

GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13th January, 2026

10.00 am

Council Chamber



AGENDA

GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 13 January 2026 at 10.00 am Ask for: **James Willis**
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone. Telephone: **03000 413007**

Membership (17)

Reform (12): Mr J Defriend, Mr T Mallon, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Fryer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mr J Henderson, Mr M Paul, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr A Thorp and Vacancy (Reform)

Labour (1): Mr A Brady

Liberal Democrat (2): Mr M Brice and Mr T Prater

Green (1): Mr M Hood

Conservative (1): Mrs S Hudson

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcement
- 2 Apologies and Substitutes
- 3 Declarations of Interest
- 4 Minutes of the meetings held on 04/11/2025 (Environment & Transport) and 11/11/2025 (Growth, Economic Development & Communities)
- 5 Verbal Update by Cabinet Members and Corporate Directors
- 6 Final Draft Budget
- 7 Performance Dashboard
- 8 Gravesend - Tilbury Ferry Petition Update
- 9 Highway Verge Improvements for Biodiversity-Report
- 10 Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) Amendments-Report

- 11 KMEF-Ambition 1-Enable Innovative, Productive and Creative Businesses-Report
- 12 Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS)- Report
- 13 25/00088 - Highways Enforcement Policies
- 14 25/00110 - A28 Sturry Link Road
- 15 25/00104 - Folkestone Library Long Term Location
- 16 Work Programme

Motion to Exclude the Press and Public

That under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

EXEMPT ITEMS

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

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive
03000 416814

Monday, 5 January 2026

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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 maximises the largest amount of benefit from recycling contracts. Although it was highlighted that due to Kents 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 Kent's 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 Kent's 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.

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 11 November 2025.

PRESENT: Mr J Defriend (Vice-Chair), Mr W Chapman, Mr S Dixon, Mr B Fryer, Mr D Sian, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr N Williams and Mr J Baker (Substitute for Mr T Mallon)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Mr J Henderson and Mrs B Fordham

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Miss M Bundy (Democratic Services Officer), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr S Samson (Head of Economy), Mr T Henderson (Project Manager) and Mr T Marchant (Head of Strategic Development and Place)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

26. Election of Chair

(Item 2)

(The Vice- Chair presided over this item)

1. Mr Dodger Sian was nominated by the Leader to be the Chair of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.
2. The Committee agreed this nomination and Mr Sian was declared Chair of the Committee.
3. RESOLVED that Mr Dodger Sian be elected as Chair of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.

27. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 3)

Since the last meeting of the Cabinet Committee, Mr Thomas Mallon had joined the Committee Membership to fill a Reform UK vacancy.

Apologies were received from Mr Chamberlain, Ms Nolan and Mr Mallon.

Mr Baker was present as a substitute for Mr Mallon.

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

(Item 4)

Mr Baker declared in reference to the verbal update on Libraries, Registrations and Archives (LRA), that Folkestone Library was in his ward.

29. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 September 2025
(Item 5)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held of 11 September 2025 were a correct record and they be signed by the Chair.

30. Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director
(Item 6)

1. Mr Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration, provided an update on the following:
 - a) Thanks were expressed to Members and officers for their contribution to various strategic plans and events including the No Use Empty (NUE) scheme, 'Grow in Kent' Ashford and Ebbsfleet event, and Regional Energy Plans.
 - b) Mr King had recently attended and spoken at the launch of the 2025-26 Kent Property Market Report, held at the Ashford International Hotel on 5 November. He commended the event and the further progress anticipated following the creation of the new Grow in Kent team (Visitor Economy and Inward Investment).
 - c) Praise was given to Steve Grimshaw, who had received additional funding from the Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) towards the project. Business cases for further investment were ongoing with the KMBF Advisory Board.
 - d) There had been significant engagement with members of the public and various District Councils to discuss the future of economic development and Mr King encouraged Committee Members to share their constituents' views on this matter.
 - e) A visit had been made to the Northfleet Harbourside development, specifically to wharfs, local businesses and the scheme's developers.
 - f) Whilst visiting the Isle of Sheppey, Mr King had attended meetings on challenges faced by the community, specifically for those Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET).
 - g) As a Member of the Neighbourhood Board for Ramsgate and Thanet Growth Board, Mr King had been able to assist in decisions regarding government funding.
 - h) Other visits included to the Eurotunnel to witness the new Entry/Exit System (EES) and to the National Institute of Agricultural Botany (NIAB) to discuss their recent investments and future plans.

2. In response to comments and questions from Members and guests, discussion covered the following:
 - a) Discussions were ongoing on the specific policy wording surrounding the NUE additional investment, which would be communicated once confirmed.
 - b) During the visit to Eurotunnel, Mr King met with the Director of Public and Corporate Affairs, Mr John Keefe to discuss the £70 million investment in the EES system, the system roll- out and their management of traffic flow.
 - c) Mr King provided an overview of his involvement in North Kent growth opportunities, including recent meetings for the Lower Thames Crossing and future endeavours to aid the county's small and medium enterprises.
3. Mrs Mary Lawes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities, provided an update on the following:
 - a) Community Wardens remained a priority, with Parish Councils committing to fund additional Wardens and further options for financial support being explored. Community Wardens were also undergoing a training programme focussed on youth engagement, anti- social behaviour and harm reduction.
 - b) The Trading Standards Ports Team had hosted Mrs Lawes on a visit to their operations at Dover Port and Sevington. Mrs Lawes informed the Committee of the volume of non- compliant and unsafe items entering the market through both ports and the postal system.
 - c) Trading Standards had also supported a National Crime Agency operation in Kent targeting premises linked to organised crime and money laundering. The operation was successful and soon to be proceeding to Court.
 - d) Three defendants had been found guilty of fraud relating to the supply of solar panels following a Trading Standards investigation and subsequent trial at Maidstone Crown Court.
 - e) A Trading Standards campaign to tackle acid attacks was ongoing, as Kent had ranked as the 4th worst- affected region in England and Wales for corrosive substance attacks. To assist in delivering this, a dashboard was being created to compile relevant data and assign resources to target the distribution of acidic substances.
 - f) Mrs Lawes had visited the recently re- opened Dover Discovery Centre that had unveiled a new design of their library space. Mrs Lawes and Mr Webb had also travelled to multiple other libraries across Kent and Mrs Lawes praised the passion and innovation displayed in all locations they visited.
 - g) Temple Hill, Cranbrook and Sittingbourne libraries were all temporarily closed until early 2026, due to ongoing works. Sittingbourne library was undergoing a new layout redesign to increase its capacity, funded by developer contributions.

- h) Works on Stanhope library had already been completed and further co-locations at Cliftonville and Queenborough were expected to be delivered in early 2026.
 - i) The LRA service recently had its annual Customer Service Excellence assessment. The LRA achieved beyond the core standard and increased its Compliance Plus points by one to a total of 25, reflecting outstanding performance and best practice.
 - j) The 'Kent Speak their Name' Suicide Memorial Quilt had been hosted at a number of libraires around Kent including Broadstairs and Rochester libraries. The quilt was comprised of personalised squares representing the victims of suicide and their loved ones.
 - k) The Active Kent & Medway annual conference held at the Kent Showground on 15 October was attended by over 200 delegates, including Mr Webb, Sport England Strategic Director, Lisa Dodd- Mayne and local Channel swimmer, Sarah Philpott.
 - l) The Community Safety Team had organised and hosted a domestic homicide learning event focussed on the impact on mothers who had been separated from their children. Over 170 professionals attended and excellent feedback had been received.
 - m) Kent Scientific Services had recently signed a new contract for Felixstowe Port which was praised by Mrs Lawes.
 - n) Senior Coroner Mrs Patricia Harding had attended the High Sheriff of Kent's Justice Service at Canterbury Cathedral, addressed by Lord Reed, the President of the Supreme Court.
- 4. In response to comments and questions from Members and guests, discussion covered the following:
 - a) Mr King and Mrs Lawes confirmed that financial investment and relevant expert advice would be explored surrounding a potential refurbishment of the Old Roundhouse Theatre in Dover.
 - b) Mrs Lawes established that the new Kent Scientific Services contract at Felixstowe Port was focussed on food and animal feed products.
 - c) Solar panel fraud in Kent had involved both the sale of counterfeit goods and poor installation practices.
 - d) The rise in acid attacks in Kent were concentrated in Dartford and Gravesham, however the Trading Standards dashboard was still collecting data on location.
 - e) Mrs Lawes highlighted a focus on utilising libraries as co- working and community hubs in Kent, with potential activities such as history talks and gardening to keep libraries popular community spaces.

- f) Mrs Stephanie Holt- Castle, Director of Growth and Communities, confirmed that a paper on the role of Community Wardens in individual districts could be considered. Mrs Lawes elaborated that Dartford Community Wardens were engaging in a water safety campaign due to a number of accidents around reservoirs.
- g) Mrs Holt- Castle explained that KCC is eligible for a small financial benefit from certain criminal fines, however these amounts were usually minimal. She confirmed the interested Member would be provided a separate briefing.

5. Mr Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport (GET), provided an update on the following:

- a) KCC's economy team were developing opportunities linked to the Lower Thames Crossing and Gatwick Airport schemes to ensure Kent businesses and local providers were in a position to support these projects. Work included identifying supplier requirements, contractor obligations, value for money and apprenticeships. A skills hub in Gravesend had also been launched for the Lower Thames Crossing scheme.
- b) Concerning the creative economy, Jasmin Vardimon, an international dance company had showcased its latest production, *Now*, at its bespoke home in Ashford. KCC had played a central role in the creation of JV Home, a flagship cultural and economic development that aimed to stimulate Kent's creative and business sectors. KCC led a dual- purpose development including a bespoke facility for the Jasmine Vardimon Company (JVC) and 29 light industrial units to support local economic growth. Mr Jones praised the success of the creative enterprise quarter and encouraged Committee Members to attend these local productions.
- c) KCC's Public Health team were in collaboration with the Kent Trading Standards Team to address the issue of unregulated aesthetic treatments. Mr Jones assured the Committee that this economic and health issue was a priority for the service.
- d) Following from the Summer Reading Challenge, Mr Jones highlighted a series of winter- mini reading challenges that would build on the LRA's work to encourage reading within Kent.
- e) Mr Jones reminded Members to call attention to the increase in door- stop and online crime during the Christmas period to their residents.

6. RESOLVED to note the updates.

31. KMEF- Ambition 2- Widen opportunities and unlock talent
(Item 7)

Ms Claire Wray, Connect to Work Programme Manager, was present for this item.

At 11am, the Committee and attendees stood in silence for two minutes to mark Remembrance Day.

1. The report was introduced by Mr Steve Samson, Head of Economy, who provided an update on the implementation of the Kent and Medway Economic Framework (KMEF) Ambition 2: widen opportunities and unlock talent. This included an overview of the following five activities: the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force; Local Skills Improvement Plan; Get Kent and Medway Working Plan; Skills Bootcamps; and Connect to Work Programme.
2. In response to comments and questions from Members and Guests, discussion covered the following:
 - a) Research by the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan indicated that reasons behind high unemployment rates in Kent were complex. Early findings identified the workforce skills gap, mismatched employer and employee expectations and access to training as potential points to address.
 - b) The current figure for NEET individuals between ages 16-18 was approximately 1600 throughout Kent. Work with partners had also identified where those NEETs were located in the county and the best methods to communicate with them.
 - c) Mr King acknowledged concerns about employment opportunities and the financial constraints facing small businesses and emphasised that KCC's approach was informed by national policy.
 - d) Mr Samson explained that incorporating AI and new technology into skills bootcamps required employers willing to offer guaranteed interviews and providers with relevant expertise to deliver training. Therefore, whilst a course could be considered for future bootcamps, those requirements would need to be met before it could proceed.
 - e) Mr Samson outlined how the Kent & Medway Working Plan aimed to address key employment barriers, such as transport being critical to enable access to work and training. Examples included Loc8 and Amazon buses which supported transport to work and assistance provided to help individuals attend training and bootcamps throughout Kent. Expansion of these provisions were subject to further allocation of funding and resources.
 - f) Ms Claire Wray, Connect to Work Programme Manager, confirmed that former members of His Majesty's Armed Forces or Armed Forces Reserves could potentially be eligible for support under the Connect to Work Programme. Spouses of these groups were also eligible and conversations with representative groups on the inclusion of Gurkhas would be taking place.
 - g) Ms Wray explained how stakeholder engagement and spreading awareness was being utilised to communicate with veterans and other eligible groups about the Connect to Work Programme. This included referral routes such as the Royal British Legion Industries (RBLI) and Life Works programme, educating referral partners and distributing updates to the Armed Forces through their media channels.
3. RESOLVED to note the report.

32. Regional Energy Strategic Plan

(Item 8)

1. The item was introduced by Mr King who provided an overview of the Regional Energy Strategic Plan (RESP), the transitional Energy Strategic Plan (tRESP) and KCC's role in shaping the energy system in Southeast England.
2. The report was introduced by Mr Tom Henderson, Principal Strategic Energy and Infrastructure Officer, who gave a short PowerPoint presentation, the slides of which can be found [HERE](#).
3. Further to questions and comments from Members and guests, discussion covered the following:
 - a) A concern was expressed on the policy's focus on heat pumps, rather than hydrogen energy alternatives.
 - b) In the case of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), Mr Henderson clarified that the RESPs would be transferred to a future strategic or Mayoral authority.
 - c) Mr King explained that due to the imbalance between energy needs and energy supply, current focus was on meeting demand rather than the method of energy production. Mr Henderson elaborated that the RESP would contribute to meeting nationally set targets for Clean Power by 2030.
 - d) Whilst KCC did not currently have authority over network upgrades, future RESPs could expand this role through a strategic board that KCC would participate in alongside other authorities and the National Energy System Operator (NESO). This would involve the development of a formal plan including recommendations for network upgrades that KCC would provide sign-off on.
 - e) Two major solar energy schemes had already been delivered by KCC with opportunities for expansion subject to the viability of the business cases and discussions with Property colleagues due to obligations under the disposals policy.
 - f) Mrs Holt-Castle explained that placing solar panels on KCC properties had previously been fully funded by government grants, and the reduction in this funding had created a financial challenge for the Council to continue roll-out at previous pace. She also advised the Committee that discussions for future reporting on e.g. Solar Together group community- buying energy initiatives were led by the Director for Environment and Circular Economy and reported to the Environment and Transport Committee.
4. RESOLVED to note the report.

33. Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings- 25/00084

(Item 9)

1. The item was introduced by Mr King, who outlined the decision 25/00084 to reinstate a Visitor Economy and Inward Investment Service for Kent & Medway and the reasons why the decision could not have been reasonably deferred to the next Cabinet Committee meeting.
2. Mr Samson provided an overview of recent events, the strategic direction for Kent's Visitor Economy and Inward Investment service as well as future governance and reporting arrangements.
3. Further to questions and comments from Members and guests, discussion covered the following:
 - a) Mr Samson clarified that the reinstated Visitor Economy would most likely retain the title 'Visit Kent'. Discussions were ongoing on the title 'Invest Kent' for the Inward Investment Service with both organisations falling under a developing growth brand called "Grow in Kent".
 - b) The Committee was assured by Mr Samson that a review of digital assets would be undertaken, in collaboration with communications teams and universities, to ensure all digital marketing opportunities were fully explored.
 - c) Mr King outlined the financial timeline including stakeholder discussions and budgetary constraints and invited views from the Committee on alternative revenue streams for the established team.
 - d) Under Budget plans for 2026, KCC would commit £405k, whilst Medway would pay a proportionate amount (subject to final Medway governance processes) that would result in £476k total funding. This would cover Grow in Kent's core team and activity budget with ongoing plans to engage the private sector for additional financial support.
 - e) Mr Samson clarified the new service would be appointing a new team of employees on a fixed- term basis, contracted until March 2027. The reporting arrangements of this new team were still being finalised, subject to discussions with industry partners.
 - f) It was agreed that consideration would be given to Member involvement in the reinstated Visitor Economy and Inward Investment Service.
4. RESOLVED to note that decision 25/00084 to reinstate a Visitor Economy and Inward Investment Service for Kent & Medway was taken between meetings of the Cabinet Committee in accordance with the process set out in the Council's Constitution.

34. Work Programme 2025/26
(Item 10)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.

35. 25/00102- Discovery Park Technology Investment Fund (DPTIF)
(Item 11)

In accordance with Section 100B 4 (b) of the Local Government Act 1972, the Vice-Chair in the role of Chair approved consideration of this item as agenda item 11 as a matter of urgency because the matter could not be reasonably delayed until the next scheduled meeting.

It was decided by the Chair that this item be taken as Item 10.

1. The item was introduced by Mr King, who outlined the proposal to end the current Partnership for the Discovery Park Technology Investment Fund (DPTIF).
2. Mr Samson explained that the recommended action to transfer shares from the existing Partnership to KCC ownership upon the contract's expiration would not materially impact the trading of currently operating businesses.
3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration to:
 - a) AGREE to end the current DPTIF Partnership and transfer the existing shares into the beneficial ownership of Kent County Council
 - b) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take relevant actions to transfer the shares and cease the operation of the DPTIF, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement this decision.

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From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

Brian Collins, Deputy Leader of the Council

Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services

Paul King, Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration & Special Projects

David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects

Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation

To: Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee - 13 January 2026

Subject: **Draft Capital Programme 2026-36, Revenue Budget 2026-27 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2026-29**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary: This report outlines the key policy considerations within the draft capital and revenue budget proposals for the Cabinet portfolios and council departments relevant to this committee. This is a tailored report for each committee and should be considered within the context of the overall whole council budget proposals published separately to support the budget scrutiny process.

Recommendations:

The Growth, Environment & Transport (GET) Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- a) NOTE the draft capital and revenue budget proposals
- b) SUGGEST any alternatives that should be considered related to the Cabinet Committee's portfolio before final draft budget is considered by Cabinet on 29th January 2026 and presented to Full County Council on 12th February 2026.

1. Background and Context

- 1.1 The setting of the budget is a decision reserved for Full Council. The Council's Budget and Policy Framework requires that a draft budget is issued for consultation with the Cabinet and Scrutiny Committees to allow for their comments to be considered before the final budget proposals are made to Full Council.
- 1.2 The Council is under a legal duty to set a balanced and sustainable budget for the forthcoming year (2026-27) within the resources available from local taxation and central government grants, and to maintain adequate reserves. This duty applies to the final draft budget presented for Full Council approval at the annual budget meeting and does not necessarily apply the preceding drafts or plans for subsequent years. The overall strategy for the budget is to ensure that the Council continues to plan for revenue and capital budgets which are affordable, reflect the Council's strategic priorities, allow the Council to fulfil its statutory responsibilities and continue to maintain and improve the Council's financial resilience within the overall resource constraints.

1.3 A medium-term financial strategy covering the entirety of the resources available to the Council is the best way that resource prioritisation and allocation decisions can be considered and agreed in a way that provides a stable and considered approach to service delivery and takes into account relevant risks and uncertainty. A report on the purpose of medium term financial planning was presented to Policy and Resources Committee on 8th July 2025 [P&R MTFP Update](#). This report identified that the strategy should pull together in one place all known factors affecting the financial standing and sustainability of the Council over the medium term. The draft budget publication sets out all this necessary information for the scrutiny process. The final draft will include all the necessary information for the approval process. These are not necessarily the same and the final draft will include supporting strategies e.g. treasury management strategy, necessary for final budget approval.

1.4 The primary focus within the capital programme must be to ensure that the Council has sufficient capacity to meet legal and regulatory requirements where there is risk of death or serious harm to residents and service users. This means first call on capital is to address “safety vital” works. The secondary focus is to reduce impact on revenue budget. This can be achieved through using the flexibility to use capital receipts to fund permitted revenue costs and reducing borrowing requirements. The capital programme will still include individual project schemes and rolling programmes funded from external sources.

1.5 The primary focus of the revenue budget must be to strike an appropriate balance between fulfilling the Council’s statutory obligations on service provision and the administration’s strategic priorities. However, these aims are not always compatible and involves difficult decisions about service levels and provision both for the forthcoming year and over the medium term. In reaching this balance the budget has to include provision for forecast spending growth (base budget changes to reflect full year impact of current variances, contractual price uplifts, staff pay awards, other cost drivers such as market availability, demand increases and service improvements). The revenue budget must also include planned efficiency, policy and transformation savings and plans to generate additional income necessary to balance any differences between spending growth and the available resources from central government and local taxation.

1.6 As part of budget scrutiny process it is worth clarifying that savings relate to reducing current recurring spend whereas bearing down on future growth is cost avoidance. Both amount to the same end outcome of reducing planned spending in the forthcoming year from what would otherwise have been needed without action and intervention. Both savings and cost avoidance are essential to ensure the statutory requirement for a balanced budget is met.

1.7 Fuller details of the budget plans will be set out in the draft budget report which will be published in due course before the Committee meeting cycle. This Draft report will be available [here](#). A separate report on responses to public consultation on the budget strategy has also been published and is available at [Let's Talk Kent](#)

1.8 The report to this Cabinet Committee focuses on the key policy considerations within the draft budget proposals for the directorate/Cabinet portfolio(s) relevant to each committee. To assist this, a summary of the 2026-27 proposals for the relevant directorate/Cabinet portfolio is included as an appendix to this report. An

interactive dashboard is also provided to Members, enabling the details of all proposals to be examined and scrutinised in depth.

1.9 Following the scrutiny process, a revised draft of the final budget proposals will be published in January for Cabinet consideration and approval at County Council in February 2025.

2. Key Policy Considerations

2.1 *Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) overview*

2.1.1 The MTFP is the change statement which transforms the 2025-26 budget into the proposed 2026-27 budget e.g. adding in any **revenue spending growth pressures** (pay, price inflation, demography/activity changes, new or updated legislation and service strategies & improvements – the latter usually being local choice/policy led) and offsetting any new savings (efficiency, transformation or policy) or increased income initiatives.

2.1.2 If the spending growth pressures exceed the level of savings and income then it is an ask for a share of KCC's increased spending power from increased Council Tax, Business Rates and general grant income. The part of a service budget whereby the gross expenditure (staffing, non-staffing) is not covered by income (specific grant, fees & charges) is then funded by KCC's general funds and is referred to as the net budget or base budget. The MTFP therefore represents the changes in gross, income and net from one year to the next.

2.1.3 The Growth, Environment and Transport (GET) directorate has growth spending pressures of +£24.76m and savings/income proposals of -£6.38m. Of those growth spending pressures, £7.85m is due to be funded from ear-marked reserves, leaving a proposed ask that £10.53m is to be funded from KCC's increased levels of Council Tax, Business Rates and general grants.

2.1.4 Appendix E contains a detailed list of MTFP changes for the GET directorate, split by Cabinet Member but the salient growth spending pressures and savings/income per Cabinet Member are analysed below. Those which are considered to be local choice and/or policy considerations are included within the '**service strategies and improvements**' sub-heading and counts for £15m of the £24.76m spending growth pressures.

2.2 *Revenue Spending Growth and Savings/Income proposals – Paul Webb*

2.2.1 The significant elements of the MTFP, including a focus on those where there is local choice (e.g. contractually committed price inflation or legislative changes are unavoidable), are analysed below for Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services.

2.2.2 Spending growth pressures of **+£411k**, of which the majority relates to contract price inflation, with smaller amounts in relation to pay uplifts for those staff not on Kent Terms and realignment of current budgets e.g. where price or activity is higher than budgeted. The only area of local choice is the one-off cost within Trading Standards to parallel run both the new and existing system at a cost of £93k. From

27/28, the old system will cease and hence this is not a permanent base budget change.

2.2.3 Savings and income of **-£584k** more than offset the pressures above, with income generating services expected to cover off spending growth pressures where the activity is non-statutory. The most significant element relates to the increased income targets within the Libraries, Registration and Archives service, with -£200k for increased activity and -£50k for a price review in line with inflation uplift on costs. There is also recognition of new grant funding of -£200k for border control work within Trading Standards, which now fully covers the costs that KCC had previously had to fund and therefore represents a base budget saving.

2.3 Revenue Spending Growth and Savings/income proposals – David Wimble

2.3.1 The significant elements of the MTFP, including a focus on those where there is local choice (e.g. contractually committed price inflation or legislative changes are unavoidable), are analysed below for David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects.

2.3.2 Spending growth pressures of **£0**. The only growth pressure will be for staff pay, which at this stage is held centrally pending consultation and negotiation with the unions.

2.3.3 Savings and income of **-£35k**.

2.4 Revenue Spending Growth and Savings/income proposals – Paul King

2.4.1 The significant elements of the MTFP, including a focus on those where there is local choice (e.g. contractually committed price inflation or legislative changes are unavoidable), are analysed below for Paul King, Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration & Special Projects.

2.4.2 Spending growth pressures of **+£12.8m**, of which the majority relates to

- a revenue contribution to capital of +£7.7m for the proposed construction of a Waste Transfer Station (WTS) in Folkestone & Hythe (to be funded from an earmarked reserve, not base funded)
- Realignment of costs of +£645k where 25/26 actual costs are in excess of budgeted levels for tipping away, inter-authority agreements (IAA), running costs for Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRC) and WTS,
- Provision for future increase in waste tonnages +£984k linked to increased house building targets and population growth.
- Contract price inflation of £3m
- Dilapidation costs of +£541k following condition surveys being performed across the waste system which has been profiled to be completed over a 3–4-year period.

2.4.3 Savings and income of **+£175k**, which is actually -£1.5m of new savings/income, offset by a reduced level of Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) funding of +£1.6m.

- £250k in relation to the re-let of the haulage contract within Waste at preferential rates,

- b. -£130k income target for Country Parks to offset pay and price pressures and finally
- c. Various Waste related savings of -£1.05m linked to both increasing recycling rates and/or reducing the ETS pressure (e.g. cost avoidance).
- d. A reduction in EPR income of £1.6m, reduced from the 25/26 level of £13.3m which is to partly offset the cost of disposal of packaging waste, with the intention to shift the cost of disposal from Local Authorities to manufacturers.

2.4.4 The Waste savings include national legislation changing meaning certain districts will now have to collect food separately – the gate fee for which is at a much reduced rate to black sack/co-mingled waste – as well as working with districts through behaviour change initiatives to improve recycling rates and reduce the level of tonnes that go in to the Energy for Waste (EfW) plant at Allington. This represents both a base budget saving by diverting less tonnes to final disposal, as well as cost avoidance given ETS legislation will place a levy on all tonnes going to final disposal/Allington plant. There are full year effects of these savings of -£3.1m in 2027/28 and 2028/29, so total base savings of -£4.15m.

2.5 *Revenue Spending Growth and Savings/income proposals – Peter Osborne*

2.5.1 The significant elements of the MTFP, including a focus on those where there is local choice (e.g. contractually committed price inflation or legislative changes are unavoidable), are analysed below for Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transportation.

