



Summons to and
Agenda for a
Meeting on
**Thursday, 10th July,
2025**
at **10.00 am**



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
SESSIONS HOUSE
MAIDSTONE

Wednesday, 2 July 2025

To: All Members of the County Council

A meeting of the County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ on Thursday, 10th July, 2025 at **10.00 am** to deal with the following business. **The meeting is scheduled to end by 4.30 pm.**

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
3. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 May 2025 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record **(Pages 1 - 10)**
4. Corporate Parenting Panel - Minutes for noting **(Pages 11 - 16)**
5. Chairman's Announcements
6. Questions
7. Report by Leader of the Council
8. Member Allowances Scheme (to follow)
9. Motions for Time Limited Debate **(Pages 17 - 20)**

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 22 May 2025.

PRESENT: Mr J Baker, Mr B Barrett, Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Mr M Ellis, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Mr R Ford, Mrs B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr S Heaver, M J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Mr S Jeffery, Ms L Kemkaran, Ms I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Rich Lehmann, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Mr J Moreland, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr M Munday, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mr T Prater, Ms A Randall, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Mrs S Roots, Ms C Russell, Mr G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE, Mr G Sturley, Mr D Taylor, Mr P Thomas, Mr A Thorp, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mr N Williams, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) and Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

309. Election of Chairman (Item 1)

(Mr Sweetland, the present Chairman, presided for this item)

- (1) Mr Paul Webb proposed, and Ms Isabella Kemp seconded that Mr Richard Palmer be elected as Chairman of the County Council.
- (2) As there were no further nominations, Mr Sweetland declared Mr Richard Palmer as Chairman of the County Council.
- (3) Mr Palmer made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office, following which Mr Sweetland invested Mr Palmer with the Badge of Office.
- (4) Mr Palmer paid tribute to Mr Sweetland and presented him with the Past Chairman's Badge, following which Mr Palmer took the chair.
- (5) RESOLVED that Mr Palmer be elected as Chairman of the County Council.

310. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item 2)

- (1) Mr Paul Chamberlain proposed, and Mrs Pamela Williams seconded that Mr Peter Evans be elected as Vice-Chairman of the County Council.
- (2) As there were no further nominations, the Chairman declared Mr Peter Evans as Vice-Chairman of the County Council.
- (3) Mr Evans made his Declaration of Acceptance of Office, following which Mr Ridgers invested Mr Evans with the Vice-Chairman's Badge. Mr Evans returned thanks for his election.
- (4) Mr Sweetland presented Mr Ridgers with his past Vice-Chairman's badge.
- (5) The Chairman thanked Mr Sweetland and Mr Ridgers, on behalf of the Council, for their years of service.
- (6) RESOLVED that Mr Evans be elected as Vice-Chairman of the County Council.

311. Apologies for Absence

(Item 3)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Miss Connie Nolan, Mr Dean Truder, and Mr Ryan Waters.

312. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda

(Item 4)

- (1) The General Counsel advised Members that unless an interest was significant and related directly to an item on the agenda all interests recorded in their Register of Interests may be taken as read.
- (2) There were no declarations of interest.

313. Minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record

(Item 5)

- (1) The Democratic Services Manager explained there was a clerical error at paragraph 5 of Item 15 - *Governance Updates* - of the minutes of the meeting held on 13 March 2025.

- (2) In relation to Item 9 – *Review of Decision 24/00093 – Commissioned Family Hubs* - Mr Lehmann explained that Mr Mike Baldock wished for his name to be recorded in the minutes as voting against the motion.
- (3) RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 13 March 2025 be approved as a correct record subject to the amendments referred to in paragraph 1 and 2 above.

314. The Returning Officer to submit the returns of persons elected to be County Councillors until 2029
(Item 6)

- (1) The County Returning Officer for the County of Kent submitted the return of persons elected to be county councillors for the electoral divisions of the county as reproduced in the papers for this meeting.
- (2) The County Returning Officer, Mr Hook and the Chairman thanked staff who had helped organise and run the 2025 elections.
- (3) RESOLVED that the return of Councillors duly elected to the County Council for the period until May 2029 be noted.

