

ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 4 November 2025.

PRESENT: Mr J Defriend (Chair), Mr T Mallon (Vice-Chair), Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice Mr M Hood, Mrs S Hudson, Mr T Prater, Mr R Palmer, Mrs B Porter, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr J Henderson, Mr M Paul, Mr R Waters, Mr B Fryer and Mr W Chapman.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport), Mr D Wimble (Cabinet Member for Environment) Mr S Dixon (Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport), Jon Yates (Head of Delivery, Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce- Southern Water) and Mike Russell (Stakeholder Engagement Manager- Southern Water)

IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport) Matthew Smyth (Director of Environment and Waste), Ben Hudson (Energy Security and Future Impacts Manager) Helen Shulver (Head of Environment)

Andrew Loosemore (Head of Highways) Matthew Wagner (Chief Analyst) Richard Emmett (Senior Highways Manager) Louise Smith (Flood and Water Manager) Shane Bushall (Head of Service: Public Transport) Tim Read (Head of Transportation) Joseph Ratcliffe (Transport Strategy Manager) Kay Groves (Service Delivery Manager), Robin Hadley (Soft Landscape Asset Manager), and James Willis (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

32. Nomination of Vice-Chair (Item 2)

Two nominations were received for the position of Vice Chair: Mr Mallon and Mr Hood. Following a vote, Mr Mallon was duly elected Vice Chair.

33. Apologies and Substitutes (Item 3)

Apologies were received from Ms Isabella Kemp. No substitutes were present.

34. Declarations of Interest (Item 4)

No declarations of interest were received.

35. Minutes of the meeting held on 09.09.2025 (Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 9 September 2025 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

36. Southern Water Presentation (Item 6)

Mr J Yates – Head of Delivery, Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce and Mr M Russell-Stakeholder Engagement Manager presented the Item.

1.Mr Yates presented the following updates to the Members:

- a) Discussed the establishment of the Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce in 2021, post COVID funding trajectories and the work that had been targeted across the five catchment areas of the Southeast.
- b) £35 million was successfully invested from early 2023 to the end of March 2025 to provide improvements to the combined sewage overflows.
- c) Discussed the use of storm overflows in the prevention of flood damage to homes and businesses. It was indicated that through accountability from customers, stakeholders and regulators that there was a need to reduce the amount of times combined sewage overflows were used.
- d) Mr Yates (Head of Delivery) outlined the challenges that had arisen from increased weather events, ongoing infrastructure developments, and the reduction of permeable land. It was highlighted that these pressures required a different approach to land use in relation to building practices, customer engagement, and compliance with the Combined Sewer Overflow (CSO) reduction plan.
- e) Reported on progress achieved during the Pathfinder project stage, and the early success that had been secured. Work had now commenced on Herne Bay as part of the 2027 regulatory outputs. It was discussed that catchments could be located only miles or even metres apart, but their needs might be very different. As a result, approaches that had proved effective in Whitstable could not simply be replicated to other impacted areas due to these constraints.
- f) The importance of taking learnings from one catchment area and applying them carefully to new areas was further expanded. Catchment areas would need to be fully understood before interventions were designed. The rationale also applied equally to inland catchments areas such as Tunbridge Wells, where tailored solutions would be required.
- g) It was further noted that a “playbook” approach would be developed to guide work across catchments, with the starting point always being a review of internal practices and capabilities.
- h) Highlighted the significant regulatory challenge the authority faced in relation to combined sewer overflows (CSOs). It was discussed that under current requirements all CSOs must be reduced to fewer than ten spills per year

across the regulatory milestones of 2027, 2030 and 2050. This represented a robust and demanding reduction target that required sustained investment, careful planning, and coordinated delivery across the asset maintenance programme.

