

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 4 March 2025.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mrs C Bell, Mrs S Chandler, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Mr D Watkins and Mr R J Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr A Ghosh (Director of Public Health), Mrs S Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mr J Betts (Interim Corporate Director Finance), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr R Smith (Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health), Mr C Chapman (Head of Fair Access), Mr P Lightowler (Head of Public Transport), Mrs S Thompson (Head of Planning Applications Group), Mr M Wagner (Chief Analyst) and Mr D Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

93. Apologies

(Item 1)

No apologies were received

94. Declarations of Interest

(Item 2)

No declarations of interest were received

95. Minutes of the Meeting held on 30 January 2025

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 30 January 2025 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair

96. Cabinet Member Updates

(Item 4)

1. Mr Watkins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, provided an update on the following:
 - (a) The UK Day of Reflection was due to take place on Sunday 9 March and marked five years since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of participation events were being held across the county at parks, libraries and family hubs. County Council staff and Members would also be able to remember others and share experiences on a digital memory wall. The Day of Reflection was a date to remember those no longer with us, those still

impacted by the pandemic and the many frontline workers and volunteers who helped through those difficult years.

- (b) Care Providers gathered at Westminster on 25th February to call on the Government to urgently address the funding shortfall announced within the autumn budget and which threatened the future of adult social care through increased National Insurance Contributions (NICs). Mr Watkins thanked Mr Oakford for his participation on the day. To date, no response had been received from the Minister following the joint letter from Mr Watkins and the Kent Integrated Care Alliance.
 - (c) The Public Health Transformation Programme commenced in July 2023 and aimed to improve service delivery across the county, with particular emphasis on targeting of underserved communities. The transformation worked included the introduction of new service models, such as substance misuse, health visiting and infant feeding, school health, oral health, sexual health, NHS health checks and the adult lifestyle programme, all of which had made excellent progress. Kent County Council had a legal duty to deliver those services under the Social Care Act 2012 and the Public Health team had worked tremendously hard to ensure that the transition to those new models would be implemented in good time.
 - (d) A free 24/7 support service for expectant or new parents had launched. Soon to be new parents who were experiencing mental health problems during their pregnancy or with parenting, could speak confidentially to a trained advisor via KCC's free perinatal mental health helpline or text service. Becoming a mum, dad, carer or guardian of a young baby is a significant moment in life. One in five women experience parental mental health issues during or soon after pregnancy and men can also struggle with anxiousness at these times. Given the challenges presented during this period and with the acknowledgement that a wide support network is not always available to new parents to help them navigate the experience, it was hoped that the new helpline and service provided expectant, and new mums and dads, a place to go whenever they need it.
 - (e) The Baton of Hope campaign aimed to raise awareness of suicide prevention. The Baton was due to start in Blackpool on 1st September 2025 and travel through a total of 20 locations , with its tour through Medway, Maidstone, Canterbury and Thanet taking place on 22nd September 2025, before finishing in Wrexham. All districts were being encouraged to play a role in promoting hope and starting the conversations around mental health and suicide in their communities. Kent and Medway had received a positive response to calls for baton bearers, however, more were needed. The deadline for applications had been extended to 31st of March. Information could be found via: [Baton of Hope | It's Time To Start The Conversation](#)
2. Mrs Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, provided an update on the following:
- (a) The Children and Young People Conference Day took place on 18th February 2025 which focussed on neurodiversity, a topic that remained crucial for the wellbeing and development of the children and young people that KCC served.

The day provided valuable insights on the latest research from the Children's Commissioner, the work of North East London Foundation Trust (NELFT), the neuroscience of learning and biology of stress, and the dynamic support service. It's also offered an extremely valuable opportunity for the members of staff (over 150) to network and update their skills.