315. Chairman's Announcements
(Item 7)

Chairman's Charities

- (1) The Chairman said he looked forward to supporting two local Kent based charities during his year as Chairman which were SATEDA, a specialist domestic abuse charity exclusively for women and children in Kent, and the Young Lives Foundation, a children's charity dedicated to offering guidance, support, and opportunities to individuals facing significant challenges.

Mr Roy Bullock MBE

- (2) The Chairman explained that at the March meeting of the County Council, Members agreed a formal motion of condolence for Mr Roy Bullock MBE, tributes for whom would be taken at today's meeting.
- (3) During his time at KCC, Mr Bullock served on the Corporate Policy Overview Committee, Electoral Boundary & Review Committee, Environment Highways & Waste Policy Overview Committee, Regeneration & Economic Development Policy Overview Committee, Education & Libraries Committee, Strategic Planning Committee, Policy & Resources Committee (Vice Chairman), Property Sub-Committee and the Tunbridge Wells Local Board. He was appointed an Honorary Alderman in 2016 for his service to the Council.

- (4) Mr Bullock also served as Leader of Tunbridge Wells Borough Council from 2007 to 2012.
- (5) Tributes were made by Ms Kemkaran, Mr Hook, Mr Lehmann, Mr Rayner and Mr Brady.

316. Election of the Leader of the Council
(Item 8)

- (1) Mr Maxwell Harrison proposed, and Ms Georgia Foster seconded that Ms Linden Kemkaran be appointed as Leader of the Council.
- (2) As there were no further nominations the Chairman declared Ms Kemkaran as Leader of the County Council.
- (3) Ms Kemkaran returned thanks for her appointment.
- (4) RESOLVED that Ms Kemkaran be appointed as Leader of the Council.

317. Appointment of the Leader of the Opposition
(Item 9)

- (1) The Chairman proposed and the Vice-Chairman seconded that the Council confirms the opposition Member nominated by the Opposition Groups, Mr Antony Hook, as Leader of the Opposition.

Carried without a formal vote

- (2) RESOLVED that the Council confirms that Mr Hook be appointed by the Opposition Groups as Leader of the Opposition.

318. County Council Questions
(Item 10)

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, 14 questions were submitted by the deadline and 14 questions were put to the Executive. 11 questions were asked and replies given. A record of all questions and answers is available [online](#) with the papers for this meeting.

319. Report by Leader of the Council
(Item 11)

- (1) The Leader of the Council opened her report by saying it was an honour and a privilege to have been elected as a Member of the Council and thanked her fellow Reform UK Members for putting their trust in her as Leader. She paid tribute to her predecessor, Mr Roger Gough, who had been Leader of the Council for six years and thanked him for his years of service. Ms Kemkaran said she would work positively with staff, Members, MPs and District Leaders to serve the people of Kent. She encouraged

Members to ignore distractions and put the people of Kent at the heart of everything the Council did.

- (2) The Leader spoke about Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) and expressed concern that LGR would remove the county's unique identity and sense of being as one county. Reform UK was proud to directly represent the people of Kent and she would make it her priority over the coming months to find out as much as she could to formulate a response.
- (3) Referring to potholes the Leader said one of the Administration's first tasks was to work closely with the Highways Department to find new solutions that would deliver better and faster outcomes. Every possible income stream would be explored to bring about a real improvement for the whole of Kent.
- (4) In relation to adult social care, the impacts of an aging population would be examined in detail. The Leader commented that successive governments had failed to establish an overarching plan and a joined up approach between agencies would be sought.
- (5) Ms Kemkaran highlighted that improving education and skills for young people was crucial to the future of the nation. A greater emphasis would be put on apprenticeships and training so that Kent could lead the way in equipping young people in practical trades and reduce the need for labour from abroad.
- (6) The Leader would be supporting the initiative of the Police and Crime Commissioner to ban smartphones from schools and emphasised the need to understand why SEN diagnoses were rising each year. She commented that every child in Kent deserved a quality education.
- (7) There would be consideration of the tangible benefits of net-zero initiatives and whether they provided value for money for residents, and attempts by central government to build on agricultural land and overdevelop towns and villages would be resisted. The Leader said her group believed that new housing should primarily be built for local people and preserving communities was vital for a sense of belonging. Reform UK supported farmers and fruit growers and there would be a renewed focus on coastal regeneration. Kent's fishing industry would also be supported.
- (8) The Leader explained that a Cabinet Member for Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) had been appointed to identify potential savings and efficiencies throughout the Council. She said the Reform UK Members had agreed to support a motion to cut 5% from all Member allowances and redirect a saving of over £100,000 into Member Community Grant Funding.
- (9) Finally, the Leader spoke about the results of the recent election and the courage of Members. She commented that the people of Kent had voted overwhelmingly for change and for a different approach to how the Council was run.