2.5.2 Spending growth pressures of **-£11.5m**, of which the majority relates to:

- a) Contract price Inflation for highways and public transport (Kent Travel Saver (KTS), English National Concessionary Travel Scheme (ENTCS) and subsidised buses) schemes of +2.9 million
- b) Provision for democracy realignment of current budgets of £2m for example where current and future activity is higher than budgeted levels
- c) A re tender price uplift for the new highways term maintenance contract HCMC of 2.8 million
- d) Grant funded new expenditure of +£3 million of which the increased level of grant is shown below.
- e) A new allocation for making safe and preparation of the increasing regularity of road and embankment collapses and sinkholes of £750K which represents the five-year average cost that has been met from reserves or one of sources in the past but can no longer be absorbed

2.5.3 Savings and income of **-£5.9m** partially offset the pressures above, with the significant elements being:

- a) Increased forecast income of -£1.4m, both in relation to increasing levels of Streetworks and other highways income -£950k, as well as to offset the operator fare inflation for the Kent Travel Saver (KTS) -£480k
- b) increased income of -£290k in relation to review the cost of the direct debit option and discounted pass price for the KTS.
- c) Provision for anticipated on-street car parking surpluses of -£600k (the service is delivered by the district authorities), that are due to be declared to KCC.
- d) Increased level of grant income of £3m to offset the increased level of revenue spending growth pressures

- e) Also included here is -£380k of savings to be achieved through a review of staffing across the entire GET directorate.

2.6 *Capital Programme*

- 2.6.1 The changes to the approved 10-year capital programme (where projects have approval to plan or approval to spend status, have a full business case/options analysis performed and funding in place), or the 10-year potential projects list (prior to funding identified or business case being developed) are analysed below, by Cabinet Member.
- 2.6.2 Paul Webb - Included within the previous capital programme potential projects list (which are aspirational projects that have not been through the full business case process and are not funded) there was a project for the Coroners Service to construct and deliver a new Digital Autopsy facility. Whilst the capital project in itself was feasible, the delivery of the service needs to be re-considered and will be subject to a future project proposal so has been removed.
- 2.6.3 David Wimble – the only change to the 10-year potential projects list is that the Electric Vehicle Fleet renewal strategy has been removed. No funding was attached to this scheme, with this appendix simply being a list of projects that are either subject to a full business case being proposed, with funding yet to be identified or as an early indication of priorities over the coming decade.
- 2.6.4 Peter Osborne - the Highways Block Maintenance Grant (HBM) for 26/27 and subsequent years has been announced, showing an increase in the core level of Department for Transport (DfT) funding. This increases further 27/28 onwards and goes some way to the aspiration for Govt grants to increase in line with inflation – after being static for many years – as well as increased funding of or the authority's highways asset.
- 2.6.5 This remains significantly below what asset management principles identify are required to achieve “steady state” (asset in the same condition as the prior year) which would require an additional £110m pa to be invested, let alone to make any significant in-roads into the current backlog of three-quarters of a billion pounds. The news is however welcomed.
- 2.6.6 In addition to this funding, we also received clarity in terms of the 26/27 allocations for Active Travel Funding (revenue and capital), and are waiting for final confirmation of the Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP) grant (revenue and capital) for the coming year. All of which contained specific terms and conditions on what they can and cannot be spent on, in which time frame and what constitutes eligible expenditure.

3. **Contact details**

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APPENDIX E - 2026-27 Budget

Directorate	GET			GET			GET	GET	GET
Cabinet Member	Core	External	Total	Core	External	Total	Core	Core	Core
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
MTFP Category									
Original base budget	204,945.3	0.0	204,945.3						
internal base adjustments	0.0	0.0	0.0						
Revised Base	204,945.3	0.0	204,945.3						
SPENDING									
Base Budget Changes	2,008.2	0.0	2,008.2	1,846.0	0.0	1,846.0	162.2	0.0	0.0
Reduction in Grant Income	27.1	0.0	27.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	27.1	0.0	0.0
Pay	53.4	0.0	53.4	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	53.4	0.0
Prices	6,048.7	0.0	6,048.7	2,863.0	0.0	2,863.0	2,997.8	187.9	0.0
Demand & Cost Drivers - Cost	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Demand & Cost Drivers - Demand	1,191.7	0.0	1,191.7	207.5	0.0	207.5	984.2	0.0	0.0
Government & Legislative	77.0	341.5	418.5	0.0	341.5	341.5	0.0	77.0	0.0
Service Strategies & Improvements	12,304.7	2,733.0	15,037.7	3,548.5	2,733.0	6,281.5	8,663.0	93.2	0.0
TOTAL SPENDING	21,710.8	3,074.5	24,785.3	8,465.0	3,074.5	11,539.5	12,834.3	411.5	0.0
SAVINGS, INCOME & GRANT									
Transformation - Future Cost Increase Avoidance	-392.1	0.0	-392.1	0.0	0.0	0.0	-392.1	0.0	0.0
Transformation - Service Transformation	-42.0	0.0	-42.0	-21.0	0.0	-21.0	-21.0	0.0	0.0
Efficiency	-973.2	0.0	-973.2	-380.0	0.0	-380.0	-593.2	0.0	0.0
Income	-417.7	0.0	-417.7	-1,512.7	0.0	-1,512.7	1,622.0	-527.0	0.0
Financing	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Policy	-1,422.4	0.0	-1,422.4	-890.0	0.0	-890.0	-440.4	-57.0	-35.0
TOTAL SAVINGS & INCOME	-3,247.4	0.0	-3,247.4	-2,803.7	0.0	-2,803.7	175.3	-584.0	-35.0
Increases in Grants and Contributions	-56.0	-3,074.5	-3,130.5	-56.0	-3,074.5	-3,130.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL SAVINGS, INCOME & GRANT	-3,303.4	-3,074.5	-6,377.9	-2,859.7	-3,074.5	-5,934.2	175.3	-584.0	-35.0

Directorate Cabinet Member	GET			GET Peter Osborne			GET David Wimble	GET Paul Webb	GET Paul King
	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	External £000s	Total £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s	Core £000s
MEMORANDUM:									
Removal of undelivered/temporary savings & grant	1,636.8	0.0	1,636.8	0.0	0.0	0.0	1,636.8	0.0	0.0
New & FYE of existing Savings	-2,829.7	0.0	-2,829.7	-1,291.0	0.0	-1,291.0	-1,446.7	-57.0	-35.0
New & FYE of existing Income	-2,054.5	0.0	-2,054.5	-1,512.7	0.0	-1,512.7	-14.8	-527.0	0.0
New & FYE of existing Grants	-56.0	-3,074.5	-3,130.5	-56.0	-3,074.5	-3,130.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Prior Year savings rolling forward for delivery in 26-27 *	-3,303.4	-3,074.5	-6,377.9	-2,859.7	-3,074.5	-5,934.2	175.3	-584.0	-35.0
TOTAL Savings for delivery in 2026-27	0.0		0.0			0.0			
	-4,940.2	-3,074.5	-8,014.7	-2,859.7	-3,074.5	-5,934.2	-1,461.5	-584.0	-35.0
* the prior year savings rolled forward for delivery in 2026-27 are based on the Qtr 3 monitoring and will be updated as part of the outturn report, and those updated figures will be used for the 2026-27 savings monitoring process									
RESERVES									
Contributions to Reserves	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Removal of prior year Contributions	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Drawdowns from Reserves	-8,010.0	0.0	-8,010.0	0.0	0.0	0.0	-8,010.0	0.0	0.0
Removal of prior year Drawdowns	160.0	0.0	160.0	160.0	0.0	160.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
TOTAL RESERVES	-7,850.0	0.0	-7,850.0	160.0	0.0	160.0	-8,010.0	0.0	0.0
NET CHANGE (excl internal base adjustments)	10,557.4	0.0	10,557.4	5,765.3	0.0	5,765.3	4,999.6	-172.5	-35.0
NET BUDGET	215,502.7	0.0	215,502.7						

From: Paul King, Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration & Special Projects

Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 13 January 2026

Subject: Performance Dashboard

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: The Growth Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee Performance Dashboard shows performance against targets set for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs). This is the third dashboard for 2025/26 and includes data up to September/October 2025.

Thirty-Eight of the Forty-Four KPIs achieved target for latest performance and are RAG rated Green. Four KPIs are below target but did achieve the floor standard and are RAG rated Amber. One KPI is below the floor standard and are RAG rated Red.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the Performance Dashboard.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Part of the role of Cabinet Committees is to review the performance of the functions of the Council that fall within the remit of the Committee. To support this role, Performance Dashboards are regularly reported to Cabinet Committees throughout the year. This is the first report to this Committee this year. Previously reports have been received by the Growth, Economic Development and Communities and the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committees.

2. Performance Dashboard

- 2.1. The Dashboard provides a progress report on performance against targets for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2025/26. The current Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee Performance Dashboard is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.2. The current Dashboard provides results up to the end of September/October 2025.

- 2.3. KPIs are presented with RAG (Red/Amber/Green) ratings to show progress against targets. Details of how the ratings are generated are outlined in the Guidance Notes, included with the Dashboard in Appendix 1.
- 2.4. The Dashboard also includes a range of activity indicators which help give context to the KPIs.
- 2.5. The following paragraphs provide additional context to performance levels achieved.

3. Growth & Communities - Economy

- 3.1. Although all the KPIs within the Economy section are on or above target and so RAG rated Green, three of these are now suspended following the closure of Visit Kent and Locate in Kent in September 2025. A new delivery model, with a small in-house team, is being put in place and KPIs will be agreed as soon as possible between KCC, Medway Council and local industry stakeholders.

4. Growth & Communities - Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA)

- 4.1 The number of visits to Kent's Libraries continues to increase, rising by 2.6% in Quarter 2 compared to the same period in 2024/25. Visits in Quarter 2 were particularly boosted by the popularity of this year's Summer Reading Challenge, Story Garden. Designed to inspire in children a love of reading, nature, and exploring the great outdoors, the initiative also aimed to keep children reading throughout the summer holiday to ensure they were as ready as possible for school in September. Over 18,000 children across Kent took part in the Challenge, a 6% increase on take up last year, and over 10,000 children completed the Challenge by reading six books and receiving their medal and certificate. This represents a 14% increase on last year's completion rate.
- 4.2 Summer Reading Challenge activities, helped to support an impressive 27% increase in overall event attendance compared with Quarter 2 last year. Children and families came together at free, sustainable events to create colourful decorations for their gardens, plant seeds, make beehives and bird feeders, and learn about nature and the environment. Partners such as Kent's Family Hubs, Community Learning and Skills, Explore Learning and Animate Arts also delivered a multitude of activities in libraries to inspire creativity and support learning.
- 4.3 Physical issues dipped by 0.8% compared to Quarter 2 last year. The success of the Summer Reading Challenge in inspiring children to keep up their reading through the summer resulted in an increase of 2.5% in children's issues in comparison with Quarter 2, 2024/25. After experiencing a technical glitch in Quarter 1, eBook and eAudiobook issues are now back on track, rising by 10% compared with last year. This means that when taking physical and elssues overall, total issues have increased by 1.5% compared with last year.
- 4.4 It was another busy summer for the Ceremonies teams who delivered over 2,800 ceremonies during Quarter 2. While this represents a decrease in ceremonies of 5% on Quarter 2, 2024/25, this is in part due to fewer numbers of citizens being referred by the Home Office, which means that fewer ceremonies are required and equally there is less demand for individual ceremonies.

- 4.5 3,773 death registration appointments were completed, representing an increase of 7% on Quarter 2 last year, equivalent to 242 additional appointments. Birth registrations increased by 1% on Quarter 2, 2024/25. Customer satisfaction with registration reached 97% for Quarter 2, exceeding the service target of 96%.
- 4.6 The Archive Search Room continued to draw in more researchers, recording 96 additional visits compared with Quarter 2 last year, an increase of 14%. With remote enquiries remaining steady, the Archive Team responded to over 2,250 enquiries altogether, over 150 above their quarterly target. The team continue to promote the Kent collection through tours of the Archive, the popular lunchtime talks and a visit for students with special education needs, who participated in a workshop on the second world war.
- 4.7 This quarter culminated with the annual visit of the Assessor for the Customer Service Excellence Award, now held by Kent LRA for 25 years. The Assessor visited 10 libraries, a prison library, Sevenoaks Museum, Kent Archives and Oakwood House, and spoke with teams across the service. Kent LRA retained the Customer Service Excellence standard, and earned an additional Compliance Plus point, recognising outstanding performance and best practice, and bringing LRA's total to 25 Compliance Plus points. This additional point was awarded in recognition of LRA's work with a broad spectrum of demographic groups. In the Assessor's words, he met "lots and lots of fabulous people – the enthusiasm across such a big county is extraordinary. Very, very impressive".

5. Growth & Communities – Community Protection

- 5.1 The KPIs in this section continue to perform strongly with seven out of eight KPIs exceeding their targets in Quarter 2. The KPI on percentage of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products sample tests reported to clients within five working days, was slightly under target; due to some products still needing to be sent to a partner laboratory for more precise testing which can take longer than the target of five working days.

6 Growth & Communities – Innovation & Business Intelligence

- 6.1 Both KPIs met target for Quarter 2, although for the percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Community Protection (CP01), it remains challenging to identify victims, so numbers are low, but when identified, they are supported.

7 Growth & Communities – Planning Applications

- 7.1 Both KPIs under this section continued to meet target.

8 Growth & Communities – Strategic Development and Place

- 8.1 Two of the three KPIs in this section met target. The percentage of public rights of way faults reported online has maintained a performance in the high 80s for some time against a challenging target of 92%; there remain some people who would prefer to use other means to contact the council regarding public rights of way issues, rather than go online.

9. **Highways & Transport**

- 9.1 Four of the seven KPIs in Highways & Transportation achieved target for latest month performance and are RAG rated Green.
- 9.2 The one KPI which is below its floor standard and RAG rated Red is Emergency incidents attended to within 2 hours; this dropped below its floor standard mainly due to adverse weather events in October, including Storm Benjamin.

10. **Environment & Circular Economy**

- 10.1 Six of the seven indicators for Environment and Circular Economy were above target and are RAG rated Green, with one KPI below target but above floor standard and so RAG rated Amber.
- 10.2 The Amber is Municipal waste recycled or composted, which has a challenging target agreed by the Kent Resource Partnership (district councils and KCC); national changes to household recycling from March 2026 are expected to improve rates.

