-24 outturn.</p> <p>Quarter 1 monitoring for 2024-25 shows further forecast overspends which if not reduced or mitigated would require a third year of draw down. This would further reduce resilience from reserves.</p> <p><u>Conclusions</u> Two successive years of drawdowns from reserves to balance overspends represents a reduction in financial resilience (with only a partial restoration of reserves included in future medium term financial plans).</p> <p>The Council’s reserves have been deemed as adequate in the short-term by S151 officer pending those restoration plans being delivered in future budgets. In particular, the general reserve needs to be restored to 5% of net revenue within the 2025-28 MTFP.</p> <p>A small amount of smoothing within the annual revenue budget to reflect timing differences between spending and savings plans is considered acceptable provided these are replaced and replenished in future years through a balanced medium term financial plan.</p>
<p>A failure to plan and deliver savings in service provision to ensure the council lives within its resources</p> <p>Score 4/10</p> <p>Scope for Improvement - High</p>	<p><u>Evidence</u> The council has planned (and largely delivered) £0.883bn of savings and income since 2011-12 (up to 2023-24). The council has delivered a balanced outturn with a small surplus each year since 2000-01 up to 2021-22 (22 years) including throughout the years when government funding was reducing and spending demands were still increasing. This demonstrated that in the past savings were sustainable.</p> <p>The approved budget for 2022-23 included £33.9m of savings and income (3% of net budget) in order to balance spending growth (£93.0m) with increase in funding from core grants and local taxation (£59.1m). Separate savings monitoring was re-introduced in 2022-23 following suspension of previous monitoring arrangements during Covid-19.</p> <p>The 2022-23 outturn was the first year in 23 years that the authority ended the year with a significant overspend (£44.4m before rollover). This overspend was partly due to under delivery of savings but more materially was due to un-forecast increases in costs compared to when the budget was set particularly in adult social care, children in care and home to school transport. These unbudgeted costs increases have been a more material factor than under delivery of savings (although if they had been forecast would have increased the savings requirement which itself may not have been deliverable).</p>

The approved budget for 2023-24 included £54.8m of savings and income (4.6% of net budget) to balance spending growth (£178.9m) and increase in funding (£124.1m). The higher spending growth included the full year effect of forecast overspend in 2022-23 and the impact of the rapid increase in inflation during 2022-23.

The 2023-24 outturn showed an overspend of £9.6m before rollover. This was significantly lower than had been forecast earlier in the year following agreement of revised strategic ambitions in Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy. These ambitions included reducing the 2023-24 overspend, focuses on ambitions for new models of care (addressing the unsustainable increases in sending in adults, children's and home to school transport), scope of the council's strategic ambitions and transforming the operating model of the council through Chief Executive model. Stringent spending controls were introduced in 2023-24 with the objective of reducing the overspend. As in 2023-24 the overspend arose from a combination of unbudgeted costs and under delivery/rephasing of savings.

The approved budget for 2024-25 includes £89.2m of savings and income (6.8% of net budget) to balance spending growth (£203.1m) and increased funding (£113.9m). The increased spending growth included revised approach to demand and cost drivers as well price uplifts (linked to inflation) and full year effect of 2023-24. Initial monitoring for 2024-25 shows further forecast underspends again from combination of unbudgeted spend and savings delivery. Under delivery of savings is now largest contributor to forecast overspends.

Savings planning and monitoring has been enhanced with greater emphasis on more detailed monitoring of progress on the most significant savings. Enhanced monitoring will not in itself ensure improved delivery performance, especially in the short-term.

Conclusions

The significant increase in the savings requirement over the last 3 years is cause for serious concern and is unsustainable. This savings requirement is driven by ever increasing gap between forecast spending growth and increase in available resources from core government grants and local taxation. This gap needs to be resolved either from reducing spending expectations and / or increased funding if resilience is to be improved.

The increased under delivery of savings indicates a lack of capacity within the organisation and that savings are put forward with over optimistic timescales (or inadequate resources to ensure delivery) and in some instances were not sustainable. This combination is weakening financial resilience.

As identified in Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy addressing these unsustainable growth increases that are leading to structural deficit are key to restoring financial resilience.

<p>Shortening medium term financial planning horizons perhaps from three or four years to two or even one</p> <p>Score 7/10</p> <p>Scope for Improvement - Moderate</p>	<p><u>Evidence</u></p> <p>The council has traditionally produced a three year medium term financial plan (MTFP). This plan sets out forecast resources from central government and local taxation with spending forecasts balanced by savings, income generation and use of smoothing reserves.</p> <p>Generally funding forecasts have been robust (other than in 2016-17 when changes in the distribution of core grants were made with no prior consultation or notification) and tax yields have remained buoyant (other than a dip in 2021-22 due to delays in housebuilding, earnings losses leading to higher council tax reduction discounts and collection losses during Covid-19 lockdowns).</p> <p>Spending forecasts for later years of the plan have tended to be underestimated (albeit compensated through the inclusion of “emerging issues” contingency based on experience and risk assessment).</p> <p>Up until 2017 the three-year MTFP was a separate publication from the annual budget (albeit produced alongside the annual budget). Since 2018 the plan has been produced as a single slimmed down document within a single publication with the annual budget.</p> <p>A one-year plan was published in 2020-21 recognising the one-year settlement and the absence of spending plans following the December 2019 general election. The further one-year settlement for 2021-22 also impacted on the ability to produce a full three-year plan although a number of medium-term scenarios were set out based on the trajectory of the pandemic (similar to the trajectories used by Office for Budget Responsibility).</p> <p>High-level three year plans were produced in 2022-23, 2023-24 and 2024-25 although experience has proved that these have been less robust and susceptible to the un-forecast spending trends experienced in these years. Funding forecasts have continued to be speculative in the absence of multi-year settlements. Council tax base estimates have proved to be extremely reliable although business rates have been more volatile.</p> <p><u>Conclusions</u></p> <p>Medium term plans are still considered to be reasonable even if for forecasts for the later years are less reliable, as a broad indicator of direction of travel rather than a detailed plan. Plans should be less speculative if multi-year settlements are re-introduced.</p> <p>Draft budget proposals need to be made available for scrutiny and savings planning earlier (even if these have to be based on less up to date forecasts). The preplanning of savings needs to recognise lead-in times of 6 to 9 months from initial concept to final approval.</p> <p>Medium term plans will need to consider alternative potential scenarios for future plans reflecting the volatile and uncertain circumstances.</p>
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<p>A lack of firm objectives for savings – greater “still to be found” gaps in savings plans</p> <p>Score 5/10</p> <p>Scope for Improvement – Good</p>	<p>It has been common that in later years of the plan there have been balancing “savings still to be found” and those savings that were identified have often lacked detailed plans, especially in later years and plans were held and maintained locally within directorates and services.</p> <p>Even where plans are detailed there have been evidence that some savings have subsequently not been implemented following further scrutiny. Greater emphasis needs to be placed on identifying consequences, risks, sensitivities, opportunities and actions in the early planning stages before plans are presented for scrutiny.</p> <p><u>Conclusions</u> Changes have been introduced to maintain a comprehensive central database of all savings plans over the three years which contain information about impacts, risks, dependencies, sensitivities as well as forecast financials, timescales and staffing. This database is backed up with detailed delivery plans.</p>
<p>A growing tendency for directorates to have unplanned overspends and/or carry forward undelivered savings into the following year</p> <p>Score 4/10</p> <p>Scope for Improvement - High</p>	<p><u>Evidence</u></p> <p>The Covid-19 pandemic had a significant impact on budgets in 2020-21 with savings undeliverable in the immediate aftermath albeit offset by significant underspends due to impact of lockdowns.</p> <p>2021-22 budget was delivered although there were early signs of underlying unbudgeted growth trends which were largely disguised by ongoing Covid-19 impacts and availability of additional Covid 19 grants.</p> <p>Significant and material overspends were reported in 2022-23. These had been partly anticipated and mitigated through the creation of a budget risk reserve and strengthening of general reserves in 2021-22, and the transfer of insecure funding into reserves in 2022-23 budget. The enhanced risks following the Russian invasion of Ukraine after 2022-23 budget had been set were reported to Cabinet on 31st March together with further strengthening of reserves from final local government finance settlement and final notification of retained share of business rates.</p> <p>The full consequences of global and national circumstances in 2022-23 could never have been fully foreseen when the budget was set, and it was acknowledged that reserves were only adequate and not as generous as other comparable councils. Initially work in 2022-23 focussed on verifying the forecasts rather than immediate remedial action on the basis that these were expected to be short-term temporary consequences.</p> <p>The 2023-24 budget included unprecedented levels of growth including the full year impact of 2022-23 overspends, historically high levels of inflation and other cost driver growth as best could be forecast at the time. This still proved insufficient and further unplanned overspends were reported in 2023-24 due to a combination of unbudgeted growth and under delivery of savings.</p> <p>“Securing Kent’s Future – Budget Recovery Strategy” was agreed in October 2023. This strategy includes immediate actions with the objective of bringing spending into balance in 2023-24 through spending reductions across the whole council for the remainder of the year and actions</p>

expected to have impacts in 2024-25 and over the medium term to reduce the structural deficits in the areas of overspend. The plan recognises it may take time to reduce spending in key areas in adults and children's and thus further savings from contracts coming up for renewal and other areas of activity outside adults and children's in the interim.

SKF and the imposition of spending controls on uncommitted spending resulted in a reduction in the overspend by year end 2023-24 although within this there were still significant overspends in Adult Social Care and Children and Young People due to combination of unbudgeted growth and under delivery of savings.

Early forecasts for 2024-25 identify overspends in Adult Social Care and Growth Environment and Transport Directorates. Again these arise from a combination of unbudgeted growth and increasingly under delivery or rephasing of savings. Some savings included in the budget have subsequently been challenged and not agreed following publication of detailed options (including withdrawing consultation. Budget plans did not include alternative mitigations or any contingency to allow for variations from the original plan.

Conclusions

Failure to deliver to budgets is becoming a significant concern. Failure to deliver budget has multiple impacts in that it either requires "right-sizing" in future budgets (increasing spending growth), roll forward of savings (increasing the in-year savings requirement in future years to an extent that there may be inadequate capacity) and is a drain on reserves.

Table: Usable Revenue Reserves Balances

	ACTUALS								
	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
General	-36,404	-36,671	-36,903	-37,054	-37,183	-37,075	-56,188	-36,918	-43,030
Earmarked*	-163,914	-159,357	-155,319	-180,424	-190,656	-261,165	-259,933	-254,219	-251,339
Covid	0	0	0	0	-37,307	-88,209	-75,122	-47,100	-10,000
Public Health	-1,988	-3,825	-3,634	-6,036	-5,877	-11,126	-16,817	-16,899	-16,984
Safety Valve	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	-36,263	-36,263
Totals	-202,306	-199,852	-195,856	-223,514	-271,023	-397,575	-408,060	-391,398	-357,616

From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities
Cabinet Committee – 6 November 2024

Subject: Introduction of the National Medical Examiner Process - impact on Kent Coroners and Registration services

Key/non-key decision – this report is for information

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary: Dame Janet Smith's Inquiry into the murders by Harold Shipman was announced on the 1st February 2000, the first report was published on the 19th July 2002. The sixth, and final, version of the report was published on the 27th January 2005

The inquiry identified weaknesses in the system of Death certification in the UK, principally because a single doctor could certify a death as being to natural causes, without challenge. Her report pointed out that this weakness had first been identified in the report of a parliamentary select committee in 1893 but over a century later it had still not been corrected.