- (10) Mr Hook, Leader of the Opposition welcomed all the new Members and paid tribute to the previous Leader and Administration of the Council. He commented that his group had doubled in size as a result of the elections and its members were serious about their role as a member of the opposition and as local champions for the areas they represented. In particular he paid tribute to Mrs Dean who had been a KCC Member for 40 years.
- (11) Mr Hook summarised the beliefs of his group which included; a society that was fair, free, and open; opportunities for all; for people to be free from poverty, ignorance, or conformity; protection of the environment; the welfare of all residents; cost of living, safety, and personal civil liberties; equality of opportunity and the adaption of services to meet differences; factual accuracy; empathy as a strength; and the opposition of populism, chauvinism, nationalism, and oligarchy. He said those broad principles would guide the Liberal Democrat group as it led the scrutiny of the Council. He invited the Administration to be cautious about leaning on its claims to have a mandate and commented that policy should be made by the Council and not from instructions from a national party.
- (12) Mr Hook referred to adult social care and stressed that the recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) inspection which had rated the Council's services as requiring improvement must be a high priority for the Council. He asked for assurance from the Leader that a detailed plan to fix the issues would be presented at the next Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee.
- (13) In relation to Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) Mr Hook explained that his group opposed a Mayor for Kent and supported power at more local levels. He said the public should be the key voice in deciding what the shape of a new arrangement should be.
- (14) Regarding SEND (Special Educational Needs and Disabilities) Mr Hook said his group welcomed a better understanding of the increasing numbers of diagnoses and commented that children in Kent with SEND had been badly let down. In February, the Kent SEND Trust had threatened a judicial review against the Council over the redesignation of seven special schools to which the previous Administration capitulated. Mr Hook invited the Leader to confirm that that was a permanent position.
- (15) Mr Hook spoke about net zero and said his group regarded the transition to renewable energy as extremely important, and if plans were brought forward to do less environmental work, they would be scrutinised carefully.
- (16) Finally, Mr Hook said his group supported farmers and fruit growers and the National Farmers' Union (NFU) had expressed dismay at the grave impact Brexit had had on farmers financially and in exporting produce. He urged Cabinet to consider the impact that climate change was having on the ability of farmers to produce crops like soft fruit in Kent.
- (17) Mr Lehman, Leader of the Green Group also congratulated Members on the recent election and echoed the Leader's praise for the former Leader of the

Council, Mr Gough. He paid tribute to Mr Gough's level-headed approach in Council meetings and said this had led to a constructive environment and he hoped that would continue.