- i) It was reported on the key learnings from the Pathfinder programme, which had run during the final two years of the last Asset Management Plan (AMP), covering 2023 and 2024/25. It was discussed that the work could not be delivered in isolation without the continued collaboration of Kent County Council and Kent County Council Highway teams.
- j) By working jointly with KCC Highways the project needs would be tailored to secure the best overall solution. Southern Water emphasised that these outcomes demonstrated the value of partnership working and confirmed that one of the most important lessons learned was the benefit of collaboration in achieving improved results.
- k) Highlighted Sittingbourne works where a significant programme of sewer sealing was currently underway. Mr Yates elaborated that intervention had resulted in considerable customer and constituent impact notably through traffic management requirements and disruptions to roads. By planning the work in advance, the Council had been able to manage delivery successfully whilst also adapting to reactive roadworks that had arisen during the programme.
- l) Reported on the successes achieved in Kent and highlighted the collaborative scheme undertaken along Gloucester Avenue in Margate, Cliftonville. This was described as one of the first true partnership projects, and that conventional road gullies were removed and replaced with swales and tree pits to slow water flows and divert them from the network.
- m) Explained that the scheme had utilised an existing green verge and that careful designs had ensured that the tree pits and road structure would not be compromised. All designs were submitted through Kent County Council's design arm for review, ratification and approval. Southern Water confirmed that significant learning had been achieved through the process and reinforced the value of collaborative working and innovative design approaches.
- n) The Whitstable Library at Diamond Road (CSO) was highlighted as a key example of how collaborative design can create spaces that are beneficial to the community and the environment. A further scheme at Countywide Circle in Whitstable was also described, where approximately 1.2 hectares of surface water would be diverted into a sustainable attenuation tank. This intervention would slow the flow of water that had entered the network and deliver significant benefits to the Diamond Road.
- o) Work was underway with Cura Terra to install a Centaur system. The system comprised of a modulating penstock gate within the chamber. The gate would move up and down in response to expected flows and allow for dynamic management of capacity and an improved control of water discharged.

- p) Outlined the approach to stakeholder engagement within catchments. It was confirmed that the organisation would maintain a visible presence and share information openly with partners and the public. Two principal tools were being used to support the work. The Clean Rivers and Seas Plan provided an interactive map showing how £1.5 billion of regulatory funding would be invested over the next ten years. Secondly, the Rivers and Seas Watch platform reported on the real-time performance of Combined Sewer Overflows (CSOs).
- q) Utilising both platforms, Mr Yates explained that teams would be deployed to the right locations at the right time and ensured that accurate information was gathered and shared. The approach strengthened transparency, supported stakeholder confidence, and enabled a more effective management of catchment-based interventions.

2. Members asked a number of questions on the presentation which included:

- a) Members questioned the reported 47% increase in domestic bills and sought clarification on whether the increase would be directed towards shareholder returns or infrastructure works. Additional questions were raised regarding those who had avoided paying bills
- b) Mr Yates acknowledged the rise in domestic bills and noted that prices had been kept artificially low for a significant period. It was clarified that the bill increases would not be used to pay shareholders. Dividend payments could resume in 2030 and would be contingent upon the company's performance.
- c) The hardship fund was highlighted as a support option for customers experiencing difficulty in paying their bills. To date approximately 155,000 customers had benefited from the fund and had received a 45% reduction on domestic bills.
- d) Members inquired about the current status of initiatives to harvest and store water from large buildings, including schools and businesses. It was discussed that initial funding for schools to implement water harvesting systems would sit within the authority of the Department for Education (DfE), which had reportedly caused significant delays and had made the initiative appear unviable in some cases.
- e) Mr Yates acknowledged the issue and its impact to the area (Tonbridge). The 'SuDs for Schools' programme was discussed as a potential avenue to explore for support. Mr. Russell (Stakeholder Engagement) added that funding was limited and allocated only to designated catchment areas which could result in delays and slow progress of installation.
- f) Members raised the impacting issues of leaks and the length of time taken to resolve them. Mr. Yates acknowledged these issues and referred Members to the ongoing discussions with contractors aimed at improving response times. It was explained that the process would be guided by key performance indicators (KPIs) to ensure that all contractual timeframes were met with penalties imposed if they were not.

- g) The water quality rating of Folkestone & Hythe beaches was discussed and the downward trend in ratings pinpointed. Concerns were raised about the lack of prioritisation for this key tourist destination. Mr. Yates addressed the comments and confirmed that Folkestone & Hythe was considered a priority area for bathing water quality by Southern Water.
- h) Mr Yates addressed concerns regarding surface water run-offs and outfalls in the areas of Dymchurch and Littlestone. Southern Water clarified that not all run-off issues fell within their remit, and that collaboration with ownership partners such as Kent County Council (KCC) and the Environment Agency would be necessary to strengthen resilience in the discussed affected areas.
- i) Concerns were raised about the volume of foul water discharges into rivers and seas. Mr. Yates responded that Southern Water's operations are regulated based on the occurrence of discharge events rather than the measurable volume of wastewater released.
- j) Southern Waters response times to spills were discussed. Mr. Yates acknowledged the concerns and raised that since COVID there had been a shift in focus to allow for a more targeted review of infrastructure. It was further explained that scrutiny and criticism directed at Southern Water and regulatory bodies such as OFWAT had been acknowledged and would be addressed. Penalties would be imposed if performance targets were not met and there would be a commitment to greater transparency through the publication of targeted results.
- k) The reporting frequency had now shifted to a quarterly schedule, with one submission having been completed and a second currently pending. Discussions also covered ongoing trajectories within the Water Industry National Environment Programme (WINEP) and discussed the significant investment planned over the next 10 years. The role of scrutiny would shape programme targets and deliverables were emphasised as a key factor in ensuring accountability and effectiveness.
- l) Members acknowledged the infrastructure investment targets and expressed a desire to review progress against these targets at a future Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee meeting in six-month timeframe.