- (b) An awareness raising film and campaign designed by Kent's young people to tackle street harassment and violence against women and girls (VAWG) had launched across Kent. On 8th February, over 100 young people at Kent Youth County Council took part in the launch of the 'Don't Disrespect' campaign and film, produced in partnership between Kent County Council, Kent Police and the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit. Young people were involved throughout the production and planning of the campaign and their experiences helped to shape the messaging throughout the film. National statistics showed that 75% of girls and women across the country, aged 12 to 21, have experienced public sexual harassment on the street from men and boys, almost half of girls have experienced harassment in schools and college and 1 in 3 girls in the UK have received unwanted sexual attention such as being groped, stared at, cat-called and wolf-whistled in public. The aim was to call for boys and young men to recognise that such actions were unacceptable and to empower friends and peers to take a stand and speak up when they witness this behaviour. Mrs Chandler articulated how proud she was of all the young people involved.
 - (c) Virtual School Kent recently received further accreditation for the Nurture Program. Tony Duran, the Headteacher of Virtual School Kent, had been asked to be part of an all-party parliamentary group on inclusion and relational approaches in education which stemmed from the work with Nurture UK and the glowing report that they had from that. The accreditation was of particular accolade to Mr Duran for all his work.
3. Mr Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, provided an update on the following:
- (a) A update report on the latest performance figures was provided which reflected the significant improvements around SEN services. The SEN phase transfer for 2025 had achieved 97.5% decisions published on time, with 91% of families having received a named preference. Mr Love noted the outstanding results and significant improvements after the short-lived statutory improvement notice. Further enhancements had been identified for next year.
 - (b) In regards to key performance indicators on the time taken to complete Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) for those pupils with the most complex needs and who meet the threshold for coordinated support, Mr Love announced that in February 2024 KCC were in the bottom 15 % of local authorities in England. However, through the exemplary efforts and hard work of the SEN team, the February 2025 figure showed that 89.9 % of EHCPs were completed within 20 weeks. The national average was currently 50.3%. KCC was therefore performing within the top quintile performance amongst local authorities. The SEN team remained committed to trialling, reviewing and refining every part of its processes to improve the customer experience. Mr Love paid thanks to all involved and their incredible work.

- (c) The 3rd March was Secondary School National Offer Day, whereby Year 6 pupils were able to find out which secondary school had offered them a place for September 2025. This year saw a 2.5 % increase in the proportion of children who received their first preference, and a 12% reduction in the proportion of children who had to be allocated a place by the local authority. It was the lowest proportion that had to be allocated by the local authority since 2016
 - (d) Mr Love had visited a number of special schools in the last month which had enabled ongoing fruitful discussions with the Headteachers. Two of the schools visited were currently undergoing expansion through the help of KCC, this evidencing the Council's commitment to ensure sufficient special school places were available for those children with the most complex needs. The fourth school visited was Brockhill Park Performing Arts College in Saltwood near Hythe whom have incorporated learning from the schools farm into several aspects of the school's curriculum.
4. Mr Baker, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, provided an update on the following:
- (a) In 2024, KCC allocated £8.6 million to the pothole blitz programme. For 2025, the pothole blitz would receive £14.5 million towards it. This was an increase of almost 70%.
 - (b) In regards to the maintenance of roads, including pavements, streetlights, drains and other highways assets, the total spend for overall maintenance for 2025-26 would be in the region of £80 million. All efforts would continue to maximise resources available.
 - (c) The Director of Highways was in discussion with the Department for Transport to determine the level of flexibility within the funding pots received from central government to ensure funding is allocated to areas of need for Kent residents to ensure they can travel as safely and efficiently as possible.
 - (d) Mr Baker advised that all efforts continued to urge central government to fund roads in a way that reflected their usage rather than my mileage.
 - (e) A submission had been made to the Transport Select Committee regarding their street work inquiry. KCC's evidence had been accepted, and would be published on the committee's website. KCC had also been invited to provide oral evidence on the 19th of March, to make the case that all highways authorities required greater control than currently permitted over the coordination of street works.
 - (f) High levels of demand remained around street works. Water companies were entering their new asset management plan period, following additional funding released. South East Water had already advised KCC of extensive main laying schemes over the next five years within Kent. Coupled with the Government's direction on house building, it was not anticipate that demand for road space would lessen.