- (18) Mr Lehmann spoke about LGR and said his group had varying views but all were against change that would further erode democratic accountability. He commented that the Green Party policy was for decisions to be made at the lowest practical level to ensure, as far as possible, that decisions were made by communities. He noted that the majority of decisions in Kent were currently made across thirteen councils and felt it would be impossible to reduce that number to just three or four without seeing bad decisions being made. He recognised that combining the County Council with District Councils would help reduce confusion over the services each council provided.
- (19) Mr Lehmann spoke about net zero and shared some facts relating to, for example, the pricing of oil and gas in the UK, the increase in domestic fuel bill costs over the past 10 to 15 years, gas price surges in 2022 and 2023, and UK investment to bring more renewables online. He said the move by Reform UK to shift from climate change denial to anti-net zero was in line with far right political groups across Europe and he hoped that the Executive would engage with the facts and resist any pressure from their central party.
- (20) Finally, Mr Lehmann said he was broadly supportive of apprenticeships and a smartphone ban.
- (21) Mr Rayner, Leader of the Conservative Group congratulated the Chairman and the Leader on their election and said his group looked forward to working with the new Administration to deliver best value for money to Kent residents, whilst considering and scrutinising carefully any proposals put forward.
- (22) The Conservative Group supported the formation of a LGR cabinet committee to allow Members to consider in public the costs and consequences, and to enable Kent residents to hear Members debate proposals.
- (23) Turning to adult social care, Mr Rayner referred to budget overruns. Whilst adult services were mandatory, he stressed the importance of ensuring that all possible efforts were made to avoid cost overruns and said he looked forward to anything that his group could offer by way of help and assistance.
- (24) Mr Brady, Leader of the Labour Group welcomed old and new Members and expressed his disappointment at the Administration's decision to take down the Ukrainian flag from within the Council Chamber.
- (25) Mr Brady asked the Administration what they would do differently to the previous Administration and said he had hoped to hear about local policy in the Leader's report. He challenged the Reform UK Members to prove to Kent residents that they were different from the previous Conservative Administration. He referred to the Reform UK group's assertion to open the books which he said had always been open and public and referred to the

work of the Council's internal and external auditors. He spoke about the role of opposition members to robustly challenge and question decision-making.

- (26) Mr Brady asked what the Administration would do differently in managing the declining road network and the adult social care overspend whilst providing Kent residents with the best possible service.
- (27) Mr Brady welcomed a focus on education and skills including apprenticeships, and regeneration in partnership with district councils. He expressed his hope that the Executive would make decisions on a county level and would bring forward new policies and decisions.
- (28) Ms Kemkaran responded to points made by the Group Leaders. She assured Members that Cabinet Members, who were soon to be announced, had already started work investigating areas within their portfolios and were eager to bring forward new policies and plans.
- (29) Ms Kemkaran responded to Mr Brady's point regarding the Ukrainian flag being removed from the Council Chamber and said whilst she believed that the flag of Kent should be in its place she was still able to support the people of Ukraine. The Leader spoke about Reform UK's election campaign and the group's policy to represent all the people of Kent.
- (30) The Leader was positive about the Group Leaders' hopes that Members could work together on areas such as SEND and supported Mr Rayner's view of forming a cabinet committee to consider LGR.
- (31) Ms Kemkaran spoke about the seriousness of the small boats crossing the English Channel into Kent and said this was a key concern expressed by many residents when Reform UK Members were campaigning for the recent election.
- (32) The Leader was pleased that Members intended to work together to support the county's farmers and fruit growers, and on adult social care. She explained that having such an ageing population was a difficult and concerning problem which local councils had been left to resolve with insufficient funding.
- (33) The Leader concluded by saying that all streams of income would be looked at cooperatively and creatively and Reform UK would serve all the people of Kent regardless of who they voted for. The people of Kent deserved to be at the centre of everything the Council did and that would be Reform UK's way forward.
- (34) RESOLVED that the Leader's report be noted.

320. Proportionality and Appointment to Committees and other bodies *(Item 12)*

- (1) Ms Kemkaran proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that

“Council is asked to:

- (a) Determine the total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on certain bodies;
 - (b) Note that the Selection and Member Services Committee will make or confirm necessary appointments to outside bodies, except for those which fall to be made by the Leader of the Council; and
 - (c) Agree to give delegated authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Group leaders and the Monitoring Officer, to adjust the allocation of committee places as necessary in order to conform to overall proportionality requirements; and to confirm external Joint Committee appointments where required prior to the Summer Recess.
- (2) Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1.
- (3) RESOLVED that Council:
- (a) Determines the total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on certain bodies;
 - (b) Notes that the Selection and Member Services Committee will make or confirm necessary appointments to outside bodies, except for those which fall to be made by the Leader of the Council; and
 - (c) Agrees to give delegated authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Group leaders and the Monitoring Officer, to adjust the allocation of committee places as necessary in order to conform to overall proportionality requirements; and to confirm external Joint Committee appointments where required prior to the Summer Recess.

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CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL– 18 February 2025

MINUTES of the meeting held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone.