RESOLVED to note the Southern Water presentation

37. Verbal Updates by Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors

(Item 7)

Mr P Osborne - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, Mr D Wimble – Cabinet Member for (the) Environment presented the Item. Simon Jones- Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport and Matthew Smyth-Director for Environment and Andrew Loosemore- Head of Highways were in attendance.

1.Mr Osborne highlighted the following aspects of the verbal update.

- a) The successful launch of the new online reporting tool had enabled residents to report and track pothole issues. Future enhancements to the portal aimed to expand its functionality to encompass reporting for street lighting, drainage, and landscaping.
- b) Sixty salt gritters would be available with an additional four held in reserve. A total of 23,000 tonnes of gritting salt had been stockpiled in preparation for the winter period. Local farmers would also be on standby to assist with clearing and supporting more rural communities.
- c) The Galley Hill restoration works feasibility design and business case development was currently underway to support the reopening of the route. Two options of either a bridge or reinforced embankment were to be explored. In relation to the Road of Remembrance cliff collapse it was discussed that the site remained subject to an options appraisal phase to determine suitable bank stabilisation measures and to explore potential funding opportunities.
- d) The contract for Bearsted Road has been awarded at a value of £10.9 million, with work having progressed well. Improvements to Bluebell Hill valued at £200 million, had also been approved and site surveys would be underway. The rapid EV charging project would also commence in November.
- e) A total of 22,000 pothole repairs had now been completed. In addition, 250,000 square metres of patching, 210,000 square metres of resurfacing and 825,000 square metres of surface works were undertaken. The cost of the Kent Travel Saver had been suppressed, with transport efficiencies contributing to a £2.5 million saving. The parish seminar was held recently with over 100 parishes having attended.

1. Mr Wimble highlighted the following aspects of the verbal update.

- a) Drapers (wind) Mill had been upgraded to Grade II status in recognition of its historical and architectural significance. Meopham Mill officially reopened in September following an extensive restoration period. Davidson Mill had also seen sail repairs take place.
- b) Eight county parks had retained their green flag status, with six of the parks securing gold awards at the South and South East in Bloom (SSEIB) competitions. Grove Ferry had been crowned Country Park of the Year.
- c) 'New reuse' shops had been opened at the New Romney and Allington household waste recycling centres. Allington had seen a saving on 10,000 tonnes of waste in two weeks.
- d) The customer satisfaction survey received 6,469 responses and had revealed that 96% of users were satisfied or extremely satisfied with their visit. In addition, 74% were able to attend on a same-day booking, while 97% successfully booked at their preferred date and time.
- e) The recent food waste campaign had achieved savings of £260,000. A 20% increase in food waste reduction had been observed in areas where awareness initiatives were implemented.

- f) The Tree Council had provided a £39,557 grant to aid in the planning of 6,000 trees. £150,000 had been secured from the Kent farming, food and drink innovators to aid in improving growth opportunities throughout Kent and Medway.
- g) The latest round of Solar Together launched and had delivered 3,730 rooftop solar panel systems. The Cross Channel Geopark would be preparing to apply to become the first UNESCO land-sea border submission. In addition, a Cross Channel Geopark festival would take place in Dover on 7–8 November.

3. Simon Jones gave a corporate verbal update that encompassed:

- a) The corporate Director highlighted the enhancement and infrastructure improvements underway across the county, including the continued maintenance of at least 150 vital bus routes.
- b) Upcoming highway maintenance contract would be signed imminently and followed on from two years of significant preparation. The Contract would be effective from April 2026.
- c) The EU's Entry/Exit System was introduced on 12 October. No notable issues had been observed to date, although potential impacts over the Christmas period and into the New Year were acknowledged.
- d) Ramsgate Tunnel had reopened following complex works. It was further reported that the Road Safety and Active Travel Team had attended 56 parish and town council meetings and delivered 33 highway improvement plans.