- (g) A company called OneSpatial had recently secured Lane Rental funds to trial their OneStreetWorks application in Kent. The cloud-based collaborative platform automatically produced compliant traffic management plans in under two minutes. Previous trials with UK Power Networks showed that using OneStreetWorks could reduce road closures by up to 40%. Further funds had been awarded to roll it out on a greater scale across all works promoters within Kent. If successful, the benefits to Kent, its residents and the organisations that operate within Kent could be truly significant with a predicted positive public economic impact of more than £25 million per year.
5. Mr R Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment, provided an update on the following:
- (a) KCC had received the Energy Efficiency Awards. This recognition celebrated KCC's commitment to promoting energy efficiency across the county such as the council's innovative solar power projects, including the 11.9 acre solar farm at Kings Hill. The judges commended KCC's ambition to achieve net zero by 2030 and commitment to reduce reliance on fossil fuels through solar installations at schools, communities, hubs and council offices. Additionally, KCC continued to support the local community with various energy efficiency initiatives including financial assistance, educational programs and collaborative projects to help promote sustainable energies within the community.
 - (b) KCC has successfully re-certified its ISO 14001 environmental management accreditation with zero non-compliance issues following a four -day audit. This achievement reflected KCC's dedication to environmental excellence. Mr Thomas extended his gratitude to all staff involved.
 - (c) KCC had partnered with Pilgrims Hospice to recycle Christmas trees. The longstanding partnership enabled residents to recycle their Christmas trees while supporting a meaningful cause. Thanks to the efforts of numerous volunteers, the charity collected over 4,200 Christmas trees at the end of 2025, raising circa £80,000 in donations. The Christmas trees were taken to KCC's waste transfer station at Ashford and then transported to a composting facility
 - (d) The Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) customer satisfaction survey results were positive and achieved a 96% satisfaction rate. Customer feedback had led to the development of a customer account facility. Registered customers could save up to three addresses and vehicles on their account enabling them to book their visits even quicker. Customers could also log into their accounts to easily manage their bookings. The new feature was due to launch in the coming weeks
 - (e) Mr Thomas announced that Deborah Kapai had started work as the strategic lead for the Kent Resource partnership. A number of meetings had been facilitated with partners to establish priorities and work streams, including food waste, reduction of contamination and recycling, as well as reviewing and updating the Kent Municipal Waste Strategy.

- (f) Mr Thomas took the opportunity as it was his last Cabinet meeting to express his gratitude to the team for the ongoing work related to the Making Space for Nature Strategy, the consultation of which would close on 12th March. It remained incredibly important to reverse the decline of nature. Furthermore a green finance strategy would also continue to be developed with anticipated approval later in the year. Work would also continue around the Net Zero strategy
 - (g) In regard to windmill divestment, Mr Thomas was due to attend the Kent Mill Manager meeting later in the month where work would continue with partners to find a satisfactory long-term solution for the management of windmills. Mr Thomas noted that KCC's resources continued to diminish in this area, however, it was hoped that the matter would be brought to conclusion later in the year.
 - (h) With regard to waste and recycling, Mr Thomas noted that in the coming weeks KCC would be receiving its extended producer responsibility payment to help reduce the costs and carbon emissions produced from Kents waste processing. Work was also underway to improve recycling.
6. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Growth and Economic Development, provided an update on the following:
- (a) Significant progress continued to be made since the relaunch of the Kent Medway Business Fund scheme. The Investment Advisory Board and its subgroup had recommended the approval of 41 loans totalling £4.7 million in the last year. These loans included support for two life sciences businesses created in Discovery Park following the partial withdrawal of Pfizer from the site, three businesses operating the food and drink sector, including an ice cream business and a high -end bakery, three recruitment and training businesses, a company operating in the environmental sector, three businesses in the hospitality sector, and three companies in the wellbeing and care sectors. And in addition, a range of others, including gardening solutions, clothing, education, virtual driver training, a climbing centre, and electoral contracting.
 - (b) Visit Kent continued to deliver a range of commission services to support, promote, and represent the county's vibrant visitor economy. A recent report confirmed that visitor numbers and spend were back to pre -pandemic levels, with the sector providing over 77,000 local jobs. The 2025 Big Weekend was due to be held in April, funded by KCC to enable residents to enter a ballot, to receive free passes to local attractions, to raise awareness of the local visitor offer, and encourage return visits with friends and relatives
 - (c) The Department of Education confirmed at the end of February that the Kent and Medway Bid for Local Skills Boot Camp program had been approved. Work was underway to enable 50 courses for over 500 learners to be delivered locally to help people into work and to enhance career opportunities for existing employees.