PRESENT: Shellina Prendergast (Chair), Paul Bartlett (Vice-Chair), Gary Cooke, Dylan Jeffrey, Rory Love, David Beaney, Sarah Hamilton, Sarah Hammond, Kelly Grehan, Chris Passmore, Tracy Scott, Nancy Sayer and Brian Horton.

ALSO PRESENT: Sue Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services.

IN ATTENDANCE: Sarah Hammond (Corporate Director Children, Young People and Education), Caroline Smith (Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting), Joanne Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager), Alice Gleave (Interim Assistant Director for SEND Operations), Christy Holden (Assistant Director for CYPE Commissioning), Kayleigh Leonard (Participation Support Assistant), Leemya McKeown (Assistant Director, Safeguarding Professional Standards and Quality Assurance), Sarah Newman (Participation Support Officer) and Georgia Humphreys (Democratic Services Officer).

Apologies and substitutes

Apologies were received from Ms Crisan and Mrs Game.

Ms Hamilton and Mr Beaney were in attendance virtually.

Chair's Announcements

1. The Chair invited Panel Members and the young people present to introduce themselves.
2. The Chair thanked the young people and Officers for attending the meeting.

Minutes of the meeting held on 10 December 2024

1. It was highlighted that the title of Item 9 should have been 'Looked after Children's Integrated Care Board Annual Report'.

RESOLVED that, subject to the above correction being made, the minutes be approved as a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

Children & Young People's Views about Corporate Parenting Responsibilities

Ms Carpenter, Ms Leonard, Ms Newman and a group of young people were present for this item.

1. Ms Newman asked the young people 'What have your Corporate Parents done for you?'
 - a. In response it was said:
 - i. Young people had received both mental and physical support for their educational studies.
 - ii. It was felt that the voices of the young people were listened to and taken into consideration.
 - iii. Many young people noted feeling safe and cared for.
2. Ms Newman asked the young people 'What areas could be improved? What could your Corporate Parents prioritise?'
 - a. In response it was said:
 - i. Further access to education as well as physical and mental health services.
 - ii. Further clarity of housing and further education opportunities.
 - iii. A slower initial transition into care, more understanding of children's emotional wellbeing.
 - iv. Further training on identity and culture for staff.
 - v. Ensuring social workers make regular visits to the young people they look after.
 - vi. Further transparency for a young person as to why they had entered into the care system.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. The Chair shared that she felt encouraged by the positivity expressed by the young people and expressed the pride she felt in being a Corporate Parent.
 - b. A Member recommended that the young people contact their local councillor for more information about housing opportunities.
 - c. A Member explained that schools needed to be trauma informed to be able to properly care for looked after children. Additionally, more information needed to be available for young adults.
 - d. Ms Hammond agreed that more needed to be done to ensure young people coming out of care had more information available to them, noting that it was a complicated situation due to the 1500 children placed in Kent from other local authorities.
 - e. It was suggested that incorporating the concept of inclusion and equality for all children into PSHE lessons in schools or teacher training could have a positive effect. Ms Nelson shared that the apprentice team met with 2nd year primary school students, there was a desire to

extend this into secondary schools. Ms Carpenter added that work was done in universities to train prospective teachers around this subject, the team was looking into delivering sessions.

- f. Mr Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, shared that the conversation with the young people would shape future conversations had with head teachers and principals.

4. The young people were invited to ask the Panel questions:

- a. Why do you do this job and what difference would you like to make?
 - i. Some Members of the Panel shared personal stories of what led them to want to be a Corporate Parent.
 - ii. The Chair shared that all Members cared about their duties as Corporate Parents and wanted to improve lives.
- b. How are we ensuring all members are keeping up their corporate parenting duties?
 - i. Mrs Chandler explained that all employees of KCC understood their responsibilities and participated in different ways, however there was always an effort to improve. The Kent Practice framework had a requirement for organisations to participate in this, ensuring there was an understanding of what being a Corporate Parent meant.
 - ii. A Member shared that there was an expectation for the legislation behind the Kent Practice Framework to be expanded to NHS staff. There was a desire to improve the health services for young people in care services and map out what was needed for their health, ensuring the transition process into adult services was smooth.
 - iii. Ms Carpenter explained that the inconsistency of social workers was a nationwide issue, there was a desire to change the narrative to ensure social workers took the time to communicate with young people.