11. **Recommendation(s):**

- 11.1 The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the Performance Dashboard

12. **Contact details**

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Growth, Environment and Transport Performance Dashboard

Financial Year 2025/26
Results up to Sept/Oct 2025

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Produced by Kent Analytics

Guidance Notes

Data is provided with monthly frequency except for Waste Management and Greenhouse Gases where indicators are reported with quarterly frequency and as rolling 12-month figures to remove seasonality.

RAG RATINGS

GREEN	Target has been achieved
AMBER	Floor Standard* achieved but Target has not been met
RED	Floor Standard* has not been achieved

*Floor Standards are the minimum performance expected and if not achieved must result in management action

Activity Indicators

Activity Indicators representing demand levels are also included in the report. They are not given a RAG rating. Instead, they are tracked within an expected range represented by Upper and Lower Expectations. The Alert provided for Activity Indicators is whether they are within their expected range or not. Results can either be within their expected range (**Yes**), or **Above** or **Below** their expected range.

Key Performance Indicators Summary

Economy	RAG
EC05: Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty	GREEN
EC10: Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract	GREEN
EC11: Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via the Growth Hub contract	GREEN
EC12: Number of visitor economy businesses supported*	GREEN
EC13: Number of inward investment projects secured*	GREEN
EC14: Number of jobs created or safeguarded*	GREEN
EC15: Amount of loan funding awarded to local SMEs by the Kent & Medway Business Fund	GREEN
EC16: Number of people supported to access employment by the Connect to Work programme	GREEN
EC17: Number of people supported with upskilling through a Skills Bootcamp programme	GREEN
EC18: Number of new people receiving entrepreneurship mentoring support from Kent Foundation	GREEN

Libraries, Registrations and Archives (LRA)	RAG
LRA06: Customer satisfaction with Registration Services	GREEN
LRA15: Total number of customers attending events in Libraries and Archives	GREEN
LRA17: Number of volunteer hours adding extra value to the LRA service	GREEN
LRA12: Customer satisfaction with libraries	GREEN
LRA13: Customer satisfaction with archives	GREEN

* Following the closure of Visit Kent and Locate in Kent in September 2025, KCC is no longer able to report on these KPIs in future. A new delivery model, with a small in-house team, is being put in place and KPIs will be agreed as soon as possible between KCC, Medway Council and local industry stakeholders

Community Protection	RAG
CST02: % of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review attendees rating the event as good or better	GREEN
CST03: Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support	GREEN
COR02: Coroners' inquests held within 12 months of the date on which the coroner is notified of the death	GREEN
KSS02: Percentage of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products sample tests reported to clients within 5 working days	AMBER
KSS03: Percentage of independent proficiency tests rated as "good" or "satisfactory"	GREEN
TS05: Number of residents attending safeguarding from financial abuse presentation meetings	GREEN
TS06: Completed visits carried out by Trading Standards to higher-risk premises	GREEN
TS07: Number of engagements with businesses and partners aimed at preventing age restricted sales and reducing youth harm	GREEN

Innovation & Business Intelligence	RAG
CP01: Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Public Protection	GREEN
CP02: Percentage of trader applications to the 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days	GREEN

Planning Applications	RAG
PAG01: Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	GREEN
PAG02: Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste)	GREEN

Strategic Development and Place	RAG
DC08: Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought (section 106)	GREEN
PROW14: Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PROW) faults reported online	AMBER
PROW16: Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-months)	GREEN

Appendix 1

Highways & Transportation	Monthly RAG	YTD RAG	Environment & Circular Economy	RAG
HT01 : Reported potholes repaired in 28 calendar days (routine works not programmed)	GREEN	GREEN	WM01 : Municipal waste recycled and composted	AMBER
HT02 : Enquiries requiring a response, responded to within 28 days lic completed in 28	AMBER	AMBER	WM11 : Municipal waste diverted from landfill	GREEN
HT08 : Emergency incidents attended to within 2 hours	RED	AMBER	WM03 : Waste recycled and composted at HWRCs	GREEN
HT12 : Streetlights, illuminated signs and bollards repaired in 28 calendar days	GREEN	GREEN	WM08 : Overall score for mystery shopper assessment of HWRCs	GREEN
DT01 : Percentage of highway enquiries reported through the online fault reporting tool Highways	AMBER	GREEN	WM10 : Customer satisfaction with HWRCs	GREEN
DT03 : Percentage of concessionary bus pass applications completed online	GREEN	GREEN	EW2 : Greenhouse Gas emissions from KCC estate (excluding schools)	GREEN
DT04 : Percentage of speed awareness courses booking completed online	GREEN	GREEN	EW1 : Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted within 21 days	GREEN

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities - Economy	Stephanie Holt-Castle	David Wimble/Paul King (no use Empty)

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	RAG	Target	Floor
EC05	Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty (rolling 12 months)	493	422	449	391	400	GREEN	400	360
EC10	Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract (Year to Date)	419	574	797	209	560	GREEN	436	371
EC11	Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via the Growth Hub contract (Year to Date)	32	42	79	22	37	GREEN	12	10
EC12	Number of visitor economy businesses supported (Cumulative from start of project 1.11.24)	*	*	390	468	468**	GREEN	400	360
EC13	Number of inward investment projects secured (Cumulative from start of project 1.11.24)			18	24	26**	GREEN	25	20
EC14	Number of jobs created or safeguarded (Cumulative from start of project 1.11.24)			379	840	1,280**	GREEN	895	716

* It was not possible to report on these indicators until Quarter 4, 2024/25 due to delays in agreeing funding.

** Following the closure of Visit Kent and Locate in Kent in September 2025, KCC is no longer able to report on these KPIs. A new delivery model, with a small in-house team, is being put in place and KPIs will be agreed as soon as possible between KCC, Medway Council and local industry stakeholders

Appendix 1

Division		Director					Cabinet Member			
Growth & Communities - Economy		Stephanie Holt-Castle					David Wimble			
Ref	Performance Indicators (quarterly figures are cumulative)	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	RAG	Target	Floor	
EC15	Amount of loan funding awarded to local SMEs by the Kent & Medway Business Fund	New indicators in 2025/26				£1.97 m	£2.30 m	GREEN	£1.5m	£1m
EC16	Number of people supported to access employment by the Connect to Work programme (Kent only)					*	271	GREEN	269	188
EC17	Number of people supported with upskilling through a Skills Bootcamp programme						210	GREEN	200	140
EC18	Number of new people receiving entrepreneurship mentoring support from Kent Foundation					12	31	GREEN	30	25

* The Connect to Work and Skills Bootcamp programmes did not go live until Quarter 2, so there was no reporting for Quarter 1.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Libraries, Registrations and Archives	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul Webb

Quarterly KPIs

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	RAG	Target	Floor
LRA06	Customer satisfaction with Registration Services	96%	96%	96%	96%	97%	GREEN	96%	91%
LRA15	Total number of customers attending events in Libraries and Archives	54,564	48,772	60,907	57,292	69,304	GREEN	54,600	49,100
LRA17	Number of volunteer hours adding extra value to the LRA service	7,645	8,099	7,992	8,342	8,365	GREEN	7,700	7,000

Sep-25 (Q2): LRA06 – 919 customers were surveyed, 888 were satisfied.

Annual KPIs

Ref	Performance Indicators	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	RAG	Target 2024/25	Floor 2024/25
LRA12	Customer satisfaction with libraries	83%	94%	94%	95%	95%	GREEN	94%	90%
LRA13	Customer satisfaction with archives	No Survey	97%	98%	100%	98%	GREEN	96%	91%

2024/25: LRA12 – 8,613 surveyed, 8,183 satisfied; LRA13 – 117 surveyed, 115 satisfied.

Activity indicators (Quarterly)

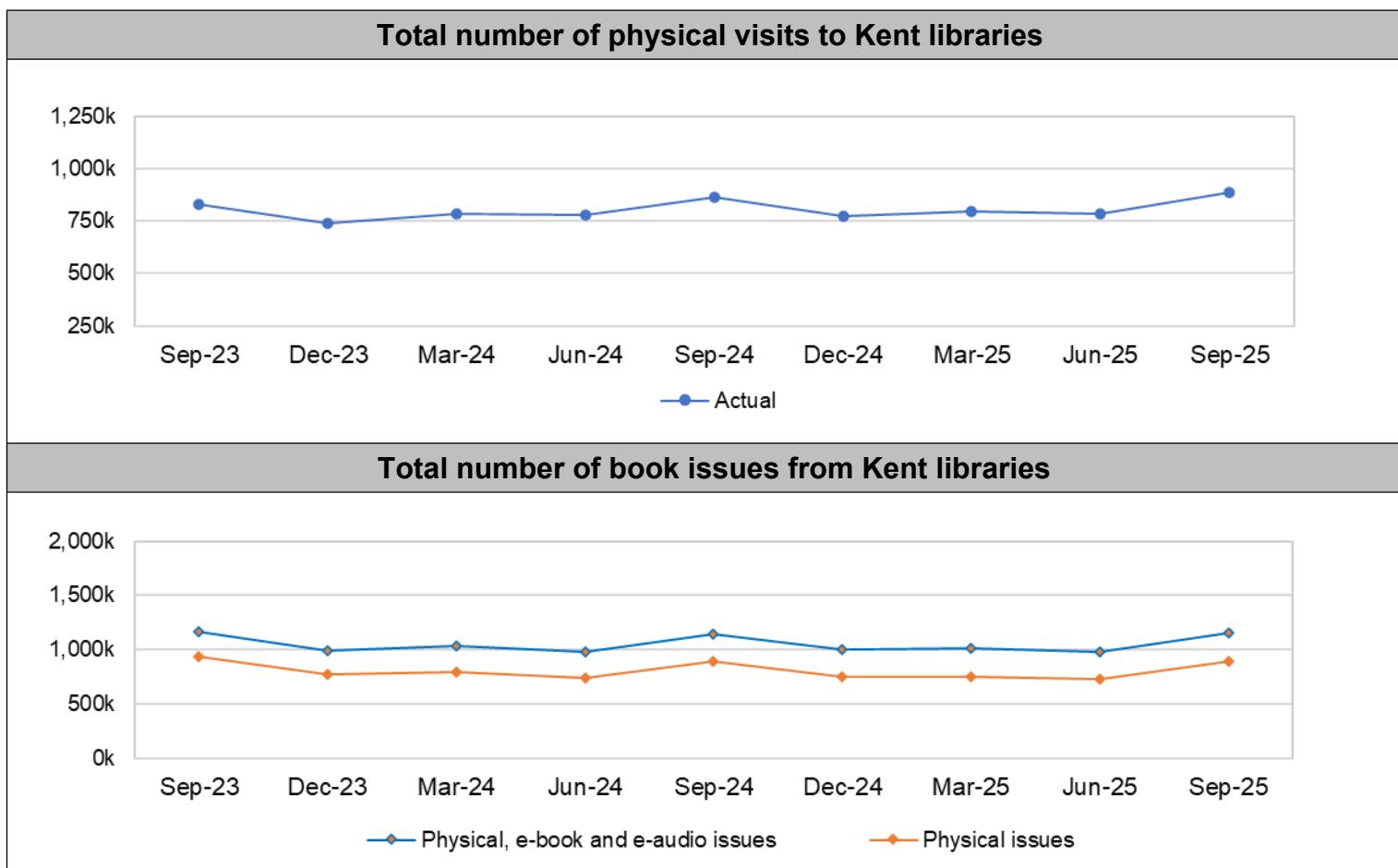
Ref	Activity Indicators (Quarterly totals)	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	Value vs Expected	<u>Expected Activity</u>	
		Upper	Lower						
LRA01	Number of visits to libraries (including mobiles) (000s)	862	772	797	787	884	Above	870	827
LRA02b	Physical, e-book and e-audio issues (000s)	1,144	998	1,009	983	1,160	In line	1,194	1,134
LRA04	Number of wedding, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies carried out by KCC Officers	2,984	1,469	915	2,165	2,821	Below	3,000	2,900
LRA25	Number of archive enquiries answered	New Indicator			2,329	2,256	Above	2,100	2,000

LRA01 - The number of visits to Kent's Libraries was higher by 2.6% in Quarter 2 compared to the same period in 2024/25, which was above expectations. Visits in Quarter 2 were particularly boosted by the popularity of this year's Summer Reading Challenge.

LRA04 – The number of ceremonies was lower by 5% on Quarter 2, 2024/25, which was below expectations. This is in part due to fewer numbers of citizens being referred by the Home Office, which means that fewer ceremonies are required and equally there is less demand for individual ceremonies.

LRA25 - The Archive Search Room continued to draw in more researchers, recording 96 additional visits compared with Quarter 2 last year, an increase of 14%. With remote enquiries remaining steady, the Archive Team responded to over 2,250 enquiries altogether, over 150 above their quarterly target.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Libraries, Registrations and Archives	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul Webb



Appendix 1

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Community Protection	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul Webb

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	YTD 25/26	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
CST02	Percentage of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Seminar attendees rating the event as Good or better.	*	100%	100%	98%	*	98%	GREEN	90%	81%
CST03	Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support**	87%	84%	95%	74%	90%	84%	GREEN	70%	65%
COR02	Coroners' inquests held within 12 months of the date on which the coroner is notified of the death	New indicator in 2025/26			95%	94%	95%	GREEN	75%	65%

* No seminars were held.

** Figures exclude those surveyed who indicated the warden support was not applicable to safety; this has revised figures previously reported (Jun-24 to Mar-25).