The implementation of the statutory Medical Examiner system, and the related rationalisation and reform of the death certification system, took effect on 9 September 2024. The reforms have an impact on coroners' responsibilities and ways of working and the way in which information flows through the death registration process. These changes represent the greatest change to the Coroner Service for 50 years.

The principle underlying the reformed system is that, where a death is natural and did not occur in custody or state detention, scrutiny should be provided by the Medical Examiner. Where the death is violent or unnatural, where the cause of death is unknown or where the death occurred in custody or state detention, scrutiny continues to be provided by the coroner. There is therefore a clear delineation between medical and judicial certification of death.

The process has taken some years to refine, to complete Pilots and explore their outcomes, carry out impact assessments, including financial, apply scrutiny and make necessary adjustments.

Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to

- (i) note the changes in relation to the death management pathway and the impacts on the Coroner and Registration Services; and
- (ii) comment upon the suggestion to link the Coroner Service KPI to the Chief Coroner guidance in relation to inquest timescales.

1. Introduction

1.1 Legislation

1.2 The underpinning primary legislation is the [Coroners and Justice Act 2009](#)

1.3 In October 2023 the Health and Care Act 2022 amended the Coroners and Justice Act to introduce the role of Medical Examiner on a non-compulsory basis. Medical Examiners are appointed by NHS bodies in England and Wales.

1.4 On 9th September this year, the three sets of regulations below, made under the Coroners and Justice Act, placed the role of Medical Examiner on a statutory footing and set out a clear pathway for certification and oversight of non-coronial investigation deaths.

- [The Medical Certificate of Cause of Death Regulations 2024](#)
- [The Medical Examiner s \(England\) Regulations 2024](#)
- [The National Medical Examiner \(Additional Functions\) Regulations 2024](#)

2 The New System - roles and functions

2.1. Medical certificate of cause of death (MCCD)

2.1.1 From the 9th of September 2024, a new MCCD will replace the existing certificate to reflect the introduction of the statutory Medical Examiner service, which will scrutinise the proposed cause of death. The intended benefits of doing so are to improve:

- efficiency in the death certification system
- mortality data for use at a local level and nationally

2.1.2 There will continue to be a statutory form to be used when a death occurs after 28 days of life, and a separate form to be used when a child dies within the first 28 days of life. The new MCCD will include details of the Attending Practitioner who certified the cause of death to the best of their knowledge and belief (as at present).

2.1.3 In addition, the new MCCD will include the following new information:

- a. details of the Medical Examiner who scrutinised the cause of death
- b. ethnicity, as self-declared by the patient on the medical record. This builds on learning from the COVID-19 pandemic. If the patient medical record does not

include this information, then the Attending Practitioner can complete it as 'unknown' on the MCCD

- c. regarding maternal deaths, there are two new questions regarding the pregnancy status of the deceased:
 - was the deceased person pregnant within the year prior to their death?
 - if the deceased person was pregnant within the year prior to their death, did the pregnancy contribute to their death?
- d. The addition of a new line for the cause of death - bringing the MCCD in line with international standards
- e. medical devices and implants will be recorded on the MCCD by the Attending Practitioner, and this will be transferred to the certificate for burial or cremation - completed by the registrar in order to inform relevant authorities of the presence of any devices or implants

2.2 Medical Practitioner

- 2.2.1 As part of the reforms introduced in September 2024, a Medical Practitioner will be eligible to be an Attending Practitioner and complete an MCCD, if they have attended the deceased in the deceased's lifetime. The Attending Practitioner will propose a cause of death, if they can do so, to the best of their knowledge and belief. The introduction of Medical Examiners will see routine independent scrutiny of the cause of death proposed by an Attending Practitioner. This represents a simplification of the current rules that enable medical practitioners to be an Attending Practitioner, to complete an MCCD, if they had attended the patient during their last illness but required referral of the case to a Coroner for review if they had not done so within the 28 days prior to death or had not seen in person the patient after death.
- 2.2.2 It is already a statutory requirement for an Attending Practitioner to complete the MCCD.
- 2.2.3 The main change is that Attending Practitioners must share the MCCD and proposed cause of death with a Medical Examiner, who will scrutinise these before submission to the registrar. This is a change to the current system where the MCCD is sent directly to the registrar by the Attending Practitioner

2.3 Medical Examiner

- 2.3.1 Under the Medical Examiners regulations, Medical Examiners: -
 - a) provide independent scrutiny of causes of death
 - b) give bereaved people an opportunity to ask questions and raise concerns with someone not involved in providing care to the deceased person prior to their death
 - c) review medical records and work with doctors to complete the MCCD to help ensure this is accurate and to highlight any concerns about the care of the deceased person prior to their death

2.3.2 Medical Examiners have been carrying out independent scrutiny of causes of death since implementation of the non-statutory Medical Examiner system. They will continue to carry out these activities in the same way in the new death certification process, but independent scrutiny by a Medical Examiner prior to the registration of all non-coronial deaths in England and Wales will become a statutory requirement.

2.3.3 Once the relevant Attending Practitioner and the Medical Examiner have completed their declarations of certification and scrutiny, and the cause of death is confirmed, the MCCD will be sent to the registrar by the Medical Examiner rather than the Attending Practitioner. The representative of the deceased will be notified at the same time that they can now contact the registrar to arrange the registration of the death.

2.3.4 In exceptional circumstances where either:

- there is no Attending Practitioner
- an Attending Practitioner is not available within a reasonable time

the death will be referred to the Senior Coroner by a referring medical practitioner (not a Medical Examiner).

In these circumstances only, where the senior coroner decides not to investigate, they will refer the case to the Medical Examiner to certify the death.

2.4 Coronial Process

2.4.1 Coroners will continue to investigate deaths where the death is violent or unnatural, where the cause of death is unknown or where the death occurred in custody or state detention.

2.4.2 While the MCCD regulations mainly provide for completion of the paperwork, in practice they reflect the flow of information between the Attending Practitioner, Medical Examiner, Coroner and Registrar in the new system.

2.4.3 There will be little change in terms of coronial interaction with the Registrar where an investigation is discontinued following a post-mortem examination, and this process will be extended to include the notification of investigations which are discontinued without a post-mortem examination. The process for the Coroner's interaction with the Registrar after inquest will be largely unchanged.

2.5 Death Registration

2.5.1 The preparation for the medical examiner service has taken place over the last year within the Registration Service, guided by the General Register Office (GRO). Using the training provided by GRO and working alongside KCC Learning and Development, training was delivered to all registrars ensuring preparedness for the implementation from the 9th September 2024.

2.5.2 Registrars will continue to have a duty to ensure all deaths that occur in their district are registered. Deaths will be registered according to the paperwork that is received, either from the Medical Examiner or from the Coroner. MCCDs can no longer be accepted directly from attending practitioners which ensures every death has been scrutinised. The causes of death are no longer checked for acceptability by the registration staff, with causes of death deemed acceptable once scrutinised by a Medical Examiner. This should reduce the time spent checking and returning paperwork that is not correct for staff to complete registration appointments.

For informants i.e. friends or family of the deceased, this should reduce the time it takes to complete the death registration process, with the paperwork being received in a timely and accurate manner from the medical examiner service. The paperwork does still require checking for completeness by registration staff.

2.5.3 The changes have provided a number of opportunities. More statistical information is gathered at the time of the registration for the Office for National Statistics. Ethnicity and pregnancy related questions as well as any medical devices and implants that the deceased may have had are now asked. There are also more categories of informants that are acceptable, these now include a partner of the deceased, if they were in an enduring relationship and a representative of the deceased, for example a solicitor.

2.5.4 The implementation of the Medical Examiner Service also provides the opportunity for the key national performance indicator to register a death within five days of date of death to be amended. The process will now within five days of the Medical Examiner signing the paperwork. This should provide the opportunity for the General Register Office key performance indicator of death registered within five days to be improved upon in Kent.

2.6 Medical referees

2.6.1 Medical Referees will remain in post while the statutory Medical Examiner system is embedded. During this transitional period, the Ministry of Justice will gather evidence to determine the long-term status of Medical Referees

2.6.2 The Medical Referee visits the crematorium to inspect all the official medical certificated documentation regarding the deceased, and if in order, they give written consent that a cremation can take place.

3. **Financial Implications**

3.1 The implementation date of the statutory Medical Examiner provision began on the 9th of September 2024, we are yet to understand what financial implications are likely, if any. As there is no quantifiable impact at this stage, there have been no legislative growth pressures included in the Medium Term Financial Plan until we have a better understanding of the situation.

- 3.2 We are ensuring that our processes are measurable so that we can quantify any impact going forward
- 3.3 For context, the annual budget of the Coroner Service is £6.89m. The service is responsible for delivery across Kent and Medway. Medway Council contribute 15% of the cost of the service.
- 3.4 In 2023, 6436 deaths were reported to The Coroner in Kent and Medway. Of those, 3369 required a postmortem examination. 1200 inquests were opened in that period.

4 Legal implications

- 4.1 The primary legislation that underpins the new statutory Medical Examiner system is the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Since its passage, the act has been amended (most recently by the Health and Care Act 2022) to reflect changes to the health system.
- 4.2 There are no additional legal implications beyond the direct changes made as set out in this report.

5 Equalities implications

- 5.1 These changes are statutory changes which do not impact on the existing EQIAs, which have been reviewed in the light of these changes.

6 Data Protection Implications

- 6.1 For the purposes of the Coroner Service, the two Senior Coroners are the data controllers. The General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) do not apply to deceased persons, but information is collected during the course of Coroner Officer enquires that relates to the living. This includes details about next of kin, for example name, address, and telephone number. Sometimes this information is shared with other organisations for the specific purposes of the Coroner's investigation, for example with the NHS for the purpose of conducting a postmortem. The contract contains a data sharing agreement that places a specific obligations on the provider to always comply with the requirements of the GDPR for the data they hold relating to next of kin. In addition, the service has published a privacy notice which explains what personal information it holds about service users, how it collects it, how it uses it and how it might share information

7 Other corporate implications

7.1 Impact of the changes, including in relation to Key Performance Indicator COR1

Whilst it is early days, from shadow implementation of the ME process, we anticipate the introduction of the statutory ME process the Coroners Service will be positive, as:

- a) a high percentage of the hospital and community referrals will come from the ME office and will include much of the information required by the Coroners.
 - b) additionally, the period of scrutiny will have occurred prior to the ME's office referring to us
 - c) if a GP can offer a cause of death and there is no need for the Coroner to investigate, the referral will not come to us
 - d) if a GP cannot offer a cause of death and the referral comes to us, the Coroner will be able to open an investigation and, if required, request a Postmortem or open an inquest as they should have all of the information required in the referral and will have no requirement for further information.
- 7.2 With the changes implemented in September, it is likely that the case type coming to the Coroner Service will alter to become more complex, with more straightforward cases being dealt with by the Medical Examiner. As such there will be a greater proportion of investigations and inquests following Postmortem.
- 7.3 As a result of these significant changes, it is unlikely that the current KPI will be an effective measure for the performance of the service. Proposals will be put forward to be included in consideration for next year's KPIs with a view to aligning the KPI with the guidance issued by the Chief Coroner in relation to the timescale within which an inquest has been heard.
- 7.4 Any delay in paperwork being received by the Registration or Coroners Service from the Medical Examiner Service could impact a customer being able to complete the death registration process. If customers are unable to register a death due to a delay, this could impact funeral arrangements, leading to customer dissatisfaction.