5. The Chair expressed the Panels thanks to the young people and invited them to come back to meetings of the Panel at later dates.

VSK Participation Team Calendar of Events 2025

Ms Joanne Carpenter, Ms Kayleigh Leonard and a group of young people were present for this item.

- 1. Ms Carpenter gave an overview of the report and highlighted key dates for Panel Members to attend. Focus groups had been conducted, a main takeaway from this was that most young people found turning 18 years old a

period of anxiety rather than a celebration. Ms Leonard added that virtual activities held since December had received positive feedback.

2. Young People came together to write a letter to the Minister for Children and Families to explain what they believed she should prioritise within her role.
3. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. The Chair commended the amount of work done by the team and the young people.
 - b. A Member questioned the scope to explore connections to other individuals through care experience to speak at events. Ms Carpenter shared that broadcaster Ashley John Baptise was due to speak at the Visual School Kent Conference on 12th March 2025.
 - c. A Member expressed concern at the thought that young people in care dread turning 18. Ms Carpenter shared that there was a lot that could be done. Ms McKeown added that within the Children's Wellbeing Bill, councils were obliged to take more responsibility for young people. Ms McKeown's team aimed to evaluate outcomes to see what more can be done, there was an intention to do enquiries within children's homes and centres to ensure procedures were followed.
 - d. Ms Smith shared that there were advisors available to get young people a pathway plan, which would ensure they were aware of offers available to them. Additionally, a housing pathway was offered, there were local offers for school bursaries and driving lessons. Ms Smith assured the young people that she would investigate into the delay in them being aware of these offers, as there was a good support network and a range of offers in place for young people.
 - e. A Member shared the idea of making films to use for training purposes to ensure that all staff would be aware of what is expected of them.
 - f. A Member asked the response from the Chancellor to the young people be shared with the Panel.
 - g. Mrs Chandler shared that it was positive to hear what was working well and what was not. Additionally, explaining that she would use what was said to inform her work, adding that she wanted to support the young people's aspirations.

Verbal Update by the Cabinet Member

1. Mrs Chandler, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, gave a verbal update on the following:
 - a. The Kent Practice Framework had been given KSCMP executive approval. The multiagency agreement was a key development for the design phase of reforming children's services. The framework offered the opportunity for families to receive consistent practice from across the multiagency.

- b. The LADO and Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS) absorbed the Sector Led Improvement Programme (SLIP). This provided an opportunity for KCC to work closely alongside the Department of Education (DfE) and other Local Authorities to help design the future of children's services.
 - c. Kent Youth County Council took part in the launch of 'Don't Disrespect', which was a partnership campaign between Kent County Council, Kent Police and the Kent and Medway Violence Reduction Unit to combat street harassment and violence towards women and girls. Mrs Chandler shared that the 'Don't Disrespect' film and campaign including posters and social media copy information were available at: www.dontdisrespect.uk.
 - d. Virtual School Kent had received further accreditation for the Nurture Programme. Mr Doran, 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.
 - e. Mrs Chandler attended the CYPE Conference Day which focused on neurodiversity. The conference provided valuable insights on the latest research from the Children's Commissioner, the work of North East London NHS Foundation Trust (NELFT), the neuroscience of learning and the biology of stress and the Dynamic Support Service.
2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
- a. The Chair shared that she had watched the 'Don't Disrespect' film and found the message behind it particularly powerful. When asked what work was going on within schools about this, Mrs Chandler shared that there was a programme within schools and a social media campaign on this topic. Additionally, explaining that she would like the LADO Education Safeguarding Advisory Service (LESAS) gave young people the opportunity to share any concerns or incidents, there was a desire for this service to reach out to more young people to ensure that they were aware of the work it does.