4. Members asked the following questions on the verbal updates:

- a) Members praised the works completed in Thanet and acknowledged the intervention of officers. Andrew Loosemore provided an update on the reduced speed limit along the Thanet Way, noting that no significant impacts had been observed. Road safety inspections and safety audits would continue to monitor any undulations to assess whether any deterioration had occurred.
- b) Concerns were raised about the continued closure of Galley Hill Road (anticipated until 2027) and queried on the current funding available to remedy the situation. Simon Jones explained that National Highways had faced funding constraints. It would be considered more strategic to engage with the Department for Transport (DfT) to explore potential funding opportunities for this critical infrastructure. Some certain funding streams were known and the root cause of the issue which was still under investigation was believed to be linked to a utility company failure at the affected location. This raised a legitimate question as to the extent to which such circumstances should influence the cost of restitution
- c) Should a broader legal discussion arise, Kent County Council would seek clarity on the appropriate course of action. From the highway authority's perspective, the priority remained to reopen the road as quickly as possible. The current road closure notice would be necessarily open-ended to provide

the maximum flexibility at the current stage. Until sufficient funding was secured to undertake the required works the situation would remain challenging.

- d) Members raised that no Member Working Groups of Plan Bee had taken place. Mr Wimble confirmed that meetings would continue and would be open to portfolio holders with responsibility for environment and/or waste. He further acknowledged that he had no objection to a cross-party initiative continuing.
- e) Clarification on EV charging was requested by Members and the £12 million pound investment. Simon Jones addressed the concerns and added that the EV update would be presented at a future Cabinet Committee.
- f) Members raised concerns regarding adherence to the speed reduction on the Thanet Way. Officers indicated that Police patrols would be undertaken to ensure compliance. Should issues persist, the matter would be raised with the Kent and Medway Road Safety Partnership to support consideration of further speed limit measures.
- g) A Member discussed a recent local resurfacing works which had omitted a nearby pothole. The Member expressed disappointment that the issue was not addressed at the time and discussed the potential additional costs of returning to the site. Mr Osborne acknowledged the concern and suggested that time constraints and the use of inappropriate material may have been the rationale on why the pothole was left unfilled.
- h) Simon Jones echoed the Cabinet Members response and suggested that contractor materials, cost planning constraints and levels of authority could have prevented the repair. Mr Osborne addressed the Members concern and suggested that he would look into the issue personally.
- i) Officers acknowledged the issues raised regarding traffic impacts in Dartford and outlined potential mitigation measures. It was suggested that governmental support could provide a quicker solution. Roads, road signage, and diversion routes would remain under constant review to ensure that impacts on residents were kept to a minimum.
- j) Collaborative works with Traffic England and other authorities would need to continue to improve, with officers and the Cabinet Member reviewing on how to make projects move quicker and unlock funding to assist local communities.

RESOLVED to note the Verbal Updates

38. Briefing on Waste

(Item 8)

Mr D Wimble - Cabinet Member for (the) Environment presented the item. Matthew Smythe- Helen Shulver- Head of Environment and Kay Groves-Service Delivery Manager- were also in attendance.

1. Matthew Smyth presentation captured the following aspects to members:

- a) Discussed the received £12.72 Million received for producer waste packaging for 2025/26 and highlighted a concern on the potential £16 million budget pressure from the proposed emission trading scheme.
- b) Highlighted the 19 recycling centres currently in Kent which had over 2 million visitors a year and managed around 660,000 tonnes of waste per Anum.
- c) Current year's budget was £88 million net, with now then less 1% of waste hitting landfill outperforming the regional and national average for landfill use. One concern raised was the recycling decrease since the pandemic (2020) which had seen Kent underperform against regional neighbours and fall below the national average.
- d) Shared that 42% of material recycled that had cost KCC around £5.6 Million to reprocess, the remaining 58% that would not be processed would cost KCC around £48 Million pounds.
- e) It was discussed that 83% of material collected was at curb side, with only 17% being dealt with directly via recycling centres. The curb side collection cost to KCC in 2024 was £47 million.
- f) Highlighted the legislation changes on the 31st of March that Boroughs would collect recyclable materials from all residents within their areas. Collections would encompass food waste, paper, card plastic, metal, glass and garden waste. By March 2027 Boroughs would also be responsible for collecting product wrappers as part of the Extended Producer Responsibility initiative (EPR).
- g) Estimates suggested that a saving of £820,000 could be achieved once Dartford and Sevenoaks Borough Councils began collecting food waste. The deposit return scheme would also finally become realised although this could impact on the amount of valuable materials made available to KCC.
- h) Explained the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS) which would come into effect from 2028 onwards and would result in any carbon emissions from waste being subjected to a 'Carbon Credit' Payment. Current estimates had placed this at a £16 million liability.
- i) Expanded upon the challenges of collecting food waste and a desire to improve and incentivise with District and Borough partners and the public to increase recycling. The presentation was closed out with a description of the ongoing work within Districts and Boroughs which would finalize a model on how KCC invested and reduced the cost burden and residual waste.