2025/26: CST02 – 144 reviews, 140 rated the event as good or better. CST03 – 104 surveys were returned, 87 responses indicated the service user felt safer. COR02 – 462 inquests held, 437 held within 12 months of notification of death.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Community Protection	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul Webb

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	YTD 25/26	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
KSS02	Percentage of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products sample tests reported to clients within 5 working days	95%	96%	96%	91%	89%	90%	AMBER	93%	88%
KSS03	Percentage of external independent proficiency tests rated as “good” or “satisfactory” with a statistical Z score of 2 or less.	82%	74%	79%	89%*	83%	86%	GREEN	75%	67%
TS05	Number of residents attending safeguarding from financial abuse presentation meetings	New indicators in 2025/26			337	478	816	GREEN	750	660
TS06	Completed visits carried out by Trading Standards to higher-risk premises				104	95	199	GREEN	90	60
TS07	Number of engagements with businesses and partners aimed at preventing age restricted sales and reducing youth harm				299	228	527	GREEN	240	210

* Based on April and May data only.

Jun-25: KSS02 – 539 samples tested, 490 reported within 5 working days; KSS03 (Apr to May 25 – 45 tests rated, 40 rated as good or satisfactory

KSS02 – In some cases, products need to be sent to a partner laboratory for more precise testing which can take longer than the target of 5 working days. The team are developing an in-house method to avoid having to do this, and hope to have this up and running soon.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Innovation & Business Intelligence	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul Webb

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	YTD 25/26	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
CP01	Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Community Protection	100%	*	*	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	90%	80%
CP02	Percentage of trader applications to Community Protection's 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days (<i>excluding those requiring enhanced checks by external organisations</i>).	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	90%

* No additional victims recorded

2025/26: CP01 – 4 people supported. CP02 – 75 trader applications processed, 75 were within 10 working days

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Planning Applications	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Paul King

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	YTD 25/26	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
PAG01	Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	90%
PAG02	Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste)	89%	84%	84%	92%	100%	95%	GREEN	90%	80%

2025/26: PAG01 – 80 planning applications, all of which met Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government performance standard; PAG02 – 150 responses, 143 of which were within 21 days.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Strategic Development & Place	Stephanie Holt-Castle	David Wimble, (Developer Contributions), Paul Webb

Ref	Performance Indicators	Sep-24 (Q2)	Dec-24 (Q3)	Mar-25 (Q4)	Jun-25 (Q1)	Sep-25 (Q2)	YTD 25/26	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
DC08	Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought (section 106)	93.2%	80.9%	95.3%	100%	96.9%	98.2%	GREEN	98%	85%
PROW14	Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	87%	88%	88%	87%	85%	86%	AMBER	92%	86%
PROW16	Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-month figure)	8	8	8	14	9	*	GREEN	10	15

* No Year-to-Date figure as this is a Rolling 12-month indicator

2025/26: DC08 - £8.8m secured; PROW14 – 3,764 faults reported, 3,248 were online; PROW16 – 93 priority faults resolved.

PROW14 – The target remains a deliberately challenging one which has increased over time as performance has improved. However, there remains a number of people who prefer to use other means to contact the council regarding public rights of way issues, rather than go online.

Division	Corporate Director	Cabinet Member
Highways & Transportation	Simon Jones	Peter Osborne

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Month RAG	Year to Date	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Yr
HT01	Reported potholes repaired in 28 days, of those becoming due	92%	90%	90%	91%	GREEN	92%	GREEN	90%	80%	96%
HT02	All enquiries requiring a response, responded to within 28 days	76%	77%	80%	83%	AMBER	80%	AMBER	90%	80%	88%
HT08	Emergency incidents attended to within 2 hours	97%	98%	98%	91%	RED	97%	AMBER	98%	95%	97%

Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Year to Date	In expected range?	Expected Range Upper Lower
HT01b	Number of potholes due to be repaired in the month	1,140	1,199	1,276	1,582	10,029	Above	8,250 5,450
HT02b	Enquiries reported by the public due for completion in 28 calendar days	5,149	3,903	3,374	3,758	30,229	Yes	34,500 26,700
HT08b	Emergency incidents attended in the month	221	146	169	179	1,153	Yes	1,320 880

HT01b – The volume of potholes requiring repair continues to exceed expectations, with October more than double those recorded in the same month last year (789) and surpassing our anticipated range for the year to date. Nevertheless, the proportion of potholes repaired within the designated timescale remains above target. This strong performance reflects several key factors: KCC highways staff have been empowered to address minor and urgent repairs directly, operational hours have been extended during the period with lighter evenings and longer working days, and additional resources have been allocated through our Reforming Kent's Roads programme.

HT02 – The timely completion rate for faults reported by the public continues to show steady improvement, moving closer to our target percentage. Service delivery in this area covers a wide range of issues, including information about roadworks, bus and bus stop

concerns, removal of dead animals, highway boundary queries, crash barriers, potholes, street lighting, soft landscaping, drainage, flooding, planning information enquiries and more. Given the breadth of these responsibilities, most of the performance remains highly sensitive to weather conditions. To drive ongoing progress, we hold monthly performance meetings focused on identifying challenges and implementing actions to achieve our performance targets.

HT08 – Attendance to emergency incidents within target timescale has decreased across October due to adverse weather events, including Storm Benjamin, which caused an increase of simultaneous emergency calls, putting pressure on dedicated resource allocations for local areas. We continue to hold regular meetings with the contractor at an area level to discuss both failures and lessons learned to improve this KPI moving forward.

Division	Corporate Director	Cabinet Member
Highways & Transportation	Simon Jones	Peter Osborne

Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Month RAG	Year to Date	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Yr
HT12	Streetlights, illuminated signs and bollards repaired within timescale*	95%	92%	96%	97%	GREEN	95%	GREEN	90%	80%	93%
DT01	Percentage of highway enquiries reported by the public using our online fault reporting tool	68%	66%	64%	63%	AMBER	65%	GREEN	65%	60%	68%
DT03	Percentage of concessionary bus pass applications completed online	78%	82%	76%	80%	GREEN	79%	GREEN	75%	65%	77%
DT04	Percentage of speed awareness courses bookings completed online	90%	91%	90%	89%	GREEN	90%	GREEN	85%	75%	89%

Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	Year to Date	In expected range?	Expected Range Upper Lower
HT06	Number of new enquiries requiring further action (total new faults)	8,215	5,940	6,896	6,513	45,587	Below	56,100 46,900
HT07	Work in Progress (active enquiries/jobs) - end of month snapshot	6,711	6,644	6,415	6,198	N/a	Yes	6,800 5,500
HT13	Street work permit applications and change requests submitted	12,623	10,821	12,128	13,045	83,849	Yes	96,000 78,500

DT01 - While there has been a modest decrease in the proportion of online enquiries completed, with performance currently just below our target, we are proactively developing a new fault reporting system. This enhanced platform will offer additional features and streamline the process for users, making it more intuitive and efficient. Given the complexity of the project, services are being transitioned to the new system in phases as each component is completed. As the rollout progresses and the user experience improves, we anticipate a steady increase in digital engagement.

HT06 – Thanks to the increased capability of KCC highways staff to address both minor and urgent repairs directly, the volume of new enquiries requiring further action has consistently remained below the expected range, currently about 8% lower than this time last year. The most frequently requested services through public enquiries continue to be Potholes, Emergency Response, and Drainage and Flooding.

HT13 – Between April and October 2025, 24,748 permits were issued to KCC (39% of total permits), and 38,742 permits were issued to non-KCC bodies (61%).

Definitions	
HT01 & b	<p>Potholes repaired within 28 calendar days</p> <p>This measure counts all potholes due to be repaired in the month (reaching the 28 calendar days deadline within the month). It includes all potholes carried out by our term maintenance contractor, our own Stewards and Inspectors or part of scheduled maintenance. HT01b reports the number of potholes due to be repaired in the month (those reaching the 28 calendar day limit within the month). HT01 reports the percentage of these that were repaired within 28 calendar days of it being reported to us.</p>
HT02 & b	<p>All enquiries across H&T logged by the online fault reporting tool and the contact centre requiring a response in 28 calendar days</p> <p>HT02b counts all enquiries raised by the public from the fault reporting tool and the contact centre which require a response within 28 days. It only includes everyday issues that need a standard repair, not larger planned projects or major works that require further investigation and planning/design. HT02 reports the percentage of these that were responded to within 28 calendar days.</p>
HT06	<p>Number of new enquiries requiring further action</p> <p>This measure counts every new enquiry we receive across Highways and Transportation that needs us to take further action such as investigating the issue, arranging repairs, or following up with more information. It only includes new enquiries that require extra steps to resolve, not those that can be handled immediately.</p>
HT07	<p>Work in Progress (active enquiries/jobs) - end of month snapshot</p> <p>This measure shows the total number of open/active enquiries or requests across Highways and Transportation that are still being worked on at the end of the month. It includes everything that has not been finished yet, whether the request just came in or has been waiting for a while.</p>
HT08 & b	<p>Number of emergency incidents attended to within 2 hours</p> <p>This measure counts how many emergency problems our teams respond to within 2 hours of being notified. It covers all emergencies, day or night. If there are a lot of emergencies at once, especially during bad weather, it can sometimes affect how quickly we can respond, but each time we miss the 2-hour target we review what happened to learn and improve. Most emergency incidents are attended by our own Incident Response Officer who will assess the site and call out the contractor when required and will remain on site to keep the site safe whilst the contractor attends.</p>

HT12	Percentage of streetlights, illuminated signs and bollards repaired in 28 days This measure provides the percentage of streetlights, illuminated signs, and bollards fixed within 28 days of being scheduled for repair. It includes all types of repairs, whether planned in advance or needed unexpectedly as long as they are completed within the 28-day target.
HT13	Street work permit applications and change requests submitted (Total) This measure counts the total number of street work permit applications and change requests submitted each month. It includes permits for work carried out by the council, utility companies, and any requests to change existing permits.
DT01	Percentage of highway enquiries reported by the public using our online fault reporting tool This measure provides the percentage of the total number of new requests from the public about highway maintenance that are completed directly online by the public each month.
DT03	Percentage of new Concessionary bus pass applications successfully completed online This measure shows the percentage of new applications for concessionary bus passes that are completed online each month. It only counts new applications, not requests for replacement passes.
DT04	Percentage of Speed Awareness courses successfully booked online This measure shows the percentage of Speed Awareness courses that are successfully booked online each month. It only counts bookings made directly by the public using the online system.

Division	Corporate Director	Cabinet Member
Environment & Circular Economy	Simon Jones	Paul King

Key Performance Indicators - Rolling 12 months except WM08 (Quarterly) and WM10 (Half-yearly)

Ref	Indicator description	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	RAG	Target	Floor
WM01	Municipal waste* recycled and composted	43%	43%	42%	42%	42%	AMBER	50%	42%
WM11	Municipal waste diverted from landfill	99.2%	99.2%	99.2%	99.4%	99.6%	GREEN	99%	95%
WM03	Waste recycled and composted at Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs)	50%	50%	49%	50%	50%	GREEN	50%	45%
WM08	Overall score for mystery shopper assessment of Household Waste Recycling Centres	97%	98%	97%	97%	97%	GREEN	97%	90%
WM10	Customers satisfied with HWRCs	No Survey	97%	No Survey	96%	No Survey	GREEN	95%	90%

* Municipal waste is collected by Districts, and by KCC via HWRCs.

WM01 – The 50% target for this KPI is within the Kent Joint Municipal Waste Strategy agreed by the Kent Resource Partnership (KCC and district councils). The requirements of simpler recycling come into place in March 2026, and it is anticipated that recycling rates will gradually increase as all Waste Collection Authorities must comply.

Division	Corporate Director	Cabinet Member
Environment & Circular Economy	Simon Jones	Paul King

Activity Indicators (Rolling 12 months)

Ref	Indicator description	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	Sep-25	In expected range?	Expected Range Upper Lower
WM05	Waste tonnage collected by District Councils	560,733	563,125	561,121	555,277	553,709	Yes	570,000 550,000
WM06	Waste tonnage collected at HWRCs	111,341	115,144	116,774	118,503	117,352	Yes	125,000 105,000
05+06	Total waste tonnage collected	672,074	678,269	677,895	673,780	671,061	Yes	695,000 655,000
WM12	Household residual (non-recyclable) waste (Kg/HH)	528	529	529	526	525	Yes	530 525
WM13	Reuse at the Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs) - tonnage	151	167	185	196	212	Yes	450 150

Division	Corporate Director	Cabinet Member
Environment & Circular Economy	Simon Jones	Paul King

Key Performance Indicator (rolling 12-month total, reported one Quarter in arrears)

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Jun-24	Sep-24	Dec-24	Mar-25	Jun-25	RAG	Target	Floor
EW2	Greenhouse Gas emissions from KCC's overall estate and operations (excluding schools) in tonnes	11,251	10,985	10,323	10,388	10,252	9,612	GREEN	10,072	11,079

EW2 – The greenhouse gas emission target for Quarter 1, 2025/26 has been met with total greenhouse gas emissions of 9,612 tCO₂e compared to a target of 10,072 tCO₂e.

Although we have seen slight increases in consumption for KCC managed sites, non-KCC managed sites and our Traded Services, there has been an overall reduction of emissions from electricity due to the reduction in the UK Electricity emission factor for 2025. The contributions that the solar farms are having in reducing KCC's emissions also continue to be positive.

Key Performance Indicators (monthly)

Ref	Indicator description	Jun-25	Jul-25	Aug-25	Sep-25	Oct-25	YTD 25/26	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
EW1	Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted within 21 days	91%	94%	89%	88%	91%	90%	GREEN	90%	80%

From: Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 13 January 2026

Subject: Gravesend to Tilbury Ferry service update report

Decision no: N/A

Classification: *Unrestricted*

Past Pathway of report: *Not applicable.*

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: Gravesend East and Gravesham Rural: Georgia Foster, Garry Sturley, Diane Morton.

Summary: The Gravesend to Tilbury Ferry services ceased to operate in April 2024 as a result of Thurrock Council withdrawing their proportion of funding for the service.