8 Governance

- 8.1 The process changes implemented from the 9th of September 2024 will be robustly reviewed by the Service and Senior Coroners at regular intervals to ensure that we understand risks as they arise. Communication and guidance from the Chief Coroner's office will steer further changes to ensure that governance is maintained and risks are managed.

9 Conclusions

- 9.1 Kent and Medway Coroners Service - it is likely that there will be some benefits to the residents of Kent and Medway - these are likely to result in some further changes to our current service delivery model.
- 9.2 Registration - Customers should have the reassurance that the cause of death has had an additional layer of scrutiny by another medical professional. When customers attend the registration appointment, they will be less likely to experience delay to the appointment, because any concerns over the cause of death would have already been discussed with the Medical Examiner Service. Registrars should be more confident proceeding with the registration without being required to scrutinise the cause and death and need to refer deaths to the Coroner.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to

- (i) note the changes in relation to the death management pathway and the impacts on the Coroner and Registration Services; and
- (ii) comment upon the suggestion to link the Coroner Service KPI to the Chief Coroner guidance in relation to inquest timescales.

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From: Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee 6 November 2024

Subject: 24/00092 - Kent & Medway Skills Bootcamps Programme

Key decision Required as programme is Kent-wide

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: for Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All

Summary: This report provides an update on a recent Kent County Council bid to the Department for Education (DfE) for a local, sector-focused 'Skills Bootcamps' programme for the 25-26 financial year to support local employers and the Kent & Medway workforce.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee is asked, , to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development (subject to receiving confirmation of funding from the DfE) agree to:

- (i) APPROVE the acceptance of the National Skills Fund Grant, subject to final review and consideration of detailed terms and conditions from the Department of Education, for delivery of the Skills Bootcamps Programme for Kent & Medway.
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, to review and agree to the required terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant arrangements.
- (iii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision to deliver a Skills Bootcamp Programme for Kent and Medway as shown at Appendix A.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Department for Education (DfE) is supporting a National Skills Fund to help businesses find and hire the workers they need; as well as supporting adults to

flourish and fulfil their potential through high quality training. This includes through Skills Bootcamps programmes.

1.2 [Skills Bootcamps](#) are intensive, Level 3-5¹ or equivalent flexible training courses up to 16 weeks, with a guaranteed job interview (in the case of a new job), which equip adults with technical skills that enable them to access in-demand jobs, apprenticeships, new opportunities and an increased level of income over time (including for the self-employed).

1.3 The overall aims of the Skills Bootcamps are:

- to deliver flexible training programmes based on local employer / sector 'in-demand' skills needs which may be either regulated (i.e. qualification based) or non-regulated (e.g. based on alignment with industry standards) enabling adults to do training around work and other commitments, looking to gain work, additional responsibilities, or access new opportunities. The bootcamps will offer a guaranteed job interview for course participants currently not in work on completion of the course or an enhanced job role where a learner is put forward by their current employer.
- to address the training needs of adults (19+) and provide them with wider access to opportunities to retrain, update or formalise their skills or acquire specialist skills.
- to address the needs of local employers and the local economy and to deliver targeted interventions to meet short-medium term demand to fill medium-higher vacancies and drive productivity.
- to bring individuals closer to better jobs, by linking them with line of sight to a job/ different role, additional responsibilities, or new opportunities/contracts

1.4 Skills Bootcamps were initially tested in Autumn 2020 and have extended across England, and across an increasing range of vocational sectors. Kent & Medway is currently one of the only areas in the UK without an active skills bootcamps programme. A bid was not submitted previously due to challenges with securing adequate employer engagement and the possibility of guaranteed job interviews, largely because the local economy is driven by very small businesses which were unable to commit to the latter during the difficult period in 2020-21.

1.5 Kent County Council was, however, invited by the Department for Education to submit a funding application on behalf of the Kent & Medway Functional Economic Area to receive grant funding, to develop and commission the delivery of a programme of a pilot Skills Bootcamps programme during financial year 2025/26 with the last learner enrolments to be confirmed before 31 March 2026 and courses able to run into the first quarter of 26-27 if required.

¹ There are nine qualifications levels in England. Level 3 includes A-level, T-Level, level 3 NVQ, advanced apprenticeship. Level 4 includes certificate of Higher Education, higher apprenticeship, level 4 NVQ. Level 5 includes diploma of higher education, foundation degree, level 5 NVQ.

- 1.6 KCC's Economy and Community Learning & Skills Teams have worked together and with partners and stakeholders to develop a Skills Bootcamps application which was submitted to DfE in September 2024. The bid requests £1.75m DfE grant funding. The bid was developed as a pilot for Kent & Medway and courses were only included where sufficient buy-in from local employers could be demonstrated to ensure that there was a commitment to providing interviews or enhanced job roles for learners completing the courses.
- 1.7 The Department for Education is currently reviewing submissions from across England and is expected to inform lead Authorities of the results and their respective allocations by December 2024.

2. Key Features and minimum expectations:

- 2.1 The DfE states that it requires substantial evidence of demand for the skills developed through the Skills Bootcamp, including evidence of vacancies in local labour market. Any suppliers must cite the evidence they are relying on regarding local labour market needs and demonstrate due regard to the skills analysis and priorities of Functional Economic Areas (Kent & Medway) and their Skills Advisory Panels (Kent & Medway Employment Task Force), Local Authorities (LAs) and show how they align with their Local Skills Improvement Plan(s) (led in Kent & Medway by the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce).
- 2.2 Employers will be actively involved by:
- Involvement in the design of the training
 - Committing to provide guaranteed interviews.
 - Committing to provide work experience, mentoring and/or further training or employment.
- 2.3 Expected outcomes:
- Individual secures employment in new job.
 - Employer skills gaps are filled – at no or a very low cost to employer.
 - Self-employed individual gains new skills/new work opportunities
 - Existing employees – employee develops skills that allows them to move into new higher skills/higher productivity role.
- 2.4 DfE has a target of 60% of employers involved in Skills Bootcamp being SMEs.
- 2.5 Ofsted began inspections of Skills Bootcamps provision in FY 2023-24.

3. The Kent & Medway Bid

- 3.1 The Kent & Medway bid covers six priority sectors that have been identified as having high skills needs and growth potential locally.
- 3.2 The bid includes 25 different Skills Bootcamps programmes, each lasting between 2- 16 weeks and providing between 30-200 hours of guided learning hours. The following Skills Bootcamps were included.

Creative

1. Creative & Digital Assistant Production Management Skills Development
2. Creative & Digital Assistant Production Management: Immersive Digital Media Bootcamp

Agri-Food

3. On Farm and Off Farm Operations
4. Horticulture & Environment Management
5. Research & Development
6. Leadership & Management Skills

Construction (NB some construction courses will be delivered at level 2)

7. Management Skills
8. Introduction to Construction – Steelfixing Pathway (x2)
9. Introduction to Construction – Groundworks Pathway (x2)
10. Introduction to Construction – Formwork Pathway (x2)
11. Plant Training NPORs Dumper / Roller (x2)
12. Introduction to the Construction Industry (x2)
13. Bricklaying (x3)
14. Bricklaying Advanced (x2, Level 3)
15. Bricklaying NVQ (Level 3)
16. Multi trades & Retrofit (x3)
17. Construction Skills Certification Scheme & Retrofit (x11)
18. The 'need to knows' about being self-employed in the Construction Sector (four guided learning hours)
19. The 'need to knows' about being self-employed in the Construction Sector (20 guided learning hours)

Retail

20. Elevate your career in Retail

Health and Social Care

21. Understanding the Principles of Dementia Care
22. Understanding the Safe Handling of Medication
23. Principles of End-of-Life Care
24. Working in Health and Social Care

Early Years and School

25. Supporting Children and Young People's Speech, Language and Communication

3.3 The proposal is structured to support approximately 530 individuals, with each Skills Bootcamp planned to accommodate 10 to 100 learners, varying according to the specific sector and the course material. The Skills Bootcamps will be delivered by a range of providers (to be procured) and will include a mix of online and face-to-face learning, as well as work placements.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Under the grant terms KCC will be able to claim a percentage of the total programme budget to cover management, communication, and operational

costs (on a full cost recovery basis). The overall budget for 25-26 is £1,753,968 of which KCC will use some £250k to fund the management and operational costs of the programme and ensure that it can be run on a full cost recovery basis.

- 4.2 Grant determination letters and conditions are not yet available and will be reviewed prior to signature to ensure that any financial risks to KCC are minimal.
- 4.3 The full amount of funding can only be drawn down in arrears based on key outcomes being achieved i.e. job interviews for learners so the Economy team is working with procurement to ensure that robust contractual arrangements with training providers will be put in place. The necessary provisions will be required to ensure that any under-performance of a particular supplier will not lead to a financial loss to KCC were the full amount of grant funding not reimbursed.
- 4.4 Prior to each boot camp commencing, KCC will ensure that employer buy-in is reconfirmed to ensure that expected outcomes, on which payments will be dependent, are able to be achieved (job interviews for learners etc.)

5. Options considered

- 5.1 Not developing a DfE-funded Skills Bootcamps programme for Kent & Medway: This would miss an opportunity to support known needs of local businesses and local people seeking employment or career development opportunities and leave Kent & Medway behind other areas successfully running bootcamps programmes such as Hampshire. Other areas have now been running the scheme since its launch in 2020 demonstrating that it can be a very effective tool for upskilling the workforce where employer buy-in is strong.