2.Members asked a number of questions:

- a) Members queried if any other authorities were currently sending waste to Kent facilities especially landfills. Officers responded that because KCC did not own the facilities in question and lacked direct oversight that there could be a possibility that landfill sites in Kent may take materials from outside Kent as a

result. Members did flag how this compounded the desire to keep landfill use below 1%.

- b) Questions were raised on the subject of KCC's performance in terms of income raised from recyclables as part of a total spend and the past incentive rate cuts to districts.
- c) Officers clarified the Government's position on the landfill tax and its relationship to make energy from waste to aid in supporting local authorities and achieve the desired goals. It was further explained that the best performers would be recycling more, burning less and using landfill the least.
- d) Discussed KCC current recycling model and how it was designed to maximise the largest amount of benefit from recycling contracts. Although it was highlighted that due to Kent's geographical location, any materials moved to the West of the County would likely incur a higher cost in contracts.
- e) Clarified the £3 million 'other' spend as part of the extended producer responsibility and associated recycling credits, Members acknowledged the response but asked for greater clarity on spend breakdowns associated with reprocessing recyclables.
- f) Matthew Smyth explained to Members the overall vision of energy from waste in the UK and the impacts of the landfill tax and the unique ways in which KCC would maximise its income from waste and the relationships between contractors and subcontractors on discussed contracts and tenders.
- g) Officers explained the financial relationship between Kent County Council (KCC) and the Borough Councils in respect of waste and recycling arrangements. It was discussed that payments were made under three mechanisms. Firstly, where Boroughs were required to transport material outside their own area due to limitations in the County's transfer station network, KCC would reimburse the additional mileage costs incurred. Secondly, where Boroughs had retained recyclable material rather than transferring it to the County, a recycling credit payment would be made to support local recycling activity. Finally, Boroughs that retained their own waste and processed it would receive recycling credit.
- h) Questioned the continued use of Tetra packs and the limited options to recycle them within Kent. Officers responded that the extended producer responsibility would financially impact those companies that create packaging that was not easily recyclable.
- i) Members suggested improvements to the food caddies provided to Kent residents, noting that they had proven ineffectual against animal interference. Officers acknowledged the impact of food waste being placed in black bags as an alternative and highlighted the negative consequences that had occurred in contaminating recycling options.
- j) Clarification was sought on the Emissions Trading Scheme, which would incorporate waste plants from January 2028 in line with the UK's net zero targets, and how improvements could be made from a resident perspective.

Officers acknowledged the point and discussed the impact of biogenic materials. The ongoing work with Boroughs and contractors to consider actions for their removal was discussed and it was highlighted that such measures could incur further costs to taxpayers.

- k) Members asked what level of investment or infrastructure would be required to improve Kents overall trajectory in achieving its recycling goals. Officers suggested that better recycling education be made available to residents and help change behaviours. Improvements for recycling options for flats and smaller properties would also be a noteworthy improvement worth pursuing.
- l) Officers elaborated further with a desire to bring forward a suite of projects with District and Borough partners that were costed in a way to determine individual returns of investment instead of one nebulous entity. As KCC did not operate its own reprocessing facilities and tendered contracts to private companies that handle materials there was a strong desire to demonstrate maximum recycling was underway with partners.
- m) Greenhouse gas implications were raised on a comparative scale of incinerator versus landfill analysis and suggested exploring a more comprehensive sorting process to remove those materials that could not be incinerated. Officers suggested that further work was required to compare landfill and energy-from-waste options from both an Emissions Trading Scheme and financial perspective
- n) Past recycling rates of Kent against the Southeast and England highlighted that in the past the trend trajectories had been on target and on par with other regions, however a 4% gap had now opened up between Kents performance and the Southeast overall.
- o) Officers reported that the Council would pursue a range of actions to boost recycling, including improvements to curb-side collections, partnerships with districts, enhanced waste handling in flats, and crew engagement with the public (such as tagging contaminated bins).
- p) It was noted that leading District Councils could implement up to 30 such measures, though significant progress often occurred during periods of disruption when behaviour change is most likely. Upcoming changes in Sevenoaks where curb-side recycling rates were currently low were pinpointed as having the potential to trigger notable improvements in that region.