The Kent Practice Framework

- 1. Ms McKeown, Assistant Director, Professional Standards & Quality Assurance, CYPE, presented on Kent's Practice Framework.
- 2. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. The Chair asked that the Panel be kept informed on the progress of the Children and Wellbeing Bill. Ms McKeown shared that she would come back to the Panel to provide evaluations on the progress and explanations of how the bill would be implemented.
 - b. Ms Carpenter suggested that apprentices within the Children's Social Work Services attended the Kent Safeguarding Children's Multi Agency Partnership and any training on the Kent Practice Framework. Ms

McKeown explained that there was a working group in place see how the framework operates, which was a great opportunity to involve Ms Carpenter's team.

Kinship Service

1. Ms Smith, Assistant Director for Corporate Parenting, explained that a full report was to come to the Panel in July to report on the first year of work. Since the launch of the service, in April 2024, the number of children in care was down by 4% (not including unaccompanied minors). The number of special guardians that were supported by the service had increased by 61%. Additionally, there were support groups running in eight areas within Kent. There was an increase in applications to the Adoptions and Special Guardianship Support Fund by 195%, which utilised funding of £56,000 to directly support children and their kinship family. 279 viability assessments had been undertaken, 89 special guardianship assessment and 52 kinship, foster carer assessments.
 2. In the future the plan was to formalise local offers of kinship. A number of informational leaflets had been developed for families, the team were using family conferences to inform families and children's local network of the options available for kinship care at the earliest stage, to avoid the need for formal foster care placements. There had been positive work done, the next stage was to align with government expectation, such as transparency of payments kinship parents could receive.
1. In response to comments and questions it was said:
 - a. A Member questioned what support was currently being offered within the kinship service. Ms Smith explained that the kinship service had two elements to it, the first being an early assessment stage within this there was a team that solely focused on support. Additionally, there were support groups, therapists, a governmental fund that the service could access for special guardians and adopters and training for special guardians available. Ms Smith explained that providing support from the beginning was important, there needed to be clear of offer of support. Ms McKeown added that there were a number of pilots available to provide financial support to kinship careers. Additionally, recognising there was a need to create a more consistent kinship offer across the country.

Work programme

1. The Chair noted the following for future meetings:
 - a. An item on SEND children in care with EHCP's.
 - b. An update on the progress of the Children and Wellbeing Bill.

MOTION – PREVENTING VIOLENCE AGAINST WOMEN AND GIRLS

Proposer:

Councillor Mark Hood

Councillor Stuart Jeffery

Background Information – provided by the Green Group

Kent County Council recognises the important and disturbing issue of Violence Against Women and Girls (VAWG) within our community. Violence against women and girls is a widespread and persistent problem, with serious consequences for those affected and the community as a whole, as it presents a barrier to safety, wellbeing and equality. It includes physical, emotional, and sexual violence, and occurs in many forms, including domestic violence, sexual assault, spiking and harassment.

Here in Kent 1 in 5 crimes reported to police are domestic abuse related and 1 in 5 children have been exposed to domestic abuse. Violence against women and girls has risen by 37% in the last five years and the National Police Chiefs Council describes it as a ‘national emergency’.

We also know that these are significantly under reported incidents with many women and girls being unlikely to come forwards or afraid to report what has happened to them. Kent County Council is committed to ensuring that women and girls feel safe and supported in all aspects of their lives, especially in public spaces and at night. The Don't Disrespect campaign which raises the issue of increasing misogyny among young men is an example of the proactive work which needs to continue. We understand the vital importance of tackling violence against women and girls as part of our broader commitment to ensuring safety and equality for all members of our community. In light of an increase in VAWG incidents, the Council should consider taking further action.

Motion:

This Council resolves the following:

1. Call on the Executive to develop a broader and comprehensive VAWG Strategy which should include the introduction of public awareness campaigns and bystander training to challenge problematic behaviours, attitudes, and beliefs. This strategy should outline concrete steps to increase the safety of women and girls, with a particular focus on vulnerable populations.
2. Promote a Women's Night-Time Safety Charter through effective working with District and Borough Councils and Kent Police. This activity should support engagement with local businesses, especially bars, pubs, and taxi services, encouraging them to commit to safer practices, including better training for staff and drivers to ensure women's safety.
3. Call on the Executive to work with the District and Borough Councils, via mechanisms such as the Kent Community Safety Partnership, to encourage the use

of Licensing Tools to enhance the safety of women and girls across the whole of Kent. This includes implementing additional measures such as improved driver safety checks, the introduction of clear driver identification signage in taxis, and ensuring safe transportation options are readily available for women at night.