Subsequently, KCC received a petition to reintroduce the service. As the signatories to the petition exceeded 1,000, in accordance with established process a response and update to the Environment and Transport Council Committee is required.

The paper outlines the history of the service and the factors that led to its cessation. It also covers the study work being led by the Thames Estuary Growth Board to consider whether it is viable to reinstate the service.

Recommendation(s):

Members are asked to note Kent's ongoing support and engagement with the Thames Estuary Growth Board (lead organisation on study on future funding options).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Ferry service operating between Gravesend and Tilbury provided an alternative mode of transport enabling passengers to commute between Kent and Thurrock.
- 1.2 The service had previously been supported through subsidy by each Council (Kent and Thurrock) to enable the service to operate. Kent had been the lead in procuring and managing the contract with the previous Ferry operator.

- 1.3 In April 2024 the Ferry service was ceased due to the withdrawal of funding from Thurrock Council. Kent was unable to bear the full cost of continuing the service due to the high levels of subsidy required.
- 1.4 Since the cessation of the Ferry service in April 2024, there has been local and political interest in reviving the service. Subsequently the matter has been taken up by the Thames Estuary Growth Board who are a Government appointed body engaged with the aim of 'working as a single voice to accelerate fair growth across the Thames Estuary'.
- 1.5 The board consists of various partners; KCC, Thurrock Council, Gravesham Council, the Port of London Authority, the Port of Tilbury and prospective Ferry operators.
- 1.6 Kent has since engaged with the newly devised board and contributed to the costs of a study commissioned by the board to determine whether the Ferry service could operate wholly commercially or through a contractual arrangement with the various partners.

2. Background

- 2.1 There is a history of a passenger ferry service operating on the River Thames between Gravesend and Tilbury dating back hundreds of years. Until 2000 the service had operated without any public funding or local authority involvement
- 2.2 Following the collapse of the then operator in 2000, the Gravesend to Tilbury passenger ferry has required subsidy to support its operation as the value of the passenger fares alone were not sufficient to cover the costs of operation
- 2.3 Since 2000, the subsidy required to support the service was met jointly by KCC and Thurrock Council who shared the subsidy cost on a 50/50 basis. KCC held and managed the contract on behalf of both authorities.
- 2.4 Before the service ceased, it operated every 30 minutes on Mondays to Saturdays between 0540 and 1900 providing a regular 5-minute crossing for passengers offering a quicker, cheaper and more reliable alternative to travelling by other modes including private car journeys using the Dartford crossing. Historic data suggests that around 60% of passengers originated on the Thurrock side and travelled to Kent for education, employment and for shopping opportunities. Kent use related to employment and use for onward connections.
- 2.5 In the last full year of operation, 113,000 journeys were made on the service. At the point of cessation, the cost of providing the ferry was forecast as being £440k of which £230k was expected to be met by passenger fares, leaving a subsidy requirement of £210k.
- 2.6 The previous contract for the ferry service was due to expire in October 2023. To secure the long-term future of the service negotiations were held with the

operator around a short-term extension to the contract until March 2024, allowing for a tender to be issued with a view to securing a new long-term contract from April 2024.

- 2.7 During negotiations around the short-term extension, Thurrock Council advised KCC that it was no longer in a position to fund the service and effectively withdrew its funding.
- 2.8 Confronted with a position where the service could cease at little notice to passengers, KCC continued to negotiate a contract extension with the operator and ultimately met the cost of the service in full (i.e. without Thurrock's funding) for the period between October 2023 and March 2024 to allow for a managed exit, reasonable notice for passengers and exploration of alternative solutions
- 2.9 The Ferry Service is a non-statutory service and as such KCC could not be expected to fund the service in full. Following the withdrawal of Thurrock's funding, the contract for the service expired in March 2024 following a public consultation, informing an Equalities Impact Assessment and having provided more reasonable notice to passengers.
- 2.10 The cessation of the service was not due to any decision made by KCC and at the time we remained committed to the service and had match funding in place. However, as the holder of the contract and the remaining sole funder of the service in the final months of operation, it was incorrectly viewed by many that KCC were solely responsible for its demise and its subsequent reintroduction.
- 2.11 Consistent with this, it is accepted that reinstatement of the service is not a KCC only consideration and that KCC alone cannot reintroduce the service. This is reflected in the ongoing approach in that we are one of a number of stakeholders on a working group being led by the Thames Estuary Growth Board but also consisting of Thurrock Council, Gravesham Council, The Port of London Authority, The Port of Tilbury and prospective ferry operators

3. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 3.1 The options for the Ferry service continue to be explored through the study work being commissioned by the Thames Estuary Growth Board.
- 3.2 It has been dismissed that KCC is able to bear full level of subsidy for the sole reintroduction of the Ferry Service and does not currently have budget assigned for this operation.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost to reintroduce the Ferry service is currently unknown and work continues via the Thames estuary Growth board to establish the service levels and subsequent operating costs.

- 4.2 Based on previous subsidy levels required to sustain the service and inflationary cost pressures in recent years, it would be highly likely that greater levels of subsidy would be required to support the operation of the Ferry service.
- 4.3 Currently there is no budget assigned to support the Ferry service; any subsequent agreement to contribute to the service, should it not be commercially viable, would require additional funding from other sources.

5. Legal implications

- 5.1 There are no legal implications to KCC for this activity.

6. Other corporate implications

- 6.1 Should The Ferry service being reintroduced and supported by KCC, communication and consultation would likely be required.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The ferry service when operating was supported financially by both Thurrock and KCC with KCC holding the contract with the operator.
- 7.2 Thurrock withdrew their funding to support the service during negotiations for an extension from October 2023 to March 2024 leaving KCC to solely manage and fund the contract until it expired.
- 7.3 The Ferry service is a non-statutory service, and it should not be for KCC only to fund or manage a contract.
- 7.4 Negotiations, via the Thames Estuary Growth Board are continuing with all interested parties to seek a potential solution to re-introduce the service.

8. Recommendation(s):

- 8.1 Members are asked to note Kent's ongoing support and engagement with the Thames Estuary Growth Board (lead organisation on study on future funding options).

9. Contact details

Report Author: Shane Bushell Job title: Head of Public Transport (Interim) Telephone number: 03000 413552 Email address: Shane.Bushell@kent.gov.uk	Director: Andrew Loosemore Job title: Interim Director of Highways & Transportation Telephone number: 03000 411652 Email address: Andrew.Loosemore@kent.gov.uk
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From: **Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport**

To: **Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport**

Subject: **Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee Meeting – 13 January 2026**

Key decision: **No**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Electoral Division: **All**

Summary: This report provides an update on the Council's work to improve biodiversity within the highway network and what operations we currently undertake to improve the environment and meet the Council's strategies regarding Plan Bee and Plan Tree.

Recommendation(s):

within the highway network.

- 1.2 There are around 5,500 miles of road within Kent that the Council is responsible for with the majority containing soft landscape assets. The network of roads across the County lends itself to provide wildlife corridors and interconnecting refuges for wildlife.
- 1.3 The primary aim of soft landscape maintenance is always highway safety. We do this by improving visibility at junctions and preventing trees, weeds and vegetation from impacting/damaging the highway or property.
- 1.4 However, the size and scale of the assets within the highway network means that biodiversity improvements can be far reaching and create an impact within the County.
- 1.5 Taking steps to enhance our road network to deliver biodiverse grass verges is in line with the purposes of Kent's Plan Bee, the Council's Pollinator Action Plan which aims to:
 - ensure that pollinators' needs are always considered throughout our work and services

- put the conservation of pollinators and their habitats at the heart of the council's land management.

1.6 The table below highlights the larger asset groups.

Asset	Quantity
Individual Street Trees	55,000
Groups of Trees or Tree Belts	450,000
Urban Grass	3.2million m ²
Visibility Verges	907,000 m ²
Rural Verges	4,600 km
Shrub beds	242,000 m ²
Hedges (Rural & Urban)	110 km

Table 1 – Asset Quantities

2. Landscape Contracts

2.1 A work programme detailing the works within the contracts and when they occur is contained in Appendix 1.

2.2 Our biodiversity improvements are linked to our maintenance contracts which have the following asset groups below:

2.3 Swathe Contracts

2.3.1 A hierachal approach has been used in the specification for all roads or sites receiving a swathe cut with each road or site being designated within one of three Tiers based upon its identified needs as follows.

- **Tier 1 - Highway Safety Swathe Cut**
Roads with highway safety as their priority need.
- **Tier 2 – Lower Value Biodiversity Swathe Cut**
Roads which offer lower value for biodiversity. They may include but are not limited to Bee Lines, low value Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR), general conservation.
- **Tier 3 – Higher Value Biodiversity Swathe Cut**
These roads or sites will have biodiversity conservation as their priority need and contain protected verges which include but are not limited to SSSI, RNR, Bee Roads, Bee Lines and Higher Value Biodiversity. Verges on these roads may require full width cuts, cut and collect, rotation cutting or other conservation maintenance methods and techniques.

2.4 Urban Contract

2.4.1 Urban grass is sub divided into three types within the contract to enable conservation verges to be included as below.

- **Urban grass** -cut six times to maintain highway safety and improve amenity of highway.
- **Conservation grass** – areas of verge that are medium biodiversity which can be managed accordingly without impacting safety or amenity.
- **Conservation grass cut and collect** – areas of verge that are high in biodiversity where cuttings are collected to impoverish the soil and increase biodiversity.

2.5 Tree Maintenance Contract

2.5.1 We have an annual tree planting programme to replace trees, and plant trees from early November to the end of March. We consider a wide range of issues to decide when and where trees are to be planted but follow the “right tree, right place” approach.

- Native species are selected where possible and are preferred.
- Around 850 street trees are planted each year to contribute to *Kents Plan Tree* action plan.

3. What are we doing for Biodiversity?

3.1 Pollinators

3.2 As part of *Kents Plan Bee Pollinator Action Plan* we identify ways we can enhance biodiversity and conservation while balancing the important need to keep our highways safe. Appendix 2 shows where all our urban and rural biodiversity verges are located.

3.2.1 Bee roads - We work with the *Bumblebee Conservation Trust (BBCT)* to identify and safeguard important roadside habitats to encourage the growth and spread of key pollinator plants for rare bees.

3.2.2 Bee roads are located along our rural roads and are higher value biodiversity verges (Tier 3). They may receive a 900mm (3 foot) wide cut next to the road edge. We may cut full width once every 2 or 3 years or change the order we cut the roads to give a succession of important food plants for pollinators.

3.2.3 B-lines - An idea borrowed from the *Buglife B-lines* initiative for a series of pollinator insect pathways which connect sites with wildflower rich habitats across our countryside using our road network.

In Kent, we have 4 B-line areas:

1. The main B-line is around our coast.
2. Cross county linking Folkestone to Dartford
3. Tenterden to Maidstone to Dartford
4. Edenbridge, Sevenoaks and Westerham.

3.2.4 Most rural roads along these B-lines have been included within our lower biodiversity cut (Tier 2) and will receive a 900mm wide cut next to the road edge in April and October.

3.3 Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR)

3.3.1 This is a partnership between Kent County Council Highways and Kent Wildlife Trust. It has a Road Verge Project Officer, based with Kent Wildlife Trust, who works with a dedicated team of Voluntary Road Verge Wardens to maintain the condition of the verges and monitor their wildlife interest. A map of our RNR's can be found in Appendix 3.

3.3.2 We have been working with the Kent Wildlife Trust since 1994 to manage Roadside Nature Reserves (RNR) . These may contain threatened habitats or wildlife and include ancient woodland, heathland and chalk grassland. We manage over 130 RNR in line with the Trusts management plans for each site and with assistance from the Trusts volunteer teams.

3.3.3 Most RNR are located on our rural roads and are within our higher value biodiversity cut (Tier 3). They may receive a 900mm wide cut next to the road edge or a full width cut to the rear of the verge in early spring or late autumn. Some have the cuttings raked up to help reduce the build-up of nutrients in the soil and are removed by us or by the trust's volunteers.

3.4 Sites of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI)

3.4.1 We manage verges near or in SSSI for wildlife according to the citations and requirements of *Natural England*.

3.4.2 Most SSSI are along our rural roads and are within our higher value biodiversity cuts. They may receive a 900mm wide cut next to the road edge, or a full width cut to the rear of the verge in early spring or late autumn. Some RNR sites are also within a SSSI.

3.5 Wildflowers

3.5.1 We look after wildflowers on rural verges. Where possible we allow wildflowers to die back before mowing. This may not always be possible if safety is an issue.

3.5.2 Bulbs in urban grass areas will not be cut until 6 weeks after the flowering period so they will grow the following year. These are cut in our planned grass schedule. While the flowers are dying back the grass will be left uncut.

4. Assets under Environmental Management

4.1 The rural contract contains the majority of our enhanced verges with approx. 15% of all of our verges under some sort of management plan. Of these SSSI verges are the highest.