6. Policy Frameworks

- 6.1 The Skills Bootcamps programme will support Securing Kent's Future through securing external funding to deliver a programme based on full cost recovery.
- 6.2 The proposed decision supports 'Framing Kent's Future Our Council Strategy' 2022-2026, specifically Priority 1: Levelling up Kent.
 - To work with partners to develop a skills system for Kent that delivers skills that are resilient to changing workforce needs and opportunities and supports people to higher level skills.
 - To see significant improvements in the economy, connectivity, educational attainment, skills and employment rates and public health outcomes in deprived communities in coastal areas so that they improve faster than the rest of Kent to reduce the gaps.
 - To work with our partners to hardwire a preventative approach into improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities.
- 6.3 The bid will support the following ambitions and action areas set out in the [Kent and Medway Economic Framework](#):

- Ambition 2 which focuses on the skills and talent of the workforce, supporting greater employer engagement and leadership in the skills system, joining up the offer and ensuring continued investment in the skills that are needed to respond in the long-term. The **action areas under Ambition 2** also include embedding the Local Skills Improvement Plan, investing in Kent and Medway’s skills infrastructure to harness the potential of the transformational trends identified to support the growth of our sectoral strengths, supporting young people into sustainable and rewarding work, and collaborating to make the most effective use of skills budgets focused on shared priorities.
- Ambition 4 which focuses on ensuring that the benefits of economic growth are shared across the county, and that economic opportunity is linked with wider social outcomes such as health and wellbeing. The **action areas under Ambition 4** include developing a county-wide approach to economic inclusion, supporting access to employment so that “everyone who wants a job can find work”, progression for disadvantaged groups, and embedding economic opportunity at the centre of local regeneration.

7. Legal Implications

- 7.1 KCC will be required to enter into a grant agreement / Memorandum of Understanding and will be expected to deliver against the plan submitted with the application. There will be full data return, quality assurance and reporting expectations against progress and a likely clause that the funding could be reclaimed if delivery is not as documented.

8. Equalities Implications

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EQIA) screening has been completed and no high negative impacts have been identified. The EQIA will continue to be developed and reviewed as this project progresses.

9. Other Corporate Implications

- 9.1 In the development of the Skills Bootcamps and sub-contracting arrangement, there will be a need for support from Procurement, Finance and Legal. There will also be a need for support from HR to support the recruitment / secondment of a small project team. This will sit within the Economy team in Growth & Communities (Growth, Environment & Transport Directorate) with support from and links to the Community Learning & Skills team (Children, Young People & Education Directorate).

10. Governance

- 10.1 Oversight of the development and successes of the Skills Bootcamps programme will be undertaken through the project management and monitoring approach of the Growth & Communities (G&C) Division within the Growth Environment & Transport (GET) Directorate and the Community Learning & Skills Division within the Children, Young People & Education (CYPE) Directorate.

11. Data Protection implications

11.1 The Data Protection Impact Assessment will be completed once it is known whether we are successful in our submission for grant funding.

12. Background Information and appendices

12.1 Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision

12.2 [Equalities Impact Assessment](#)

13 Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee is asked, , to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development that the Cabinet Member for Economic Development (subject to receiving confirmation of funding from the DfE) agree to:

- (i) APPROVE the acceptance of the National Skills Fund Grant, subject to final review and consideration of detailed terms and conditions from the Department of Education, for delivery of the Skills Bootcamps Programme for Kent & Medway.
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, to review and agree to the required terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant arrangements.
- (iii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision to deliver a Skills Bootcamp Programme for Kent and Medway as shown at Appendix A.

Contact details:

Report Authors:

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Relevant Director:

Relevant Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle

Director for Growth and Communities

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development

DECISION NO:

24/00092

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Kent & Medway Skills Bootcamps Programme

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Economic Development I agree (subject to receiving confirmation of funding from the DfE) to:

- (i) APPROVE the acceptance of the National Skills Fund Grant, subject to final review and consideration of detailed terms and conditions from the Department of Education, for delivery of the Skills Bootcamps Programme for Kent & Medway.
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, to review and agree to the required terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant arrangements.
- (iii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other necessary actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as required to implement the decision to deliver a Skills Bootcamp Programme for Kent and Medway.

Reason(s) for decision:

KCC has been invited by the Department for Education (DfE) to submit a funding application for a Kent & Medway Skills Bootcamps programme for 2025-26. Skills Bootcamps are intensive, Level 3-5 flexible training courses of up to 16 weeks which equip adults with technical skills that enable them to access new or enhanced employment opportunities and enable local businesses to tackle skills gaps.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 6 November 2024.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Not run a local Skills Bootcamps Programme in Kent & Medway. This would miss an opportunity to support known needs of local businesses and local people seeking employment or career development opportunities and leave Kent & Medway behind other areas successfully running bootcamps programmes such as Hampshire.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:

.....
signed

.....
date

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Sub-Contracting Skills Bootcamps

Responsible Officer

Natasha White - GT GC

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Steve Samson - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Economy

Responsible Head of Service

Steve Samson - GT GC

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Aims and Objectives

The Department for Education (DfE), is providing GBP 2.5 billion for the National Skills Fund, to help businesses find and hire the workers they need; as well as supporting adults to flourish and fulfil their potential through high quality training. This includes through Skills Bootcamps programmes awarded funding by DfE to be delivered at a local 'functional economic area' (Kent & Medway).

Kent County Council on behalf of Kent & Medway has been invited to bid for DfE funding to run a programme of skills Bootcamps locally.

Skills Bootcamps aim to secure benefits for adults by giving them access to in-demand skills training and a guaranteed interview for a more sustainable, higher-skilled job and higher wages over time. The benefits for employers include helping them fill specific skills shortage vacancies, enabling them to become more productive, more quickly.

Skills Bootcamps are intensive, Level 3-5 or equivalent flexible training courses up to 16 weeks, with a guaranteed job interview (in the case of a new job), which equip adults with technical skills that enable them to access in-demand jobs, apprenticeships, new opportunities and an increased level of income over time (including for the self-employed).

The overall aims of the Skills Bootcamps are:

- to deliver flexible training programmes lasting up to 16 weeks, based on employer / sector 'in-demand' skills needs which may be either regulated (i.e. qualification based) or non-regulated (e.g. based on alignment with industry standards) enabling adults to do training around work and other commitments, looking to gain work, additional responsibilities, or access new opportunities and will offer a guaranteed job interview (in the case of a new job) to individual participants on completion of the course.
- to address the needs of adults (19+) who are full-time and part-time employed, unemployed, returning to work after a break or self-employed, and provide individuals with wider access to opportunities to retrain, update or formalise their skills or acquire specialist skills.
- to address the needs of employers and the wider economy, to deliver targeted interventions to meet short-medium term demand to fill vacancies and drive productivity. They will help fill medium-higher level vacancies and bring individuals closer to better jobs, by linking them with line of sight to a job/ different role, additional responsibilities or new opportunities/contracts.
- to help fill vacancies and bring individuals closer to better jobs (including those currently in employment), by linking them with line of sight to a job / different role, additional responsibilities or new opportunities / contracts.

Expected outcomes:

- Individual secures employment in new job
- Employer skills gaps are filled – no cost to employer
- Self-employed individual gains new skills/new work opportunities
- Existing employees – employee develops skills that allows them to move into new higher skills/higher productivity role

DfE have a target of 60% of employers involved in Skills Bootcamp being SMEs.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

Yes

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Kent County Council has engaged with the following organisations to support the development of the application:

- Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce
- Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce / Local Skills Improvement Plan
- DWP
- Kent Association for Training Organisations
- Department for Education
- Further Education Colleges and other training providers in Kent
- National Careers Service delivered by CxK

- Internally within Kent County Council - Some employers - The Kent & Medway Economic Partnership and Business Advisory Board - Sector groups and partner agencies
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
Staff/Resident – Increase in work opportunities, skills development and opportunities. Service users/clients/communities - Increased opportunities to access courses and develop skills, particularly in local areas, to support positive progression into and within work.
Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions
19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age
Are there negative impacts for age?
No
Details of negative impacts for Age
Not Applicable
Mitigating Actions for Age
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age
Not Applicable
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

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From: **Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services**

Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee - 6 November 2024**

Subject: **Public Rights of Way and Access Service - Overview**

Decision No: N/A

Classification: **Unrestricted**
Electoral Division: All

Summary: The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee requested a “deep dive” into the Public Rights of Way and Access Service. This paper provides an overview of the Service.

Recommendation(s):

Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider this report and note its contents.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network extends to 4318 miles (6915Km), representing 44% of Kent’s highway network. With a small number of exceptions it is publicly maintainable highway. The network provides extensive opportunities for leisure and active travel. Its use contributes significantly to health and well-being and quality of life of Kent’s residents and visitors, and to the rural economy.
- 1.2 The contribution that PRoW make to the quality of life and economy of Kent and the strategy for the management of the network are set out in detail in the Rights of Way Improvement Plan adopted by the County Council in 2018 and its accompanying evidence base. The *Appendix A*. The Plan was adopted by the County Council following consideration by the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee in 2018.
- 1.3 The Operational Management policies for the delivery of the Rights of Way and Access Service are set out in Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2013 – Operational Management. **Appendix B**. Please note that this was the last occasion on which policies were drawn together in one comprehensive document. While the majority of the policies are little changed some have evolved in response to legislative and regulatory change or changes in priority or resources.

2. Background

- 2.1 The County Council is the:

- a) Surveying Authority for Kent and responsible for the production of the Definitive Map and Statement (DMS) for Kent (the legal record of PRow) and keeping the map under continuous review.
 - b) Registration Authority responsible for maintaining the register of commons and village greens.
 - c) The Highway Authority for Kent responsible for the assertion and protection of the PRow network and the maintenance of those PRow that are publicly maintainable highways
 - d) The Access Authority for Kent with responsibilities in respect of the King Charles III Coast Path and coastal access margin, access land, the production of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and hosting an Access Forum (the Kent Countryside Access Forum)
- 2.2 The Service delivers the County Council's obligations in respect of these functions and is divided into three teams to aid efficient delivery. The Definition Team deliver the functions in respect of the DMS, common land and village green registration, and those resulting from the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 including the improvement of the network. Two area teams (East and West) deliver the duties of the authority in relation to the assertion and protection of the network and its maintenance. Each of these areas is considered in further detail below, detailed against the relevant Authority as described at 2.1:

Surveying Authority - Definitive Map and Statement:

- 2.3 The work of the Definition Team is critical to the delivery of the County Council's statutory duties. The DMS underpins all of the Service activity in respect to protecting and maintaining PRow. It informs land management; the presence of recorded or claimed PRow may impact on land use, particularly development. The Regulation Committee is updated annually on the work of the Definition Team: Regulation Committee Report 17 September 2024 **Appendix C**.
- 2.4 The DMS provides conclusive evidence at law as to its contents. The DMS may only be amended as a result of a legal event such as the making and confirmation of a Definitive Map Modification Order (DMMO) or a Public Path Order (PPO).
- 2.5 Applications may be made to the County Council for a DMMO to amend the contents of the DMS on the basis that a right of way is omitted, should not be included or requires amendment in some other way: For instance a footpath should be shown as a public bridleway, or that a PRow has been established through use without force, secrecy or permission. The County Council is obliged to determine any correctly made application.
- 2.6 Agreements may be reached or Orders made to create further PRow, often in respect of development sites or to improve the PRow network.
- 2.7 Applications may also be made to divert or extinguish PRow in the public or landowner interest, for purposes of school security or rail safety. In addition applications may be made to planning authorities for the diversion of footpaths, bridleways and restricted byways in order to enable permitted development to lawfully progress. The Service processes such applications on behalf of twelve planning authorities in Kent (including KCC).