- (d) Mr Murphy was due to attend a meeting of the Straits Committee with representatives from Belgium, Holland and France due to meet Kent Ambassadors to understand the latest priorities for cross-border working.
 - (e) On the No Use Empty scheme, Mr Murphy had recently visited one of the most problematical properties in Folkestone, 45 Augusta Gardens. The property had received financial support from the NUE was now in active use as five apartments after remaining empty and dilapidated for over 25 years. KCC's Comms team had secured local press coverage as well as an article on the BBC South East website. National Empty Homes Week started on 3rd March 2025. Adam Cliff from the Empty Homes Network was scheduled to meet with Steve Grimshaw, the leader of the NUE project, and the NUE team to visit various sites around the county. NUE was also due to present to the Local Government Association on the 27th of March. Since its inception, more than 500 individual loans had been processed under the Empty Property initiative, and all funds for 2024 -25 had been allocated. There was a healthy pipeline of projects for the new year, both empty properties and new builds. In 2024 -25, no use empty generated a return on investment of 4% for KCC Treasury of £650,000 (after paying admin costs and the original loan back). To date, the no use empty scheme had contributed to £1.5million to Treasury.
 - (f) The Kent and Medway Business Fund Investment Advisory Board had recently agreed to support an allocation of an additional £6 million to the no - use empties scheme to deliver more commercial business units for the county. The Kent and Medway Business Growth Hub service, together with representatives from the Kent and Medway Business Fund, had continued with a series of business roadshows across the county, which offered one-to-one navigational and supporting services to local and national businesses. The Growth Hub had launched a series of 11 accelerated workshops, which were free for local businesses to access, covering topics such as sales, marketing, and finance. The first workshop was scheduled to take place on 15th of January. All workshops could be accessed both virtually and face -to - face in four locations to support networking opportunities. Recordings of the workshops would be uploaded to the Kent and Midway Business Growth Hub YouTube channel for businesses to access on their own time.
 - (g) Mr Murphy paid tribute to the team for their ongoing hard work.
7. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services provided an update on the following:
- (a) On libraries, registration and archives, visits to Kent libraries had increased by 4% compared to last year, with e-book and audio book usage up 12%. Public PC and Wi -Fi usage had also risen, reinforcing the vital role of libraries in digital access and community well -being. Over 170,000 people had attended library events over the course of year, a 6% increase. The archive service remained a key resource for Kent history, with in -person visits up 4%. The registration service continued to meet demand with ceremonies increasing by 4%, including a 22% rise in citizenship ceremonies
 - (b) Broadstairs Library had been shortlisted for the Library of the Year Award as part of the British Book Awards 2025.