RESOLVED to note the Briefing on Waste

39. Performance Dashboard

(Item 9)

Mr P Osborne - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and Mr D Wimble - Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment presented the Item. Matthew Wagner - Chief Analyst was also in attendance.

1.Mr Wagner presented the current iteration of the performance dashboard:

- a) The second performance dashboard report for 2025/26 showed that, by August 14 KPIs were measured: 11 rated Green, 2 Amber (had met floor but missed target), and 1 Red (was below floor standard). The Red KPI had remained the same from the previous update (HT02- Faults reported by the public completed in 28 calendar days).
- b) Heavy rainfall in June and July had affected demand into August. The service held monthly performance reviews to aid in improving results. Updated data showed September's performance at 80% of the KPI, meeting the floor standard and had achieved an amber rating.
- c) Highway service demand for new inquiries had stayed below expectations since April. Pothole repairs were above the expected range. Recycling rates remained at the floor standard and well below the 50% target set by KCC and District Councils under the Kent Resource Partnership (KRP)

2.Members raised the following questions:

- a) Queried on the efficiency of using the reporting portal and not directly raising issues to highway managers. Officers acknowledged the response times and highlighted how Borough colleagues had approached highway managers in (the past) an attempt to progress matters quickly. Mr Osborne suggested that if a relationship were place between Councillors and officers that there would be no issue in directly approaching them with matters of concern.
- b) Members suggested that any correspondence from residents to officers / Cabinet Member would also include the respective District's Member as to enable them to monitor the issue and be part of any wider discussions.
- c) The use of the portal system would remain the opportune and recommended way of recording issues and tracking progress. This would also ensure officers/Members would not be inundated with emails.

RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard

40. Briefing on Green Finance (Item 10)

*Mr D Wimble - Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment presented the item.
Helen Shulver- Head of Environment-was also in attendance.*

1.Mr Wimble prefaced the briefing and explained the targeted options for private and public investments options for KCC and green finance:

- a) KCC would mobilise public and private investment in a bid to meet environmental obligations under the Environment Act and Improvement Plan. This included nature recovery, climate adaptation, and biodiversity net gain although these needs did exceed current budgets. The briefing reviews green

finance options to shift from grant dependency to a resilient investment model. Each options carried risks and complexities and required further work to define the approach.

- b) Foundational work included mapping Council assets, exploring biodiversity net gain credits, and piloting habitat creation sites. Development of a green finance strategy required the addressing of five areas: timeframes, investment size, project scope, partnership arrangements, and project types.
- c) Appetite in each area would shape the strategy and involved complex financial models, parameters, risks, and benefits. Member involvement would be essential in shaping and progressing the future strategy.

RESOLVED to note the briefing on Green Finance

41. Water Supply and Sustainability Report

(Item 11)

Mr D Wimble - Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment presented the item. Louise Smith-Flood and Water Manager was also in attendance

1.Mr Wimble introduced the report:

- a) The report proposed a shared 25-year Kent Water Resource Strategy with strategic partners, building on a decade of KCC's work. The plan would focus on integrated water planning, demand management, investment, and environmental protection.
- b) Kent as one of England's driest regions faced rising water stress. This year's extreme dryness had caused bans and outages. The Environment Agency projected a 5-billion-litre shortfall by 2050, with impacts building gradually over time on public supply and high-use industries.
- c) Water stress would impact and threaten resident's supplies, the economy, and the environment. Building on over a decade of water resource projects and partnerships, KCC had proposed working with strategic partners to create a shared countywide strategy to manage long-term water risks and impacts.
- d) A dedicated water strategy would secure sustainable resources for residents, businesses, and the environment. The plan would align with the Environment Plan's six goals and support local nature recovery and flood risk strategies.
- e) Goals would encompass: Integrated water planning, embedded water considerations in spatial planning and infrastructure, Demand management through efficiency across domestic, public, commercial, and agricultural sectors and Investment in resilience and environmental protection, including recycling, storage, supply infrastructure, and ecosystem safeguarding.
- f) Members welcomed the report and its acknowledgment of the immediate challenges faced due to climate change.