- 2.8 Public Path Order work is discretionary and full cost recovery is achieved as far as the relevant regulations permit.
- 2.9 The work is detailed, complex and heavily regulated. There are significant backlogs in the processing of applications for DMMOs reflecting this complexity. Orders to which objections are made must be forwarded to the Secretary of State (Planning Inspectorate) for determination which may involve written representations, local hearing or public inquiry. Appeal may be made to the SoS for direction where DMMO applications are declined or applications have not been determined within 12 months.
- 2.10 Amendments to legislation relating to the administration of the DMS were included in both the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and Deregulation Act 2015. The changes aimed to simplify the processes involved, to the benefit of all, and to deliver greater certainty for land managers. The principal change was to close the DMS to applications made on the basis of historic evidence. Other changes included the introduction of a right to apply to divert or extinguish PRoW: GEDCCC Committee Report 11 September 2024 **Appendix D**. Many of the reforms have yet to be implemented.
- 2.11 The current DMS has a relevant date of 31 May 2013. The updating (consolidation of the DMS) represented a huge amount of work leading up to its publication including;
- a) the mapping of former excluded areas (urban areas of Kent for which no map had previously been produced),
 - b) digitising the alignments of the PRoW from the 1987 DMS,
 - c) updating the DMS to reflect all of the Legal Events that had occurred since the production of the previous DMS in 1987. For example, confirmed Public Path Orders, Definitive Map Modification Orders, the Channel Tunnel Act , Channel Tunnel Rail Link Act, the M20 Side Roads Order.
- 2.12 In bringing the DMS into the digital age it has made future consolidation a more straight forward task.
- 2.13 Other work carried out by the Definition Team includes:
- a) Making responses to property searches, undertaken as part of the conveyancing process (CON29 and CON290 enquiries).
 - b) Processing Traffic Regulation Orders and Temporary Traffic Regulation Orders usually to prohibit public access in response to safety issues or to enable work on the highway.
 - c) Processing statutory declarations and deposits submitted by landowners to protect their land against the establishment of rights of way by use.

Registration Authority – Registration of Common Land, Town and Village Greens:

- 2.14 Town and Village Greens (TVG) are of significant amenity and recreational importance. The County Council's role is to maintain the registers of common land and TVGs, and to determine applications to amend the register. The registration of TVG may be voluntary or result from a successful application on the basis of qualifying use, without force, secrecy

or permission over a twenty year period. The determination of applications may be, and often is, contentious given the constraint that village green status imposes on the future use of land.

Highway Authority – Protection:

2.15 The County Council has a duty to assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of the highway. The work of the Service in protecting the network ranges through:

- a) The provision of advice and guidance to land managers to assist them in complying with their obligations in respect of PRow .
- b) The investigation of reports of obstruction and nuisance through to resolution.
- c) Working with partner organisations in the provision of information/ evidence that allows the efficient delivery of their duties. Eg District Councils, Environment Agency, Kent Police.

2.16 The investigation of reports follows a consistent process:

- a) Conciliation – providing land managers with the opportunity to resolve obstructions and nuisances prior to, or at an early stage of enforcement.
- b) The service of notice, providing a defined period in which time the obstruction/ nuisance must be removed.
- c) Direct action to remove the obstruction or nuisance at the expense of the landowner/ occupier. The full costs incurred by the County Council in investigating the matter and undertaking the work are recovered.

2.17 Prosecution, while uncommon and resource intensive, remains an option for significant obstructions and nuisances. The penalties for obstruction of the highway having been amended (Police, Crime, Sentencing and Courts Act 2022) with the maximum sentences now being up to 51 weeks imprisonment and/or an unlimited fine.

2.18 Responding to planning applications and planning policy consultations is a key activity in protecting the network as construction may not lawfully proceed so as to obstruct a PRow unless and until an Order for its diversion or extinguishment has been confirmed.

2.19 Again, this work is detailed and complex and requires a thorough working knowledge of, and adherence to, the relevant legislation, regulation, codes and guidance.

Highway Authority – Maintenance:

2.20 The majority of PRow are highways maintainable at the public expense (99%+ of Kent's network). An asset management plan approach is taken to the maintenance of the network. **Appendix E**. The modern replacement equivalent cost of those elements of the network for which KCC is responsible was most recently calculated as £140M with an annual spending requirement of £3.4M to maintain the network at a steady state. Investment has consistently run below this level and therefore there is a backlog of maintenance work currently, conservatively, standing at £5.9M.

- 2.21 The asset includes:
- a) 3046 Bridges. A combination of simple short span sleeper bridges, kit bridges, culverts, more complex longer span bridges, through to a footbridge crossing the railway at Ashford and a footbridge crossing the M20
 - b) Path furniture (Signposts, stiles, gates, steps, barriers etc) - 32000 Items
 - c) Aggregate surfaced PRow , principally bridleways and byways – 409Km
 - d) Tarmacadam surfaced PRow – 736Km
- 2.22 Maintenance work is identified through a mixture of planned inspection, ad-hoc inspection, reports from volunteer wardens and the public. A simple cost benefit analysis is used to prioritise repair and maintenance schemes taking into account factors such as public safety, asset condition and the alignment with stated policies and objectives. Those schemes providing greatest benefit are prioritised. There is often an element of improvement in the schemes undertaken given that the existing highway may have fallen into disrepair as a result of a fundamental inability to support the use made of it or an inability to withstand weather extremes. Such improvement has occurred across the highway network over centuries in response to changes in the type and patterns of use.
- 2.23 The principal areas of maintenance work are:
- a) Vegetation clearance – approximately 777Km of PRow are included on the annual vegetation clearance contract , 11.2% of the network. The majority of these routes are subject to two or three cuts.
 - b) Repair and replacement of bridges and structures.
 - c) Surface repair, renewal and provision including the drainage and provision of all-weather surfaces.
 - d) Repair and replacement of fingerposts and the provision of gates and stiles.
- 2.23 Maintenance work is completed by a mixture of:
- a) Contractors. These are usually small / medium enterprises based in Kent and the South East many of whom specialise in this area of work.
 - b) Officers who may complete work when on site if a solution can be delivered in a short space of time with the tools available.
 - c) Volunteers. The service harnesses the good will and interest of the public in the network to run two volunteer maintenance programmes.
- 2.24 The Countryside Access Wardens (79 Wardens are currently active) carry out small scale , low risk work on the network. They report on asset condition, carry out spot vegetation clearance, gate adjustment, waymarking and other similar activity that the Service would not otherwise be able to carry out.
- 2.25 Vegetation clearance volunteers. The Service has equipped and trained a number of groups to carry out vegetation clearance. This can supplement the work undertaken by contractors.

2.26 The Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 introduced a number of additional obligations:

- a) To appoint a Local Access Forum, this is comprised of volunteers appointed by the access authority and advises on access matters
- b) To manage access in respect of the to the 2000Ha of access land, including the KCIII England Coast Path and coastal access margin (On establishment of the King Charles III England Coast Path National Trail (KCIII ECP), those sections of the trail not on public highway and land seaward of the trail becomes coastal access margin and is managed under the same provisions).
- c) To produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and review the plan every ten years. The ROWIP is to assess current provision and future need.

2.27 While the County Council is obliged to produce a Rights of Way Improvement Plan there is no duty to deliver improvements. However, it has been possible to deliver improvements through:

- a) Amendments to existing policy, for example adopting a policy of least restrictive access under which thousands of barriers to access have been removed from the network.
- b) The production of an asset management plan
- c) Prioritising those projects that meet with the Council's statutory obligations and align with wider policy objectives
- d) Securing external funding for improvement of the network,
- e) Securing developer contributions to address increased and future demand.
- f) Active involvement in national projects such as the development of the KCIII ECP National Trail.

Operational priorities:

2.28 The Service receives more unique fault reports annually than it has the capacity or resources to deal with. Inevitably reports are therefore prioritised on the basis of the importance and level of use of the route and the urgency of the issue raised. Resolution of issues can take considerable time and resource. Solutions may often involve numerous disciplines and much negotiation. (Included in **Appendix B**) : Public right of way operational priorities - Kent County Council

3. Finance

3.1 The Service budget for 2024-5 is:

- a) £2.1M Revenue (including approximately £200K income PA from cost recovery and grants)
- b) £900K Capital including a £200K revenue contribution.

3.2 In addition to the above, further grant income has been secured in respect of establishment work for the KCIII ECP, National Trail management and maintenance, National Landscapes - Farming in Protected Landscapes access grant and Highways England designated funds. This funding has enabled some improvements to be delivered and the asset management funding backlog to be slowed. That additional funding amounts to approximately £180K for the current year

3.3 In addition the Service seeks developer contributions to off-set the pressures that development places on the surrounding network, for instance through additional use. The contributions are received at various trigger points during development; for example, on commencement, or at the completion of a phase of the build out, or the occupation of a set number of properties. Currently £2M of developer contributions are in our programme for delivery. A further £209K has been secured in 24/25 from Sevenoaks District Council community infrastructure levy for projects throughout the district.

4. Policy Framework

4.1 The Service contributes to the County Council's Strategy "Framing Kent's Future"

- a) Levelling up Kent: Priority 1:- supporting ambitions to improve the health of Kent's population particularly promoting healthy behaviours.
- b) Infrastructure for Communities, Priority 2: Invests in Kent's high-quality landscapes, and supports the choice of alternative travel options by prioritising the maintenance of accessible walking routes and cycle lanes
- c) Environmental step change . Priority 3: Improve access for our residents to green and natural spaces especially in urban and deprived areas and through our Public Rights of Way network to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.

4.2 Securing Kent's Future. The Service seeks to deliver its work in the most efficient, economic and effective way, consistent with the prioritisation of the Council's best value duty. In that respect it is consistent with, and supports, Securing Kent's Future.

4.3 The Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Kent – 2018-2028. (Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf (kent.gov.uk) Appendix A). The plan was produced following wide ranging public consultation and engagement. It is required to make an assessment of existing provision and set out policies for the improvement of the network and how it will meet future requirements. The importance of having well maintained rights of way was consistently raised by the public and other stakeholders as essential to achieve the positive outcomes for health, well- being, the rural economy and active travel.

4.4 There are very few strategies and plans that the ROWIP, and the work of the Service, does not in some way contribute to or align with. For example:

- a) Local Transport Plan IV (and the, in preparation, Local Transport Plan V)
- b) Active Travel Strategy
- c) Local Development Plans and Core Strategies
- d) National Landscape Management Plans.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 As outlined in the report, there are many statutory duties that relate to PRow and access. It was once calculated that there are over four thousand pieces of statute, regulation, statutory guidance and case law relating to the management and administration of PRow. It is perhaps not surprising, given the mixture of rights and land management, that this is an area of law that has

been regularly litigated through the centuries, many noteworthy cases relating to Kent. It is often complex and highly scrutinised work. Legal advice is regularly sought by the Service in respect of more challenging matters. Advice is sought to ensure that risk to the authority is as far as possible mitigated.