- (c) The Know Your Neighbourhood Project in Thanet also had a significant impact, helping vulnerable residents access library services and community support.
 - (d) In Folkestone, work was underway to deliver a long-term solution for the Town Centre Library. Mrs Bell met with Creative Folkestone on their concept for the Grace Hill building. Proposals from other community organisations were also due to be accepted through the asset of community value process.
 - (e) The Dover Discovery Centre's refurbishment was on track for completion in summer 2025. The modernisation of multiple library spaces using developer contributions were also underway. Newington and Sturry had expanded the children's libraries with Westmalling and Hythe House in North Fleet next in line. Smaller improvements were also expected to progress at Minster in Sheppey, Paddock Wood, at Allington and Sandgate Libraries.
 - (f) KCC had hosted a visit from Her Majesty the Queen in Canterbury when she unveiled a statue of Aphra Behn, one of the first English women to earn her living as a professional writer. Mrs Bell had the pleasure, alongside the Leader, Mr Gough, Chairman of KCC, Mr Sweetland, Mrs Beer, Chief Executive and other senior officers, to represent KCC on the day. The Queen was taken on a guided tour of the Beeney Library by, Mr Pearson, Head of Libraries, Registration & Archives and by all accounts she showed great interest in all that the library had to offer. The library was home to over 50,000 books, including works by Aphra Behn and precious local studies collection. She toured the museum, which was run by Canterbury City Council, met children from Wickhambreaux Primary School, was introduced to the Wise Words for Wellbeing Creative Reading and Writing Group, and the collection of Ukrainian books. The visit received extensive media coverage and was a special day for Canterbury and for Kent as a whole.
8. Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Service, provided an update on the following:
- (a) Mr Oakford placed on record his thanks to the teams and staff whose work often went unrecognised and highlighted examples of exemplary work
 - Finance:
 - Management of cash flow
 - Management of wages
 - Members' allowances
 - Debt management – reduced to £800m
 - budget process,
 - Homes for Ukraine scheme,
 - Safety Valve program - secured £140m of funding to protect the most vulnerable children and young people with special educational needs whilst also providing the taxpayer.
 - Introduction of a 10-year capital program.
 - Infrastructure:
 - Delivery of reception centres.

- Cost recovery in areas such as utilities, business rate appeals, that saw £1.7m in returns to KCC in the last financial year.
 - Delivery of the communities programme, decommissioning of 46 buildings, 37 of these are no longer operational and the sales are progressing.
 - Recovery of £1.1m of disputed rent arrears and the continued management of £5m worth of rental income
 - Disposals - selling nearly £25m worth of assets,
 - Reinforced, Autoclaved, Aerated concrete (RAAC) - proactive commitment in ensuring all Kent schools were safe.
 - Dover Discovery Centre
- Human Resources:
 - Oracle programme – more resilient
 - Implementation of the new pay strategy
 - Information Technology:
 - Replaced over 5,000 laptops through the last 12 -18 months
 - Completed over 200 accessibility requests.
 - excellent cyber security - the government auditors stated they had rarely seen devices as secure as the new WP laptops within KCC
 - Co-pilot

Further thanks and recognition was paid to the Corporate Directors, Cabinet Members and staff for all their achievements and continued success.

9. Mr Gough, Leader of the Council, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Thanks was paid to Mr Oakford, Mr Thomas and Mr Murphy for their service as this would cease in May following the elections.
- (b) On the Government's Devolution Priority Programme, the Leader advised that Kent and Medway had not been successful in its application to be taken forward as part of the programme. The Leader expressed his discontent at the Government's incomprehensible decision and one based off incoherent reasoning. The decision from Government would have a detrimental impact on Kent residents and the Council continued in its efforts to pursue the rationale as to the decision that had been taken, and also sought to engage with ministers on ways forward as part of its proposed reorganisation.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Members for their updates

97. Late Changes to the 25-26 Budget and 25-2028 Medium Term Financial Plan (Item 5)

John Betts (interim Corporate Director Finance) and Dave Shipton (Head of Finance, Policy, Planning, Strategy) were in attendance for this item

1. Mr Shipton introduced the report that provided details of late changes to the approved 2025-26 revenue budget which were not available in time for the County Council budget meeting. This included net changes to share of Retained Business

Rates growth/Business Rates Compensation Grant (+£42.7k) and Business Rates collection fund. The paper included a recommendation that business rates collection fund surplus balance be transferred to the local taxation equalisation reserve in accordance with existing policy and the remainder added to the existing contribution to the general reserve. This paper also updated Cabinet on other late changes to specific grants since County Council on the 13th February 2025 which did not impact on the net revenue budget requirement

2. RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to:

- (a) NOTE the budget updates and ENDORSE that they be included in final 2025-26 budget in accordance with the Budget Decision made at County Council on 13th February 2025.
- (b) APPROVE the net transfer of £356.0k into reserves (£42.7k increased contribution into the General Reserve and £313.3k contribution into the Local Taxation Equalisation smoothing reserve) to improve the Council's financial resilience.
- (c) APPROVE additional £6,067.8k of specific grant income along with associated spending with nil impact on net 2025-26 revenue budget

98. Quarterly Performance Report, Q3 2024-2025

(Item 6)

David Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance) and Matthew Wagner (Chief Analyst, Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance) was in attendance for this item

1. Mr Wagner outlined the report for Quarter 3 (Q3, 2024/25) which set out the performance data up to the end of December 2024. Mr Wagner noted that of the 38 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) contained within the QPR, 17 achieved target (Green), and 12 achieved or exceeded the floor standard but did not meet target (Amber) and 9 KPIs did not meet the floor standard (Red). With regards to Direction of Travel, 10 indicators showed a positive trend (one fewer than the previous Quarter), 22 were stable or with no clear trend (the same as the previous Quarter), and six were showing a negative trend (the same as the previous Quarter). Following changes in Ofsted's reporting of inspections of schools and early years' settings, two KPIs in the Education & Skills section have now been removed. The direction of travel analysis was positive in comparison to quarter three last year, when there were three fewer KPIs on an improving trend and five more KPIs on a worsening trend than in the report presented. Mr Wagner addressed the KPIs assessed as Red.

2. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:

- **Percentage of phone calls to Contact Point which were answered** – it was noted that performance had improved since the last quarter and had moved from an Amber rating to Green.
- **FOI requests completed within timescale** – the number of requests completed within timescale had improved within Q3 and reached its highest level of performance in over four years. Therefore, whilst it remained rated

Red, the concerted effort from staff and utilisation of technology had seen performance levels improve.

- **Percentage of Early Help cases closed with outcomes achieved that come back to Early Help or Children's Social Work teams within 3 months** – Mrs Chandler commended the teams and staff who continued to deliver the service against a background of increased referral numbers and increased number of complex cases. Mrs Chandler commended the teams for remaining on track with their performance.
- **Percentage of case holding posts filled by permanent qualified social workers** - Mrs Chandler commented on the improved performance under this KPI and highlighted the significant amount of work around the retention and recruitment of new Social Workers.
- **The percentage of Children in Care (excluding UASC) placed in KCC in-house foster care or with family/friends** – Mrs Chandler noted that whilst the performance remained below floor standard there remained a number of factors which impacted on KCC's ability to maintain its percentage of foster carers. However, work continued on the initiatives to increase the number of fostering households. There had also been an increase in children with more complex needs for which foster care was not an option. The implementation of in-house provision aimed to address this.
- **Percentage of Education, Health Care Plans (EHCPs) issued within 20 weeks – rolling 12 months** – Mr Love highlighted that the figure in the report was a 12 month rolling average and it was not until June 2024 that significant improvements started to be made with reducing the backlog and completing EHCPs within the 20 week timescale. Therefore, whilst completion of EHCP assessments in timescale remained below floor standard, there continued to be improved performance quarter on quarter.
- Mr Baker commented on the **lagged impact of KPI reporting** and the need to take into account the severity of weather events which impacted on performance. Despite the unprecedented challenges presented to the service due to weather pressures, the directorate managed to only miss performance targets by minimal percentage. Mr Baker placed his thanks on record to all the staff who contoured to work at high capacity.

3. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the Quarter 3 Performance Report and the actions being taken to address areas where performance is not as targeted

99. Cabinet Reconsideration of Decision 24/00093 - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs (Item 7)

Sarah Hammond (Corporate Director for Children's, Young People and Education) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mrs Chandler (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services) introduced the report which set out the comments expressed during the debate at the [Scrutiny Committee held on Wednesday 29th January 2025](#) following the call-in of

decision [24/00093](#) - Future of Commissioned Services at Seashells and Millmead Family Hubs.

2. Mrs Chandler advised that the comments and views expressed at Scrutiny Committee had been considered by herself and Senior Officers, having kept in mind the policy context set by the Council and the requirement to deliver family health services to families, children and young people consistently across Kent.
3. Particular consideration was given on the points raised about co-location of services and potential reach. Mrs Chandler highlighted that the original decision had been amended to include the option of delivery of outreach services by the KCC Family Hub team in recognition of the consultation responses, which expressed considerable concern about those two issues. Careful consideration had also been given to the various issues raised over the available data. Mrs Chandler emphasised that data relating to delivery of family hub services as determined by the DFE had to be the key data that was considered, however, assurance was provided that that wider data sets which had been provided by the centres were being considered carefully in the context with relation to family health services.
4. Mrs Chandler confirmed that the report to Full Council would provide the detailed responses to the above points and the others that were raised at the Scrutiny Committee.
5. Mrs Chandler offered an alternative recommendation for Cabinet consideration, as follows:

“that Cabinet note the report from Scrutiny and note the referral of this item to full council”

6. The Leader advised that Cabinet should not pre-empt the debate at full Council. It was however recognised that a number of issues needed to be addressed during the debate at Full Council, including the data sets and understanding what the indicators confirmed. It was also important that the discussion of the decision was in line with policy choice regarding the Family Hubs model.
7. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:
 - Members expressed their confidence in the Cabinet Member for Integrated Children’s Services to review the decision and ensure availability of figures to support a well-informed debate at Full Council. It was noted that until the full information had been presented, it was not appropriate for Cabinet to make any further recommendations.
 - Members expressed discontentment regarding the petition submitted calling for the resignation of Cabinet Members for decisions that the administration were taking. Whilst debate and the expression of different views remained a part of a healthy representative democracy, such unacceptable behaviours undermined the key democratic principles of free speech, debate and engagement, and thus posed a risk to councillors' personal safety. Cabinet Members acted in accordance with the law and in accordance with the administration's policies.

- Members recognised the challenges presented to the Executive and the substantial effort in navigating those difficult decisions.

8. RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to:

- (a) NOTE the comments and views expressed by Scrutiny when agreeing to refer the matter to Full Council
- (b) CONFIRM the decision will be progressed to Full Council unchanged at this time
- (c) AGREE to present further information to support Full Council consideration of the call-in

100. Home to School Transport - Presentation

(Item 8)

Craig Chapman (Assistant Director - Fair Access and (Interim) SEN Processes) and Phil Lightowler (Head of Public Transport) were in attendance for this item

1. Mr Chapman and Mr Lightowler presented a series of slides which set out information on Home to School Transport which addressed the work that continued to be undertaken to balance user satisfaction, cost and outcomes to ensure sustainable delivery. Thanks was paid to the Strategic Reset team and to Mr Ben Watts (General Counsel) for the support provided to deliver the programme of work. Mr Chapman highlighted that KPIs against Home to School Transport delivery were Green and commended the fantastic achievement of the teams who had managed to deliver amazing outcomes for the Council and the children of Kent. Further recognition was paid to Shane Bushell, Client Transport Manager.
2. The Leader noted the remarkable accomplishments and thanked both Mr Chapman and Mr Lightowler for their work. It was an exemplary example of collaborative working across all the Councils business to ensure areas of pressure were identified and resolved, thus obtaining an 89% satisfaction rate from parents and carers. The Leader also commended the service for the £12.5m underspend which had stemmed from a range of initiatives and asked that the message of thanks be extended to all involved for their considerable efforts.
3. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:
 - Members commended the success of the service in the delivery of improved Home to School Transport
 - It was noted that the close collaboration between teams helped to identify areas of weakness in the system and address them. Further benefits transpired through work with the supplier market, with recruitment and training of staff which had increased the number of transport providers available.
 - It was noted that 6400 pupils were transported on a daily basis, with 3867 individual vehicle trips per day, which served 523 establishments. Kent SEN transport continued to achieve outstanding results and this was accredited to the SRP team and analytics.