RESOLVED to note the Water Supply and Sustainability report.

42. 25/00089 - Highways Emergency Tree Works Contract
(Item 12)

*Mr P Osborne - Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport presented the item.
Robin Hadley-Soft Landscape Asset Manager- was in attendance*

1. KCC had a statutory duty to maintain roads and pavements by clearing vegetation and felled trees. Current contracts would be ending, so approval would be sought for a new emergency tree works contract lasting up to five years, with a possible three-year extension. Procurement was underway, with tender deadline on 17 November 2025. evaluation would commence in December, and the contract would commence 1 April 2026.

- a) The proposed contract would ensure a 24/7 emergency response for clearing fallen trees and vegetation that obstructed highways. A two-hour response time would be targeted. Used mainly during adverse weather the contract would support both in-hours and out-of-hours operations.
- a) Demand would be driven by weather events with no fixed schedule present. The service suited small and medium suppliers that could offer a flexible, rapid response. Combining it with larger programmed works had reduced agility and impacted the two-hour emergency target. Usage had risen over the past three years due to more frequent storm events..
- b) The new contract would emphasise data collection on tree failures and capture how and where they occur. This would enable proactive engagement with landowners about their duty of care. It would further aid in identifying high-risk locations that were subject to repeat failures and target landowners more effectively. This would provide a mechanism to recharge costs where trees fall from private properties.
- c) The current contract would end on the 31 March 2026. Tender documents were published and due back later in the month (November). Evaluations and negotiations would be scheduled for December to early January. The existing contract had two providers in place but there had been a need to expand into a more flexible county wide model of multiple providers.

2. Members raised a number of questions:

- a) Queried on the existing KPI performance of the current contract. Officers discussed that the priority would maintain the two-hour emergency call out window and that a level of stewardship would be applied to the contract to allow greater data collation and clarity in KPI's.
- b) Members raised concerns on the two-tier lot model and asked for clarification. In response it was indicated that a three-tier model has been in place in the

past, but a notable provider had gone into liquidation and impacted on delivery.

- c) The lack of a third-tier model was discussed, and it was suggested that a third tier would enable smaller providers to complete works at a District level. Members speculated that the two-tier model could also limit tenders.
- d) Officers acknowledged the feedback of a three-tier model, its impact to smaller providers and the potential impacts to tenders and suggested some temperance to manage both ways across tiers be explored.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

That the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment agree to:

- 1. APPROVAL to procure and award a new Emergency Tree Works contract for up to five years with an opportunity to extend this for up to three further years,
- 2. DELEGATE authority to the Director of Highways and Transport to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity,
- 3. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport to take relevant actions including but not limited to awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision and
- 4. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the relevant clauses within the contract.

43. 25/00090 - Procurement for the Receipt and Processing of Wood Waste Contract Countywide - CN260428
(Item 13)

Mr D Wimble - Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment presented the item.
Helen Shulver- Head of Environment-was also in attendance.

1.Approval was sought to procure and award a new contract to process 25,000 tonnes of wood and waste annually. The current contract would end in November 2026, and a new one would be required to continue this statutory service. The proposed contract included a 2028 break clause to accommodate potential local government changes.

- a) The proposed five-year contract, with a two-year extension option, would be awarded county-wide on lowest price subject to quality standards. Key features included haulage costs in whole-life evaluation, a landfill disposal ban under the waste hierarchy, and social value commitments.

- b) KPIs would track service quality, contamination, and recycling performance, with innovation clauses for possible future reorganisation. The contract's annual cost would be just over £1 million and was based on a stable historic tonnage of 25,000 tonnes.
- c) Risks such as market volatility and contamination would be managed through flexible contract terms and public education programmes.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

- (i) APPROVE the procurement and contract award of a wood processing contract for an initial 5 years (plus an extension of up to 2 years),
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy to take relevant actions to facilitate the required procurement activity,
- (iii) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Economy and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment, to take relevant actions including but not limited to awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision; and
- (iv) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Economy and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment, to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the relevant clauses within the contract.

44. 25/00091 - Energy Efficiency Plan (Item 14)

Mr D Wimble - Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment presented the item. Ben Hudson- Energy Security and Future Impacts Manager were in attendance

1.Mr Wimble introduced the decision and discussed that KCC had secured £4 million in external funding to upgrade estates and utilities, generating nearly £9 million in fuel and utility savings over five years in addition to the £1 million generated from KCC's two solar farms.