4. Call on the Executive and responsible Senior Officers to make women's safety central to our responses to planning applications as a statutory consultee. This should include ensuring that the safety of women and girls will be a key consideration in Kent Highways responses to planning applications, ensuring that public spaces are designed with safety in mind. This includes improved lighting, more accessible public transport routes, and the creation of safe public spaces that encourage women to feel comfortable and secure in all parts of Kent.

5. Agree an ongoing commitment to be a White Ribbon Accredited Organisation and agree to promote the opportunities for any Members to serve as a White Ribbon Champion.

6. Note a key White Ribbon UK message; that it is vital to promote the concept of men and boys working to end violence against women.

7. Recognise that this ongoing accreditation will demonstrate our commitment to tackling violence and abuse and fostering an inclusive culture of respect and equality in the community.

County Council Meeting

Motion for Time Limited Debate – Improving KCC’s Blue Badge System

Proposer: Mr Antony Hook

Seconded: Mr Richard Streatfeild, MBE

Background Information Provided by the Liberal Democrat Group:

1. The council issues Blue Badges, a form of disabled parking permit, recognised by local authorities across the UK.
2. There are many disabled people in Kent. According to the 2021 Census, 281,423 people in Kent are disabled within the definition in the Equality Act.
3. Kent residents aged 16-65 with a disability are currently less likely to be in work than those without a disability (54.7% compared to 82.7%).¹ Disabled residents’ participation in non-work activities, such as activities of an educational, recreational or cultural nature may also be affected.
4. A barrier that many disabled people must overcome is transport, whether by car (as either a driver or passenger) or by public transport. A Blue Badge makes life easier for some disabled people by enabling them to park nearer to shops, services, or their place of work or education.
5. Blue Badge holders may, in England & Wales, park for free:
 - a. In allocated disabled bays on the road.
 - b. On single or double yellow line for up to three hours.
 - c. In car parks for the maximum stay, subject to displayed terms and conditions.²
6. Many applicants such as those in receipt of certain benefits are automatically entitled to a Blue Badge. In other cases, applications are individually assessed by the council which determines whether to issue a badge.
7. The council has refused to issue Blue Badges to some residents with cancer or other life-altering conditions on the basis that the council could not determine if their condition would last for three years. People refused a Blue Badge include patients suffering serious fatigue, breathlessness or severe limitation on their mobility, which may significantly reduce their quality of life and access to services.

¹ https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/8181/Disability-in-Kent.pdf

² [Disabled parking - Blue Badge - Kent County Council](#)

8. The council is required to follow DfT guidance³ and relevant legislation⁴ which contains the “three-year rule”.
9. There is an inconsistency between the definition of disability in the Equality Act, which requires an impairment to be long-term (12 months or more) and the Blue Badge rules which require it to be enduring (three years or more). This means that, for example, that a disabled person accessing the council's services might be entitled to reasonable adjustments under the Equality Act but not be entitled to the assistance with parking afforded by a Blue Badge.
10. Residents have complained to Members of long waits for their Blue Badge application to be determined and refusals which they consider appear to be unduly harsh. Some refusals have been overturned on appeal.

Council resolves to:

- a) Express its appreciation for the busy, hardworking team who deal with Blue Badge applications.
- b) Request that the application of the Blue Badge rules and the determination of Blue Badge applications should be as generous as possible to residents making Blue Badge applications, so far as the law permits.
- c) Request that a comprehensive report on the waiting times for Blue Badge applications and how this can be improved be provided to the appropriate Committee.
- d) Request that the Executive write on behalf of the Council to government asking for necessary changes to be made to legislation governing Blue Badges so that the three-year rule is abolished and, in particular, that cancer patients and other residents suffering from short-term compromised mobility may be supported with a Blue Badge.

³ [Blue Badge scheme local authority guidance \(England\) - GOV.UK](#)

⁴ [Blue Badge Scheme Local Authority Guidance \(England\) - appendices](#)