4. RESOLVED that the presentation and ongoing work be noted and welcomed, with thanks.

101. Adoption of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039
(Item 9)

Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport), and Sharon Thompson (Head of Planning Applications Group) were in attendance for this item

1. Mr Murphy (Cabinet Member for Economic Development) and Ms Thompson, introduced the report. The County Council had a statutory responsibility to plan for future minerals supply and waste management within Kent. As a result, the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2013-30 was adopted by County Council in July 2016 with some limited changes adopted in September 2020. The Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan contained planning policies relating to minerals supply and waste management against which the Council assessed planning applications for.
2. Members were drawn to section 4.3 of the report in relation to the objection received on the Minerals Sites Plan work, in particular the nominated hard rock site at Oaken Wood, Aylesford. Clarification was provided that this had been submitted in response to the Council's 'call for sites' as part of the Sites Plan work. For the avoidance of doubt, the Kent Mineral and Waste Local Plan 2024-39 made no decision in relation to the Oaken Wood site. This was a matter for the separate Mineral Sites Plan work. Work on the review of this plan was ongoing and remained subject to detailed technical assessment of the submitted hard rock site. Until that assessment had been completed, no decision could be taken on whether the site should be allocated or not. A future report would be considered by the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee. The Plan before Members for adoption provided the strategy for minerals supply, including the quantity of minerals required, not where sites to meet the need were to be allocated.
3. Ms Thompson added that the current local plan was adopted in 2016 with a limited review in 2020 and no longer reflected up to date planning policy and guidance in a number of areas. The Plan set out the planning strategy for minerals and waste development in Kent and was the policy document for the determination of planning applications affecting mineral and waste management development and ensured planning applications were determined in accordance with the Local Plan. It was therefore important to have a local plan that was up to date to reflect local circumstances and which had been shaped by local requirements.
4. There had been significant changes to planning and environmental policy over the last 10 years; the drivers for the changes were set out in paragraph 1.7. These included:
 - Multiple changes to the National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)
 - Greater emphasis on climate change mitigation and protection and enhancement of the natural environment;

- A move towards a more circular economy with a stronger emphasis on the waste hierarchy
5. The Plan had been subject to extensive public consultation as set out in paragraph 1.5 and these comments helped to shape and influenced the Plan. The work has also been the subject of a cross party Informal Members Group. The pre submission version of the Local Plan was considered by County Council in December 2023.
 6. The planning inspector considered this Plan, along with representations regarding legal compliance and soundness made in January to February 2024. The report was set out in appendix A and concluded that with the modifications set out in appendix 1 of the inspector's report the Plan was sound and could be adopted. Recommendations for modifications in the plan making process were common as these essentially responded to representations that had been made by interested parties. The nature of these were set out in paragraph 2.2 and did not change the principle of the strategy and policy direction of the Plan that Members had submitted for examination.
 7. The Council's governance process required that the adoption of the Plan be a decision for County Council and that as part of that process, reports be considered by Cabinet and Cabinet Committee. The intention is for the adoption to be considered at the County Council meeting in March 2025.
 8. Members welcomed the Plan and thanked Mrs Thompson and her colleagues for their extensive work.
 9. RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to:
 - (a) NOTE the Inspector's Report (see Appendix A) on the examination of the Kent Minerals and Waste Local Plan 2024-2039 (KWMLP);
 - (b) NOTE the recommendations of the Sustainability Appraisal of the KMWLP (Appendix D); and,
 - (c) ENDORSE the Cabinet Member's proposal to recommend the KMWLP (Appendix B), as modified, to County Council for Approval and Adoption