- a) KCC had cut emissions from 23,000 tonnes to under 10,000. Despite the progress made financial and technological constraints remained challenging to achieving the full 50% reduction target.
- b) KCC had received £24 million in external funding, with £21 million secured in 2020–21. Accessing new funding was becoming increasingly difficult.
- c) Some targets in the Net Zero plan were not feasible under current technology constraints, so greater flexibility would be needed to optimise solutions. The New Energy Efficiency plan was built on four principles: financial value, pragmatism, efficiency, and solutions-led technology fit. A 2026 action plan covered estate efficiency, fleet optimisation, governance, and finance. The contract offered a balanced approach to emissions reduction and efficiency

and enabled KCC to modernise assets and explore financial options whilst retaining the benefits of its previous net zero plan.

2.Members responded to the presentation:

- a) Members raised concerns that there were not enough significant differences between the plan presented and the previous approach. Furthermore, a number of Members voiced scepticism at the proposed £32 million pound of savings.
- b) It was further raised that the decision represented an abandonment of previous Net Zero strategies and would impact on any savings that had been made to date. Future decarbonisation bid works were also noted as an area of concern.
- c) Mr Wimble addressed Members concerns and suggested that KCC was not abandoning its climate strategy or denying climate change. The decision was made to move away from the constraints of the strategy to allow best policy practice.
- d) Members asked officers for an historic example of when a past net zero scheme did not focus on value for money or result in cost saving. Officers addressed the point by clarifying that in the early stages after recognising the climate emergency, KCC had accessed government funding, often 100% grants which had enabled investment in schemes without immediate financial returns
- e) Queries were raised on the 2026 action plan reference to fleet optimisation. Mr Wimble responded that the Council would review all fleet vehicle options, including EVs, diesel, and petrol, with decisions based on best value. Current contracts could be extended, and council-owned vehicles could be retained longer. The aim would avoid any unnecessary spending on vehicles that could only be used briefly or redistributed under potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Members raised frustrations on the clarity of the £7.5 million proposed savings.
- f) Mr Prater (named as requested in the Minutes) shared that the presented report had in fact captured that the past Council's Net Zero work had saved millions of pounds and avoided significant financial losses had it not been undertaken.
- g) Returning to the £7.5 Million-pound electric vehicle (EV) cost, it was highlighted that the costing had not been placed into a budget but was in fact placed into a Medium-Term Financial Strategy (MTFS) that had covered a potential vehicle replacement scheme by 2030. Clarity was asked on what a future fleet replacement would look like and how it was to be funded.
- h) Mr Wimble responded that replacement vehicles would be procured as and when required. Members questioned the validity of the strategy and suggested that a rolling strategy of replacement would be pursued. The Cabinet Member discussed the point and suggested that due to local government changes, replacements would only be provided in exceptional cases.

- i) Members queried on what targets were to be measured (post 2030 removal), revenue streams and additional streams, improved efficiency of service delivery and external funding opportunities that are to be explored.
- j) In addition, concerns pinpointed the impact to District and Boroughs existing biodiversity plans and the cost of maintaining current (Sessions House) infrastructure. Mr Wimble acknowledged the points raised and suggested that the best-case scenario and productive use of public funds would be pursued prior to LGR being introduced.
- k) Mr Waters (named as requested in the Minutes) in response to earlier comments, suggested that the report did not give evidence that there was a net benefit or net cost of Net Zero across the board for the reasons that the Cabinet Member for the environment had outlined.
- l) Members raised for clarification on where the proposed £32 million savings are to be found. Mr Wimble responded that the savings would be presented at the upcoming full Council meeting.
- m) The benefits to smaller business were also raised although contracting rules would still remain within KCC. Mr Wimble discussed the points and reiterated that the incoming impact of LGR and a desire to keep spending under control until the new authority landscape would be realised.
- n) Members raised additional points on the cost to taxpayers, and the increased trajectory of energy bills in light of past Net Zero targets.
- o) Members requested their position on the decision be captured in the minutes: on the decision, the following was captured 4 abstained, 1 against and 10 for. (of the 15 Members present)

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

That the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment agree to:

- (i) ADOPT the Energy Efficiency Plan for KCC's estate and operations to support our environmental goals (and replace the existing Net Zero 2030 Plan)
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for (the Kent) Environment to refresh and/or make revisions to the Plan as appropriate during the lifetime of the plan

45. Work Programme (Item 15)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.