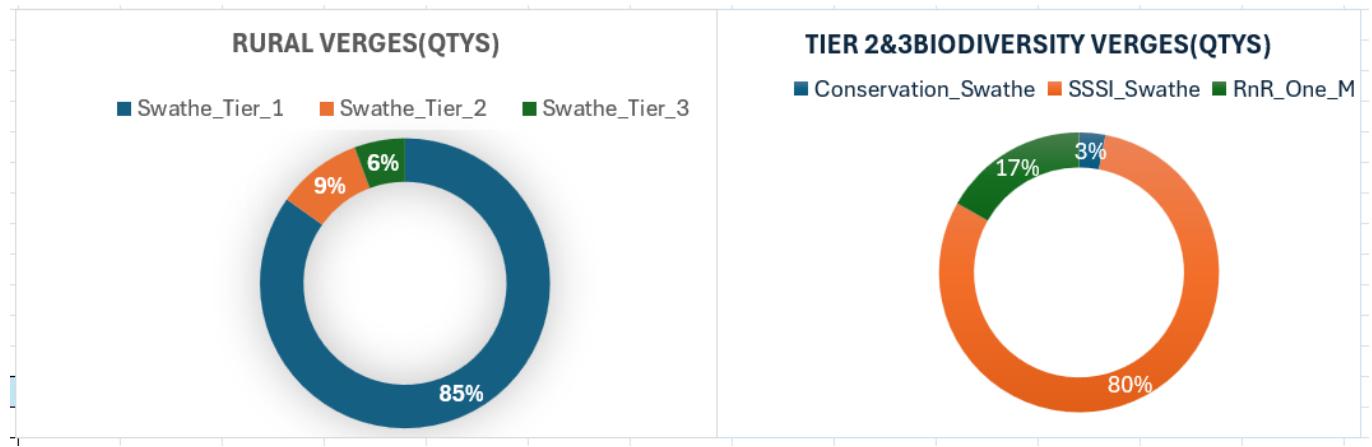


Table 2- Overall Swathe Figures

5. Projects

5.1 Ebbsfleet Development Corporation – Verge Enhancement

5.1.1 We are working in partnership with Ebbsfleet Development Corporation to enhance the habitat and planting at highway verge and roundabout sites across Ebbsfleet Garden City. This programme of works aims to demonstrate both parties' commitment to high quality, sustainable placemaking across Ebbsfleet Garden City.

5.1.2 The project proposes to deliver an exemplar approach to design and maintenance of green infrastructure and the creation of ecological value at key gateways into the Garden City, to include roundabouts, verges and along primary road environments. Appendix 4 identifies these locations.

5.1.3 The project is championed and funded by Ebbsfleet Development Corporation but will be delivered in partnership with KCC, with the intention for KCC to lead the delivery of the landscaping improvements on highway land.

5.2 Shared Outcome Fund

5.2.1 KCC has been a key partner in the Trees Outside Woodland research programme since 2020, it was a project funded by HM Government and

delivered in partnership with The Tree Council, Natural England, Defra, and four other local authorities and finished Sept 2025.

- 5.2.2 The aim of the programme was to test innovative methods to increase non-woodland tree cover, looking to address funding barriers by investigating ways to reduce the costs, and enhance tree stock resilience.
- 5.2.3 Urban Tree Establishment
 - Miyawaki method trials (Phase 1 and 2) - 11 sites (**6,655** trees)
 - Natural regeneration trials (Phase 1) - 4 sites
- 5.2.4 Free Tree Scheme 2022/23
 - 1,181 total applications
 - 80% over subscribed
 - 203 successful recipients
 - **17,910** trees given out

Approximately 35,706 trees planted in Kent throughout the duration of the project.

5.3 PoMS FIT Count

- 5.3.1 Set up by the UK Pollinator Monitoring Scheme. Flower-Insect Timed Count. Highways have been monitoring 40 verges since 2023.
- 5.3.2 A 10-minute survey of a small patch of flowers, counting all the insects that land on highway verges during that time.
- 5.3.3 Selected urban and rural verges across Kent – identified as tier 3 conservation verges and some control sites.
- 5.3.4 The data will be collected and analysed by Plan Bee and also submitted to PoMS FIT count national scheme. Over time, data collected from selected road verges will provide evidence for the impact of conservation cuts (conservation verges vs. control verges).
- 5.3.5 This evidence will also contribute to the bigger picture on the impact of Kent's Plan Bee overall – are we making a difference?

6. Challenges

- 6.1 The rural swathe contract originally had two main safety cuts. One at the beginning of the year in April/May with another cut during September. This timing meant that the main cut did not take place during the main flowering season over the summer. The decision was made to reverse the provision for two cuts and revert to one in 2022 to reduce financial pressure on the Council. This meant a reduction in biodiversity value of highway verges.
- 6.2 The primary aim of our maintenance regimes is to provide a safe highway and to reduce our liabilities. This significantly limits the opportunities for including verges within biodiversity schemes.

- 6.3 It is not always clear that highway verges are being managed for biodiversity and enquiries and complaints regarding verges not being cut can be made. To offset this many of our verges are subject to a number of regimes; a regular perimeter cut to show that we haven't missed the verge coupled with the later conservation cut.
- 6.4 Having many different work types can be confusing for contractors when they are cutting. Knowing when to start and stop a tractor flail did present problems in the past with verges being cut incorrectly. Advancements in technology and regular contractor updates has now made this a rare occurrence.
- 6.5 Managing for biodiversity can cost more than regular maintenance, for instance collecting arisings or cutting long grass is more costly. Only verges that have a higher biodiversity value are therefore considered for this type of maintenance.

7. Policy Framework

- 7.1 Managing highway verges for the benefit of biodiversity supports the following:
 - KCC's Strategic Vision through the Strategic Outcomes: 'Kent's physical and natural environment is protected, enhanced and enjoyed by residents and visitors.
 - The Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy
 - Kent's Plan Bee pollinator action plan
 - Kents Plan Tree

- 7.2 The recent Environment Act (2021) has amended the existing Biodiversity Duty of the 2006 NERC Act and now specifically requires public authorities to look strategically at their policies and operations and assess what action they can take to further the conservation and enhancement of biodiversity.

8. Conclusion

- 8.1 The Council has implemented Plan Bee as part of its environmental strategy to improve the biodiversity across its assets. The current approach to managing the highway soft estate allows for this improvement to take place.
- 8.2 Whilst the emphasis is clearly on safety there are process' in the current contracts that provide enough flexibility to enhance biodiversity within the highway network.
- 8.3 We have seen the emphasis of the soft landscape service change over recent years from one of purely maintaining for safety reasons to one where we are maintaining highway safety whilst delivering key Kent County Council Environmental strategies within the service.

9. Recommendation:

9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to note our approach to managing biodiversity within the highway network.

10. Background Documents

- Appendix 1 - Landscape Programmes
- Appendix 2 - Location of Biodiversity Verges
- Appendix 3 - Roadside Nature Reserve Maps
- Appendix 4 – Ebbsfleet Development Enhancement Sites

11. Contact Details

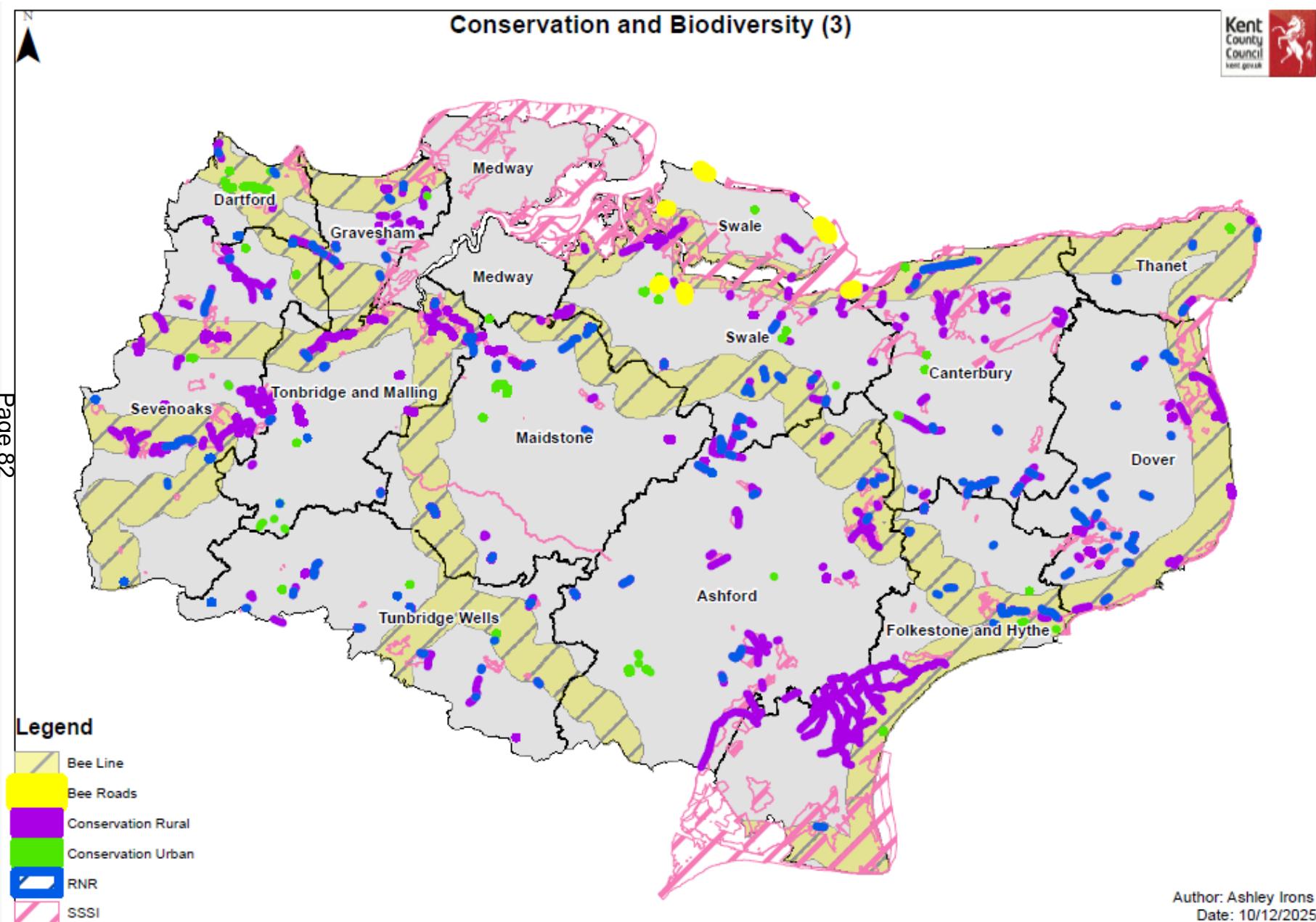
Report Author: Robin Hadley Soft Landscape Asset Manager 03000 413647 robin.hadley@kent.gov.uk	Relevant Director: Andrew Loosemore Interim Director of Highways & Transportation 03000 4116532 andrew.loosemore@kent.gov.uk
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Appendix 1 – Work Programmes

2025 - 2026 Highway Soft Landscape & Arboriculture Maintenance Work Programmes

	2025											2026	
	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	January	February	
Urban Maintenance Programmes													
Grass (Urban) Cut 1		18 Mar to 19 Apr											
Grass (Urban) Cut 2			23 Apr to 24 May										
Grass (Urban) Cut 3				9 May to 28 Jun									
Grass (Urban) Cut 4					8 July to 7 Aug								
Grass (Urban) Cut 5						17 Aug to 26 Sep							
Grass (Urban) Cut 6							30 Sept to 30 Oct						
Grass (Urban) Conservation & Wildflower Cut 1								30 Sept to 30 Oct					
Shrub Bed (Urban) Visit													
Rose Bed (Urban) Visit 1			1 May to 30 May										
Rose Bed (Urban) Visit 2									1 Oct to 1 Nov				
Hedge (Urban) Visit													
Rural Road Programmes													
Visibility Splay Cut 1			1 to 21 May										
Visibility Splay Cut 2					10 to 30 July								
Visibility Splay Cut 3						10 to 20 Sep							
Swathe Cut 1 - Tier 3 Full Width - Higher Value Biodiversity	5 to 31 May												
Rural Standalone Footway Cut 1		1 to 15 May		1 to 30 June									
Swathe Cut 1 - Tier 1 Roads - Highway Safety						1 to 15 Sep							
Rural Standalone Footway Cut 2							1 Oct to 31 Oct						
Swathe Cut 1 - Tier 2 Roads - Lower Value Biodiversity								1 Oct to 31 Oct					
Swathe Cut 1 - Tier 3 Roads - Higher Value Biodiversity													
Hedge (Rural) Cut											1 Dec - 31 Jan - One visit p/a		
Tree Maintenance Programmes													
Tree Planting	1 Nov to 31 Mar										1 Nov to 31 Mar		
Basel & Epicormic Removal					1 June to 31 August								
Pollards	1 Nov to 31 Mar										1 November to 31 March		
Tree Safety Works													
													Year round programme of tree safety works and audits