6. Conclusions

6.1 The County Council fulfils a range of statutory functions in respect of PRow and access

- a) The recording of the rights of way network through the production and continual updating of the DMS, including determining applications to amend the map or to divert and extinguish public rights of way.
- b) The registration of Common land, Town and Village Greens, and the determination of applications to amend the registers.
- c) Asserting and protecting the rights of the public to use and enjoy PRow.
- d) The maintenance of those elements of the PRow asset that are publicly maintainable, through a mixture of contractor, officer and volunteer work.
- e) The management of access to access land and coastal access margin including stretches of the KCIII ECP.
- f) The production of a Rights of Way Improvement Plan and the appointment of an Access Forum.
- g) The establishment of strategies, policies and systems to ensure that the statutory duties are met and delivered in the most efficient way.

6.2 The work is often complex and requires a thorough working knowledge of the relevant statutes, case law and technical demands of the various disciplines.

6.3 The work of the Service in delivering the statutory obligations of the County Council is important as it supports the health and well-being of residents, encourages and provides key infrastructure for healthy lifestyles including travel choices. It contributes to the sense of place, provides a free opportunity to experience the landscape and nature of the County provides a network that enables residents and visitors to enjoy recreational visits, exploring the County and what it offers. It contributes hugely to the rural economy.

7. Recommendation(s)

Recommendation(s):

7.1 Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider this report and note its contents.

8. Background Documents:

- Appendix A: Rights of Way Improvement Plan [Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Appendix B: Countryside Access Improvement Plan 2013 – Operational Management: [Coastal-Access-Improvement-Plan-Operational-Management-Appendix-1.pdf](#)

- Appendix C: Report to the Regulation Committee September 2024 – Annual update from the Public Rights of Way and Access Service : [PROWAS Update report 2024: \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Appendix D: GEDCCC Committee Report 11 September 2024 Amendments to the Highways Act 1980: [Amendments to the Highways Act 1980 Report.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Appendix E: Rights of Way Asset Management Plan. [Rights of Way Asset Management Plan \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)

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From: Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 6 November 2024

Subject: Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All KCC electoral divisions

Summary: This report provides an update on the development of an Integrated Health and Work Strategy for Kent & Medway which aims to tackle economic inactivity related to long-term health conditions.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and endorse the development of an Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This paper provides an update on progress with the development of an **Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway** to be overseen by the Kent & Medway Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy (SPHE)¹ which in turn reports to the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) and the Kent & Medway Integrated Care Partnership (ICP).
- 1.2 There has been a “*recent sharp rise in the number of people out of the workforce due to long-term sickness. This has significant impacts on individuals’ wellbeing, as well as large fiscal and economic costs*”² The number of people out of work in the UK due to long-term conditions is at the highest level since 2008³. The [‘Towards a Healthier Workforce’](#) report (October 2024) from the Commission for Healthier Working Lives highlights that:
- More than 8 million people (20% of 16 to 64 year olds) now have health conditions that restrict the type or amount of work they can do, up from 6 million in 2013.

¹ The SPHE includes representatives from local government including economic development, public health and social care, the NHS, businesses and business representative organisations, skills providers, voluntary groups and the Department for Work & Pensions.

² ‘Improving our Nation’s Health: A Whole-of-Government Approach to Tackling the Causes of Long-Term Sickness and Economic Inactivity’ - BCG Centre for Growth and NHS Confederation (September 2024)

³ Rising ill-health and economic inactivity because of long-term sickness, UK - Office for National Statistics (ons.gov.uk)

- Of the 4 million people currently not participating in the labour market due to a work-limiting condition, 2.6 million cite long-term sickness or disability as their main reason for being out of the workforce³.
- There has also been a significant increase in the number of people with ill health who are in work. In 2023, there were 3.9 million workers aged 16 to 64 years with a work-limiting health condition up by 1.5 million, or 64%, from a decade ago.
- Workers with a work-limiting health condition face a much higher risk of exiting the labour market (1 in 9 compared to 1 in 30 of those without a long term health condition).

1.3 As demonstrated above, unemployment and economic inactivity due to long-term health conditions are significant across England. The phenomenon is higher in Kent than elsewhere in the South East although slightly lower in Medway. In Kent, 27% of economic inactivity among 16-64 year olds is due to long term sickness compared to 20% in Medway, 22.7% in the wider South East and 27.3% nationally⁴. In response to this growing challenge, various national initiatives are underway, and this agenda is a clear priority for the new Government which recently described economic inactivity as “[the greatest employment challenge for a generation](#)”. The new Kent & Medway strategy will identify local opportunities to deliver improvements in the support available for employers and employees.

1.4 Apart from the impacts upon the health and wellbeing of individuals, these high levels of economic inactivity present significant economic challenges and most notably for local employers. In the 2023 ‘Kent and Medway Employer Skills Survey’, 35% of the 900 business respondents confirmed that they had gaps within their existing workforce capabilities and half of them highlighted that recruitment was a problem. The [Kent & Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan](#) confirms that many of Kent’s most significant industry sectors (Construction, Manufacturing, Health and Social Care, Food & Food production and Education) are all impacted by critical skills gaps which results in lower productivity and slower business growth. Identifying ways to support economically inactive people into work could play a significant role in meeting labour market demand. People in work also benefit from higher levels of personal income and are therefore able to contribute more to the local economy as consumers through, for example, supporting retail, leisure and hospitality businesses.

1.5 With regard to the existing workforce, long term conditions for mental and physical health are particularly prevalent in certain industry sectors including construction and agriculture. Equipping employers to support a healthy workforce is also important to retain skilled employees and maintain productivity levels.

1.6 With some 90% of Kent businesses being categorised as micro-businesses that employ fewer than nine people, employee sickness and skills shortages

⁴ <https://www.nomisweb.co.uk/>

can have a disproportionate impact on these firms. Small companies do not tend to have human resources departments to provide support and advice related to sickness. Despite being more agile than large firms in many senses, they lack capacity to deal with or cover the impacts of long-term health conditions in the work force. Small firms typically don't have the resource to explore and promote programmes and activities that might boost employee wellbeing. For many small firms, balancing the operational needs of the business with any flexibility required due to employee health issues is a significant challenge. Businesses need certainty to make plans, invest and operate smoothly and any opportunities to tackle workforce reliability issues (perceived and real) will boost business confidence.

- 1.7 Levels of economic inactivity are particularly high in parts of Swale, Medway, Dartford, Gravesham, Maidstone, Dover and Thanet. The issuing of 'fit notes', or 'Statements of Fitness for Work' are particularly high in Dover town, Folkestone town, Sheppey, Ashford, Ramsgate, Margate, Gravesend and the Medway towns.
- 1.8 There is national expectation and strong local support for the development of an Integrated Work and Health Strategy for all Integrated Care System (ICS) areas, including Kent and Medway. The focus of the Kent & Medway strategy will be to integrate work and health support for employers and individuals so that the general health and productivity of the workforce can be enhanced. By enabling local people with long term conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work, skills shortages can be addressed and local businesses will be more able to increase productivity and grow.

2. An Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway:

- 2.1 In December 2023, the Kent & Medway ICS was successful in securing funding from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) and the Department of Health and Social Care to take forward new workstreams on Work and Health.
- 2.2 A working group consisting of KCC and Medway Council Economy, Public Health and Policy colleagues and the NHS has been meeting regularly to take forward activity including the development of a Health & Work strategy for Kent & Medway.
- 2.3 The strategy will enable key organisations in Kent & Medway to better understand the challenges that employers face with regard to long term health conditions and the issues that prevent people with health conditions from accessing employment opportunities and sustaining work. It will also ensure that the various strands of current and potential activity can be better coordinated to avoid duplication and ensure positive outcomes for local employers, residents and the local economy.
- 2.4 As a first step, the ICP organised a workshop in April 2024 which brought together stakeholders including from the Kent & Medway Employment Taskforce, KMEP, the K&M Business Advisory Board, the ICS, the

Department for Work & Pensions and the Office for Health Improvement and Disparities. Themes explored included Skills Development, Employer Perspectives, Mental Health, Community Support, In-Work Support for People & Employers (further details are shown in **Appendix 1**). Feedback from the breakout sessions was used to inform the early development of the Strategy.

2.5 The strategy is being developed in three phases:

- **Phase 1** - Intelligence gathering (April - September 2024): to map existing provision and ask what needs to be different for people with long term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work with the aim of improving a coordinated offer. Partner engagement and focus groups have taken place alongside an evidence review and some data analysis. 115 stakeholders were able to feed in to this stage including through 71 interviews. **Appendix 2** shows the range of stakeholders engaged broadly grouped by category. **Appendix 3** provides a summary of relevant policies and strategies that support the work and health agenda.
- **Phase 2** - Drafting and approving the strategy (September 2024 – June 2025): This work will cover three main elements.
 - ‘Where we are now?’, the Kent and Medway context including population health data, employment rates, range of programmes underway and views elicited from engagement activity.
 - The goals and aspirations for the next five years.
 - How the goals and aspirations will be achieved including establishing targets to measure progress and outcomes.

2.6 It is intended that a public engagement exercise on the draft strategy will be launched in December 2024 and run until March 2025. This will build on the intelligence gathering phase which achieved high levels of engagement from interested stakeholders. The aim of consulting with key stakeholders, local employers (public and private sector), community groups and residents is to seek relevant views and ‘sense check’ the aims of the strategy. The intention is also to seek the views of people with lived experience via a reference group. Local businesses will be consulted via KMEP, the Kent & Medway Business Advisory Board and through local business membership organisations (Chambers of Commerce, Federation of Small Businesses, Institute of Directors, sector groups etc.).

2.7 The final scope of the strategy will be confirmed to determine what areas of focus should be included and to identify those that are already being delivered in Kent & Medway to avoid duplication and link in where appropriate.

- **Phase 3** - Implementing the strategy and monitoring delivery (June 2025 onwards): Developing monitoring and reporting mechanisms that will be as the strategy progresses.

3. Emerging Themes

3.1 A number of challenges and potential areas of focus came out of the intelligence gathering phase which are summarised in **Appendix 4**.

- 3.2 From an employer perspective:
- A lack of access to support for employers and a fear of ‘getting it wrong’ when assisting employees or potential employees with long term health conditions.
 - A potential need to consider adapted recruitment processes.
 - The potential provision of employer training and access to relevant information and resources.
 - Employer peer to peer support and improved employer-employee communications.
- 3.3 From an employee / individual perspective:
- Better consideration of the factors that become a barrier to working
 - The importance of a person-centred approach
 - A need for appropriate support to gain and retain employment
 - Help with skills development and training
- 3.4 The above considerations will help to determine the overarching priorities for the strategy which are likely to focus on:
- Building employer and employee confidence
 - Career development, training and skills (including a focus on opportunities to tackle skills gaps in particular sectors such as agri-food, construction and social care)
 - A person-centred approach
 - A healthy, thriving workforce (working to ensure that employers are equipped to support employee health and wellbeing)
- 3.5 The strategy is developed and implemented there will of course be a need to balance employer and employee needs. In particular it will be crucial to consider how small enterprises, which often find themselves lacking in resource and capacity, might be best supported in this area without compromising their ability to operate commercially and thrive.
- 3.6 Although this strategy will focus on work specifically, the wider role of economic development in supporting a healthy population will be considered by the Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy. Early topics to be explored will include the role of the visitor and leisure economy in supporting wellbeing and how access to healthy local food & drink products can support better health.
- 3.7 While the strategy is still under development, KCC and its partners will consider whether any ‘quick wins’ can be quickly implemented to respond to early feedback from local employers. This could include collating and making relevant information, tools and advice available to local businesses to support them with managing health-related issues in the workplace.

4. Strategic Alignment

- 4.1 The development of the strategy and its future implementation supports the following local priorities and strategies:

Kent & Medway Economic Framework:

- Action Area 2: Focusing support to business on measures that will increase long-term productivity and resilience.
- Action Area 4: Supporting the conditions for growth
- Action Area 6: Investing in Kent and Medway's skills infrastructure
- Action Area 7: Retaining and developing talent
- Action Area 13: Ensuring that everyone who wants a job can find work

Framing Kent's Future: Priority 1: Levelling Up Kent

- To support the Kent economy to be resilient and successfully adapt to the challenges and opportunities it faces over the coming years.
- To work with partners to develop a skills system for Kent that delivers skills that are resilient to changing workforce needs and opportunities and supports people to higher level skills.
- To see significant improvements in the economy, connectivity, educational attainment, skills and employment rates and public health outcomes in deprived communities in coastal areas so that they improve faster than the rest of Kent to reduce the gaps.
- To work with our partners to hardwire a preventative approach into improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities.

Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy:

- Shared Outcome 2 - Tackle the wider determinants of health to prevent ill health
- Shared Outcome 4 - Empower people to best manage their health conditions
- Shared Outcome 6 - Support and Grow our Workforce

4.2 The strategy aligns with the recent commitment to create a **Marmot Coastal Region in Kent** with that commitment's aim of reducing health inequalities in the boroughs of Swale, Canterbury, Thanet, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, and Ashford.

4.3 **Government priorities:** Labour's Back to Work plan includes "new **local plans for work, health and skills support** to get more people with health conditions and disabilities into work, with devolved funding and leadership from Mayors and local areas"⁵ and it is anticipated that the early work on this strategy will fulfil this requirement for Kent & Medway and may unlock future government funding.

4.4 **Securing Kent's Future:** The strategy is being developed using external funding secured for this purpose and it does not in itself commit KCC to further spend. The strategy aims to make a positive contribution to key health determinants (employment and income specifically) without which, individuals are more likely to require ongoing support from public health and social care services.

4.5 The SPHE and its direct links to the ICP and KMEP will ensure that the strategy and its implementation connects to existing initiatives and relevant partners and stakeholders. Anticipated government schemes such as a forthcoming national programme of Supported Employment to be delivered at

⁵ [Back to Work Plan will help drive economic growth in every region - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/news/back-to-work-plan-will-help-drive-economic-growth-in-every-region)

a local level (including Kent & Medway) will also play a key part in the local implementation of the strategy.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 The development of the strategy is being funded by the DWP/DHSC grant referred to above with support from relevant KCC and Medway Council officers as well as NHS colleagues. The strategy itself is not a funded strategy but with government announcements about the need for local 'Health, Work & Skills plans' and other potential initiatives around supported employment, it is anticipated that externally funded programmes will support the implementation phase of the strategy. Further details will be worked up in due course.

5.2 The future implementation of the strategy may bring about indirect longer term financial benefits for KCC in addition to reducing public sector spend on the ill-health prevention agenda. Programmes to help more people into work will support business growth and productivity which could lead to increased business rates receipts in Kent as companies grow and occupy new space. Similarly, additional council tax receipts could be generated if people are supported into the labour market reducing reliance on (housing) benefits.

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are no legal implications for KCC or its partners associated with the development of the Work & Health Strategy.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 A high-level Equalities Impact Assessment has been prepared for the development of the strategy phase and more detailed EqlAs will be produced to support the programmes and initiatives that will be put in place to support the implementation of the strategy. It is anticipated that these programmes will have a positive effect on groups with protected characteristics who find themselves excluded from the labour market due to health-related issues.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 There are no data protection implications for KCC or its partners associated with the development of the Work & Health Strategy. DPIAs will be developed in due course to support the implementation of the strategy.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 The development of the strategy is being led by the K&M Integrated Care System with oversight from several KCC services; Economy, Public Health and Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance. Different elements of the strategy will be delivered by the most appropriate partner organisation(s) in future.

10. Governance

- 10.1 A similar paper to this one was taken to the August K&M Integrated Care Partnership meeting and a presentation given to the inaugural meeting of the Strategic Partnership for Health and Economy in October 2024. Both groups provided feedback which will be taken into account as the strategy is developed.
- 10.2 Any decisions and delegations needed to support the implementation phase of the strategy will be taken by the relevant partner organisations in line with their governance policies. For KCC, future papers will be presented to GED&C Cabinet Committee and the Health Reform and Public Health Cabinet Committee.

11. Conclusions

- 11.1 Given the level of economic inactivity nationally and in Kent & Medway and the negative impacts that this has on individuals and the local economy, the development of the Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway and its subsequent implementation is an important area of work for KCC. Economic inactivity due to health conditions is a complex issue but with the support of local and national partners and stakeholders, the new strategy will enable Kent & Medway to improve employment possibilities from people currently excluded from the labour market.

12. Recommendation:

- 12.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and endorse the development of an Integrated Work and Health Strategy for Kent & Medway.

13. Background Documents

- 13.1 Equality Impact Assessment

14. Appendices

- **Appendix 1:** Emerging Themes from the Integrated Care System Stakeholder Workshop in April 2024
- **Appendix 2:** Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Broad Categories
- **Appendix 3:** Summary of relevant policies and strategies that support the work and health agenda
- **Appendix 4:** Feedback from Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups
- **Appendix 5:** Draft Priority Themes for the Strategy

15. Contact details:

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Appendix 1: Emerging Themes from the Integrated Care System Stakeholder Workshop in April 2024

- Differing Sector Needs: workforce requirements vary across industry sectors in terms of the types of roles, work patterns, locations and management structures that correspond to business operational needs.
- Information for Employers: the potential to provide high quality support, information and practical tools to small/medium businesses efficiently.
- New Work Dynamics: Pros and cons of remote work for employers and employees, emerging legal rights for flexible arrangements, and new opportunities post-Covid. While it boosts productivity, it blurs boundaries, risking burnout.
- Work vs. Benefits: People with health issues might weigh working against welfare benefits, but face disincentives such as the 16-hour 'cut off' for benefits (now 18 hours).
- Perceptions and Stigma Misconception: It is not always true that those with disabilities/long-term health conditions often stay off work for long periods. Stigma exists around medical conditions like mental health, leading to concerns from employers about reliability.
- The need to consider wider factors that may affect workforce availability / reliability including childcare, transportation, and reduced public transport options.
- Differentiate between disability and health conditions, considering varying permanency.
- Revamp recruitment processes to be inclusive, moving beyond traditional interviews.
- Simplify access to support services for people with health conditions, enhancing awareness and navigability.

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Appendix 2: Summary of Stakeholder Engagement Broad Categories (non-exhaustive list)

Business:

Business Membership/Representative Organisations
Industry Sector Groups / Representatives
Kent & Medway Economic Partnership
Housing Sector

Education, Training & Skills:

Further Education Colleges
Training commissioners
Training providers

Workplace:

HR representatives (various sectors)
Workplace wellbeing organisations
Armed Forces

Government:

Department for Work & Pensions

Local Government:

Kent County Council (Economy, Financial Hardship, (Adult) Education)
Medway Council (Skills, Employment, Adult Education)
District Councils (Housing, Communities, Health & Wellbeing, etc.)

Health:

NHS Foundation Trusts
Mental Health Support Providers
Public Health
SEND and Neurodiversity
Health Care Partnerships
Primary Care

Voluntary & Community Sector:

Wellbeing organisations
Skills delivery organisations
Social Enterprise Organisations

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Appendix 3: Relevant policies and strategies that support the work and health agenda

- In 2023 the previous government announced a new 'Back to Work Plan' which included boosting four key programmes: NHS Talking Therapies, Individual Placement and Support, Restart and Universal Support, alongside the WorkWell funding.
- Following the change of government in July, economic growth has been the primary focus, with an emphasis on empowering local areas to tackle economic inactivity, with an ambition for an employment rate of 80% (extra 2 million people in work nationally).
- As announced in the King's Speech, the government plans to introduce the Skills England Bill and the Employment Rights Bill (published 10th October 2024) as part of a coordinated approach to align national work and health policies with broader economic objectives. These bills look to establish 'Skills England', end zero-hour contracts and make flexible working the default from day one.
- The government is also expected to publish a White Paper on the 'Plan to Get Britain Working' in the autumn, which is set to include manifesto commitments and policy announcements made since the election, for example:
 - Devolve funding so local areas can shape a joined-up work, health, and skills offer.
 - Bring Jobcentre Plus and National Careers Service together to provide a national jobs and careers service.
 - New work, health and skills plans for 'economically inactive' people who are not looking for work or available to work.
- Locally, the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy and the Kent and Medway Economic Framework both recognise the strong connection between economic prosperity and the health and wellbeing of the population.
- Many other organisations across Kent and Medway have also developed local strategies that align with this shared vision of health and work and creating a healthy workforce. A few examples include:
 - Medway Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy (Priority Theme 1, 2 and 4)
 - Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan (to address sector-specific skills needs and shortages)
 - People/Workforce Strategies (KCC, Medway, ICB etc)
 - Health and Care Partnership Action Plans (Vision to support broader social and economic development)
 - Education (The Education People and Kent Further Education)
 - Skills and Employability Plan for Medway (Establishing Routes to Employment)

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Appendix 4: Feedback from Stakeholder Interviews and Focus Groups

Employer Perspective:	Employee Perspective:
<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Fear of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial/business losses including additional costs linked to sick leave and additional equipment that may be necessary • Getting it wrong • Creating staff prejudice • Legal action if discrimination is claimed • Staff with significant or unplanned absence due to sickness • High staff turnover after investing in onboarding • Impacts on other staff particularly in small businesses including covering workload <p>Lack of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness of support available when hiring staff with disabilities • Access to affordable HR support services • Occupational health support • Time within an already pressured environment • Access to legal advice 	<p>Challenges:</p> <p>Individuals:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mental health • Caring/family responsibilities • Lack of confidence • Ex offenders • Stigma • Fear of work not working out • Relapse • Communication with employer about needs <p>The role:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Zero hours contracts • Shift work • Job description <p>Long term conditions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Menopause • Neurodiversity • Stress from work • Mental health • Musculo – skeletal <p>Skills and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lack of training and education • Maths skills • Reading/writing skills <p>Financial:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benefit systems <p>Wider matters:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Transport and travel • Physical accessibility • Substance misuse • Homelessness/Housing • Waiting lists for treatment • Primary care process • Lack of disability confident employers
<p>Needs:</p> <p>Recruitment and retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Alternative recruitment/interview processes • Reasonable adjustments, access to work • Right match of employee to organisation/role <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employer/manager training • Toolkit • Signposting to resources 	<p>Needs:</p> <p>Person Centred approach:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Social prescribing • Paced transition into work • Establish best practice for supporting individuals • Direct referrals to the right support • Suitability of role to the individual <p>Provision:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Individual Placement & Support • Apprenticeships • Universal support • Supported employment

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational health for SMEs • Self employed • To be Disability Confident • Funding to support people with long term health conditions or disabilities to stay and succeed in work (particularly in the voluntary, community and social enterprise sector) • Wellbeing training/helping employees to be physically active <p>Working together:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication/listening to people • Collaboration between organisations • Engagement of organisations/employers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported internships <p>Skills and training:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Upskilling • Training courses • Volunteering <p>Support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occupational health • Flexible working • Equipment • Knowledge support available • Joined up support offer <p>Recruitment and retention:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CV development guidance • Clarity of job descriptions • Inclusive recruitment practices
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Appendix 5: Draft Priority Themes

1. Building employer and employee confidence

- Building employer confidence in the ways they support employees with LTHC and disabilities and access to relevant support for both employers and employees.
- Building employee confidence in their capability and competence to engage in meaningful work that is appropriate to their circumstances and to be able to seek support when needed.
- Building strong working relationships between employers and employees and a culture of a collaborative approach to achieving business and employee needs.

2. Development, training and skills

- Creating the environment in which people are supported and willing to undertake development training and skills to facilitate their engagement with meaningful work.
- Providing opportunities, for people to receive appropriate careers guidance and take part in development, training and skills support to seek new roles which align with their circumstances and values.
- Providing employers with access to knowledge about development, training and skills opportunities across the system which can enhance their own offer to facilitate each employee reaching their potential.

3. Person centred approach

- Promoting a multidisciplinary approach to addressing the work and health needs of each individual with a long term condition or disability, supporting them to start, stay and succeed in work.
- Promote flexible working options and reasonable adjustments which take account of the needs of the individual alongside business requirements.
- Promoting a holistic approach to each individual which takes account of the wider determinants of health

4. Healthy, thriving workforce

- Engender a culture in which employer and employee take a proactive approach to promoting good physical and mental wellbeing at work.
- Collaboration within and beyond organisations to mitigate the impact of the wider determinants of health, e.g. healthy food, fuel poverty, housing.
- Take a life stage approach which considers the impact of different life phases on the individual at work, e.g. menopause, ageing workforce.

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy

Responsible Officer

Emma Watson - GT GC

Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Steve Samson - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Economy (with Public Health and SPRCA)

Responsible Head of Service

Steve Samson - GT GC

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

Aims and Objectives

The UK faces significant challenges with Economic Inactivity which are at the highest level since 2008 with some 2.6m people being out of the labour market for health-related reasons.

A Kent & Medway Integrated Work & Health Strategy is to be produced with the aim of integrating and improving support for people and employers to enable more people with health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work. The strategy will be overseen by the Kent & Medway Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy and 'owned' by the Integrated Care Partnership and Kent & Medway Economic Partnership.

It is intended that the strategy and its future implementation will enable people with long term health conditions and disabilities to benefit by being able to start stay and succeed in meaningful work. This is based on the evidence that there is a synergistic relationship between meaningful work and good health. Employers from all industry sectors are also set to benefit from the strategy through increased access to untapped workforce potential, retention and diverse and inclusive workforce.

The following outcomes are hoped to be achieved by the strategy and these will be refreshed as the

strategy is developed and implemented.

Through integrating work and health:

- To increase the number of people with long term conditions and disabilities who are able to engage in meaningful work
- To take a person-centred, multidisciplinary approach to referral and provision to support people with long term health conditions and disabilities to start, stay and succeed in work.
- To build employee and employer confidence to support employees to start, stay and succeed in work and to build employee confidence in their capability and confidence to engage in work.
- To create an environment in which people are able to engage in relevant development training and skills to support them to start, stay and succeed in work.
- To engender a culture of a healthy, thriving workforce across Kent and Medway.

Unemployment can affect people with protected characteristics disproportionately including people with disabilities and health issues (physical and mental) or those with caring responsibilities. The development of the strategy and its future implementation is anticipated to have a positive impact upon various sections of the local population.

This EqIA is intended to give an early high level view of equalities, diversity and inclusion issues with further EqIAs to be developed as the strategy moves into its implementation phase through supporting programmes and initiatives during 2025.

Section B – Evidence

Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?

No

It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

As part of the intelligence gathering phase of the development of the strategy, 115 stakeholders have been engaged through 70 interviews including:

- NHS Trust leaders
- Representatives of employers and business support/membership organisations
- Education, training and skills leads
- Department of Work and Pensions
- Leaders of mental health organisations
- VCSE
- Housing representatives
- Economy representatives
- Public Health
- SEND and neurodiversity leaders
- Health and Care Partnerships
- Adult Education
- Kent and Medway ICB
- Primary Care

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service users – from health perspective, organization employee perspective, DWP perspective • Community leaders
Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?
No
Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?
Yes
Section C – Impact
Who may be impacted by the activity?
Service Users/clients Service users/clients
Staff Staff/Volunteers
Residents/Communities/Citizens Residents/communities/citizens
Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?
Yes
Details of Positive Impacts
<p>The intended purpose of the Kent and Medway Integrated Work and Health Strategy is to support people with long term health conditions or disabilities to start stay and succeed in work. To that end it would be intended that there would be a positive differential impact on those people experiencing disability</p> <p>Age: Further evidence will be explored for this but there is likely to be a positive differential for age. As people age it is more likely that they will develop a long term health condition which may also result in a disability. Therefore by developing the strategy it is likely that there will be a positive differential impact for this factor.</p> <p>There is also potential to impact positively on younger age groups given work limiting conditions have risen fastest in the younger age groups. The rate of work limiting conditions among younger workers has doubled in the last decade. The number of workers aged 16 – 34 who report that their mental health limits the type or amount of work they can do has quadrupled in the last decade.</p> <p>Disability: The programmes and initiatives that emerge from the strategy are likely to impact positively upon people with a disability who have previously been excluded from the labour market.</p> <p>Sex: There is potentially a positive differential impact for women where factors such as menopause and pregnancy will be taken into consideration. Alongside this, the negative or positive impact of specific health conditions relating to men need to be considered.</p> <p>22% of working age women report having a work limiting condition compared with 17% of men (https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-we-know-about-the-uk-s-working-age-health-challenge.)</p> <p>Gender Identity/transgender: Relevant data relating to gender identity and employment alongside long term health conditions and disability needs to be explored further to determine its impact.</p> <p>RACE:</p>

This factor will be explored further to establish particularly whether there is likely negative differential impact when taking into consideration the additional risk factors for people of minority ethnic groups for some health conditions such as diabetes.

Risk factors for this group could include wider determinants such as occupations and other factors related to culture. People in these groups may be reticent to come forward for support other than to trusted contacts and therefore care will need to be taken to reach out to these communities in a way that engages them most appropriately.

Working age people of Bangladeshi ethnicity are most likely to have a work limiting condition, followed by those of white and Pakistani ethnicity. ([https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-we-know-about-the-uk-s-working-age-health-challenge.](https://www.health.org.uk/publications/long-reads/what-we-know-about-the-uk-s-working-age-health-challenge))

Religion or belief:

Further evidence will be sought for this factor (religion) but care does need to be taken in implementation that there is not a negative differential impact for this factor. Religion or belief may cause people to be reticent to come forward through the usual designated channels. Care must be taken to reach out to some specific community groups through trusted routes.

Sexual Orientation:

Relevant data relating to sexual orientation and employment alongside long term health conditions and disability needs to be explored further to determine the impact of sexual orientation.

Pregnancy & Maternity:

Evidence needs to be reviewed for this factor to determine conclusively but it is likely that there will be a positive differential impact where associated conditions relating to pregnancy and maternity create circumstances where it becomes difficult to engage in work including due to caring responsibilities.

Marriage & Civil Partnerships:

Relevant data relating to gender identity and employment alongside long term health conditions and disability needs to be explored further to determine its impact.

Carer's Responsibilities:

The programmes and initiatives that emerge from the strategy are likely to impact positively upon people with carer's responsibilities as people receiving care due to long term health conditions are more likely to be supported into the labour market.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No

Details of negative impacts for Age

Not applicable

Mitigating Actions for Age

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Not applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

No

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Applicable
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not applicable
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not applicable
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Applicable
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Applicable
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No
Negative impacts for Race
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Applicable
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable

26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
N/A
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
None
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Steve Samson
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

**GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE
WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025**

Item	Cabinet Committee to receive item
Work Programme	Standing item
Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corporate Director	Standing item
Final Draft Budget	November and January
Risk Register – Strategic Risk Register	Annually (March)
Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
Kent and Medway Business Fund Monitoring	Bi-annual reporting (6 monthly)
Key Decision Items	

22 JANUARY 2025 at 2pm

1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Thames Estuary	
7	Final Draft Budget	
8	Folkestone library and 2 Grace Hill building - Consultation Response	Key Decision
9	Community Wardens Update	
10	Growing Places Fund Update	Key Decision
11	National Support Employment Programme	Key Decision
12	Universal Support	
13	Minerals and Waste Local Plan	TBC January or March
14	Performance Dashboard	
15	Tourism in the county and economic impact – Visit Kent	
16	Work Programme	Standing item

6 MARCH 2025 at 10am

1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item

6	KMBF Bi-Annual report	
7	Kent Rural Partnership – Update of last 18 months of activity and priorities	
8	Brand Kent Commission Update	
9	Inward Investment Economic Impact update – Locate in Kent	
10	Kent & Medway Economic Framework Implementation Update	
12	Trading Standards Checked – Information paper	
13	Sports Capital Grant	
14	Work Programme	Standing item
1 JULY 2025 at 10am		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Performance Dashboard	
7	Kent Design Guide	
8	Border Target Operating Model and Trading Standards/ KSS	
9	Employment Task Force	General Update
10	Work Programme	Standing item

Items for Consideration/Not yet allocated to a meeting		
Dungeness Nuclear Power Station	Given the announcement in the March 2024 Government Budget that Great British Nuclear will delay a decision on where the first Small Modular Reactors will be delivered until after the General Election, there is no substantive update that can be provided to Cabinet Committee. Work and engagement will continue in meantime and will be reported upon in 2025.	<i>(Mr Robey – agenda setting 31/01/23)</i>
Lower Thames Crossing		
Otterpool Garden Town		
Energy Infrastructure		