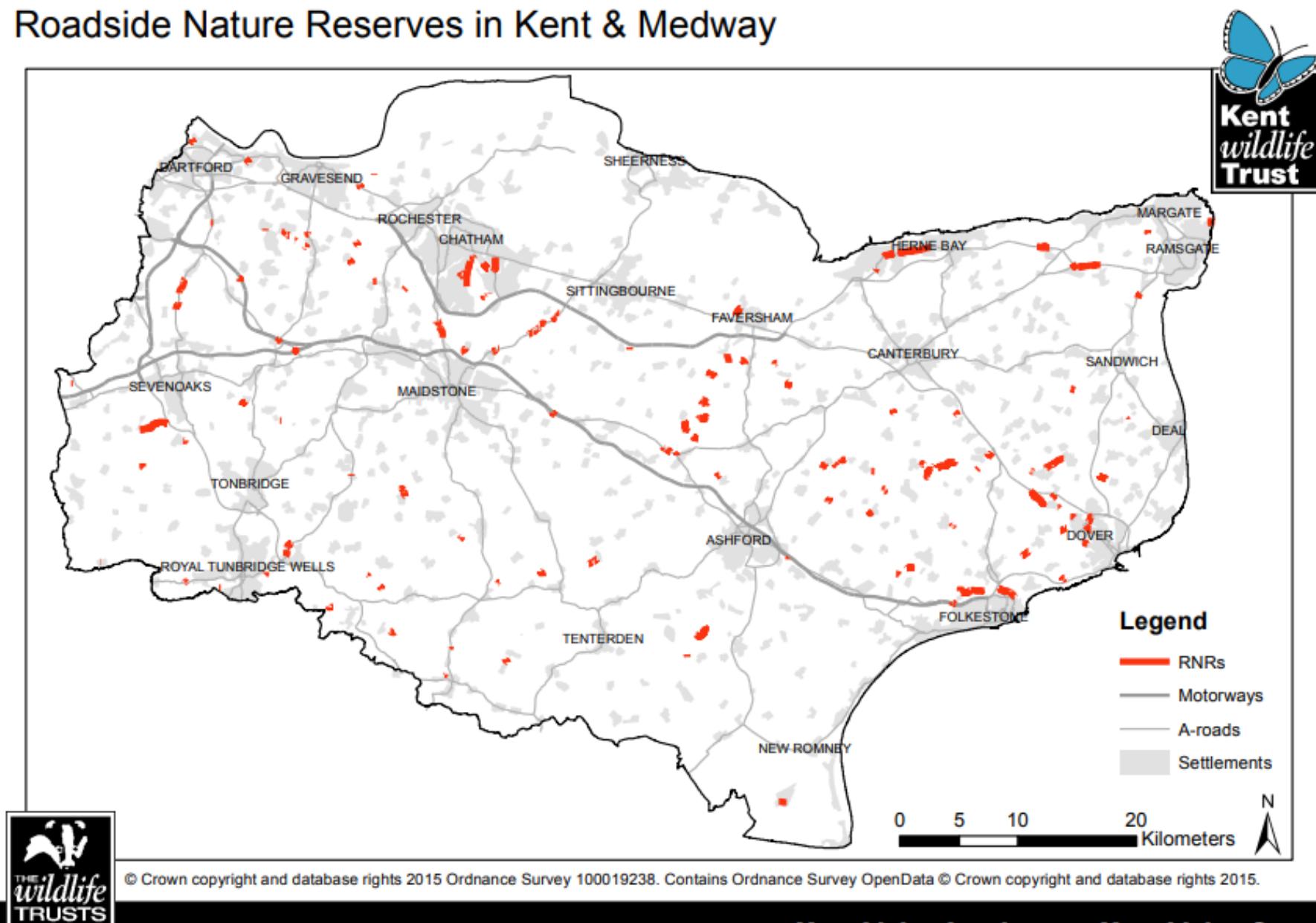
Appendix 2 – Location of Pollinator Verges



Appendix 3 – Roadside Nature Reserve Locations

Roadside Nature Reserves in Kent & Medway

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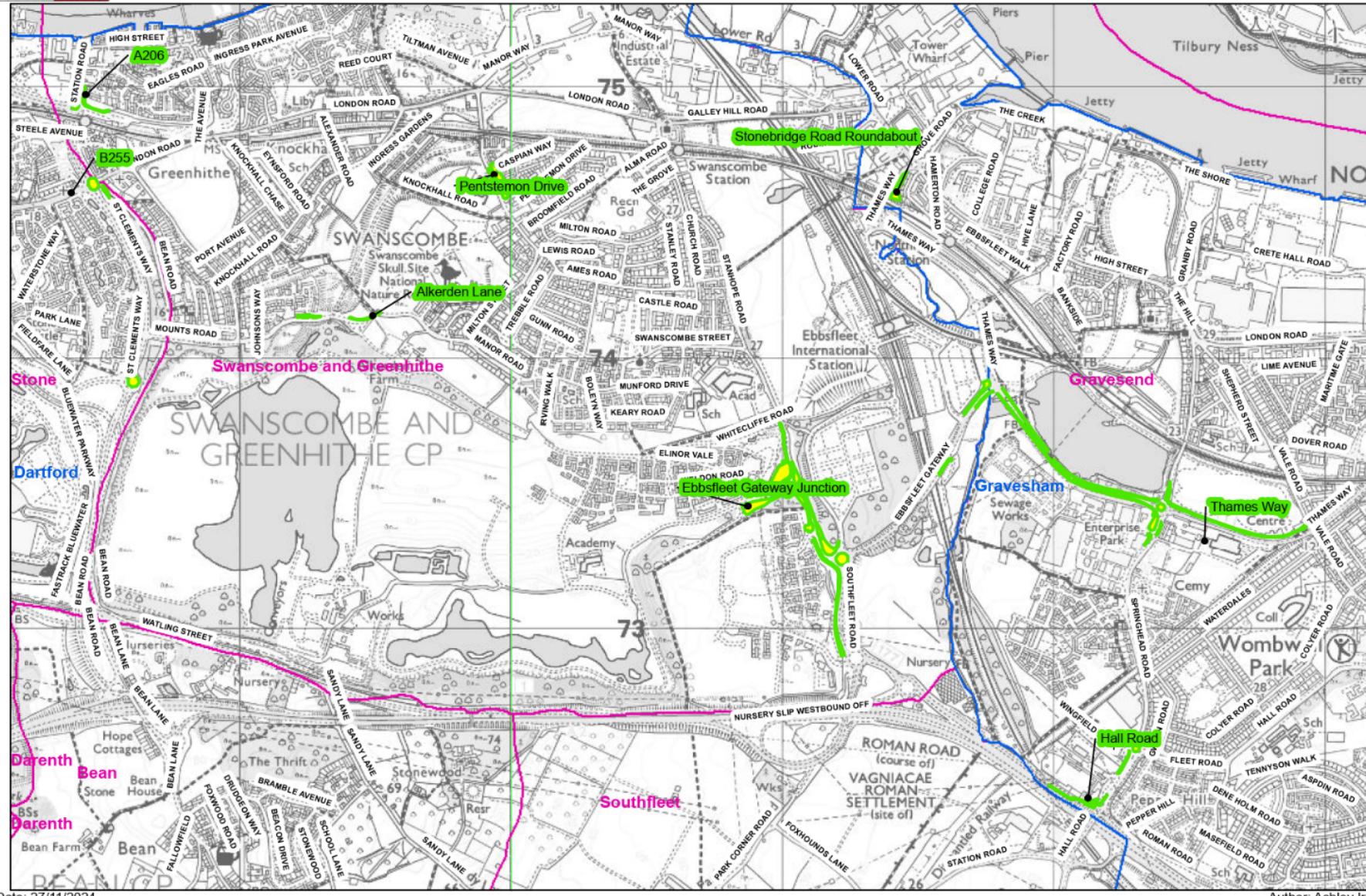


Appendix 4 – Ebbsfleet Development Corporation – Enhanced verges



Ebbsfleet Biodiversity

Ebbsfleet Biodiversity Overview



From: **David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects**
Matthew Smyth, Director for Environment and Circular Economy

To: **Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 13 January 2026**

Subject: **Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan Revision – an update paper**

Key decision: No

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All divisions

Summary: The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy (ELES) Implementation Plan sets out the actions to be taken by Kent County Council and partners to deliver the aims of the partnership strategy and is updated every three years. In February 2025, partners agreed to refine the actions within the ELES Implementation Plan with a focus on deliverability, measurability and relevance.

KCC has presented the revised plan to partners who have agreed to the revisions, to improve the efficiency and productivity of the plan by refining its scope.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and make comment on the content of this paper and its appendices.

1. Introduction to the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy

- 1.1 The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy was developed by partners from across the public sector and frontline public services in 2020. Partners included all 14 local authorities in Kent and Medway alongside other organisations such as the NHS, Kent Chamber of Commerce and the Kent Housing Group.
- 1.2 The aim of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is to set out how organisations in Kent and Medway will respond to national targets and policies to drive a clean, resilient economy across the county.
- 1.3 The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy was formally adopted in July 2020 by Kent County Council and has been collaboratively delivered and monitored by the partnership since.
- 1.4 At its heart, the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is a partnership strategy, covering multiple themes that benefit our residents, buildings and spaces.

2. Revising the Implementation Plan

- 2.1 In February 2025, partners agreed to undertake a review of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan. The purpose was to streamline the Plan's delivery, focusing on the most impactful and achievable actions, considering evolving policy, funding, and local priorities.
- 2.2 Officers from across Kent's local authorities worked to make improvements to the Plan through 2025, consulting partners and relevant teams within their respective organisations.
- 2.3 The rationale applied to the refinement of actions broadly falls into 4 categories as outlined below. More detail can be found in appendix 2.
 - Amended/Merged with similar actions
 - Removed – work programme referred to in other actions
 - Removed – no additionality/covered by other strategies
 - Removed – beyond scope of the strategy/partner influence
- 2.4 As a result of the above rationale, following stakeholder consultation, the number of actions has been reduced from 79 to 24. This ensures a more focused and strategic approach to delivering energy resilience, emissions reduction, and climate adaptation across the region. Actions are more deliverable, measurable and relevant.
- 2.5 The revised Implementation Plan continues to support Kent and Medway's ambition to decarbonise, while also addressing and improving energy security, quality of life for our residents, and resilience for local communities and businesses.
- 2.6 In October 2025, the Kent and Medway Environment Group, which is made up of portfolio holders from all 14 local authorities in Kent and Medway, were presented with and accepted the final revisions.

3. Financial Implications

- 3.1 This is an update report so does not in itself have financial implications.
- 3.2 Any project specific financial implications will be considered alongside robust business cases and raised with Members as required. Value for money and best practice will be placed at the forefront of any decisions.
- 3.3 Actions within the plan are jointly owned by Kent district and borough Councils, KCC and Medway Council.

4. Legal implications

- 4.1 No legal implications have been identified. Legal advice will be sought where necessary for any delivery under the strategy.

5. Equalities implications

5.1 An [EqIA](#) undertaken when the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy was introduced. This EqIA is applicable to the Implementation Plans that accompany the strategy. The adverse equality impact rating was found to be low.

6. Other corporate implications

6.1 The Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is at the heart a partnership strategy and covers multiple themes. Within KCC, the delivery of the Energy and Low Emissions Strategy is dependent on teams from across the organisation working together to support the delivery of this strategy.

7. Governance

7.1 There are no new delegations as a result of the revised Implementation Plan.

7.2 This proposed decision is aligned with the new Strategic Statement and Energy Efficiency Plan as the review ensures the actions in the Energy and Low Emissions Implementation Plan are financially focused, pragmatic and solutions led.

8. Conclusions

8.1 The ELES Implementation Plan 2026 was approved by stakeholders in October 2025 by KMEG. The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and note the content of this paper and its appendices.

9. Recommendation(s):

9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to note and make comment on the content of this paper and its appendices.

10. Appendices:

Appendix 1 Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan 2026

Appendix 2 Kent & Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan Rationale

11. Contact details

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ELES Implementation Plan 2024-25

Theme 1: Emissions reduction pathways to 2050

1.1 Agree evidence/baseline and set 5-yearly carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole. Monitor delivery against the five-year carbon budgets for Kent and Medway as a whole.

1.2 Develop Kent and Medway emission reduction pathway to Net Zero by 2050. Monitor delivery against the high ambition pathway and the 1.5° compliant pathway set by the Tyndall Centre.

1.3 Develop local strategies that set out how Net Zero will be achieved in their area, using carbon budgets and emission reduction pathway report to inform the evidence base where appropriate.

1.4 Continue to develop and refine detailed emission reduction pathways for key sectors based on emerging policy and good practice, incorporating estimated costs where possible.

1.5 Monitor and publicly report progress against net zero targets

1.6 Consider how emissions from consumption could be calculated and incorporated into future area pathways/targets. Incorporate consumption-based emissions into ELES targets and implementation

Theme 2: Public sector decision making

2.2 Develop recommended requirements to be included within public sector contracts to align to net-zero ambition and support use of local goods and services where possible.

2.3 Review contracts and commissioning processes to implement recommended requirements, tailored to organisation/ local needs, as necessary.

2.4 Develop, test and rollout a comprehensive climate change impact assessment and social value framework for public sector decision making, with associated policies, guidance, training and support.

2.5 Encourage and support SMEs within public sector supply chains to effect positive environmental change by utilising Low Carbon Kent and linked support programmes across the county.

Theme 3: Planning and development

3.1 Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth, net-zero targets, and climate change adaptation.

3.2 Adopt and/or reference the refreshed Kent Design Guide as Supplementary Planning Documents, in line with Local Plan updates.

3.3 Secure agreement and identify scope and resource requirements to develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth evidence-base and strategic planning policy and guidance framework.

3.4 Using the outputs from action 3.3, develop a shared Kent and Medway clean growth strategic planning policy and guidance framework that identifies latest evidence, good practice, position statements and policies for Local Plans and Development Management.

3.5 Raise clean growth / climate change awareness and skills of planners, planning committees, developers, and supply chain

3.6 Develop tailored Kent and Medway public sector building design guidance for new build and

Theme 4: Climate Emergency Investment Fund

4.1 Review existing internal and external funding streams, expertise and opportunities that could be used to deliver ELES actions. Develop into a central collaborative resource.

4.2 Accelerate the 'supply and demand' of nature-based climate solutions (understand demand, assess skills/ capacity gaps, develop resources to support delivery).

4.3 Create the framework for a SE-wide 'brokerage hub' that can bring together 'buyers' and 'sellers' to co-develop nature-based carbon sequestration projects.

4.4 Review and act on the outcomes of the SELEP Sector Support Fund project, and Accelerating Nature Based Climate Solutions conclusions.
4.5 Grow and maintain a portfolio of 'shovel-ready' renewable energy projects suitable for external funding.
4.6 Develop a portfolio of quick wins and 'shovel-ready' natural capital / carbon sequestration projects suitable for delivery through Net Gain or other external funding.
Theme 4: Buildings retrofit programme
5.1 Develop organisational action plans to deliver net zero public sector estate by 2030 at the latest. Monitor and report progress.
5.2 Implement a public sector building retrofit programme (energy and water), identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where possible.
5.3 Develop a Kent and Medway Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (excl. social housing) that identifies the actions and financial mechanisms for all income levels, to reduce emissions (electricity, heat, and water) from all property types, with evidence-led targets and costed actions where possible.
5.4 Secure funding and implement projects identified in the Domestic Retrofit Action Plan (exc. social housing).
5.5 Develop costed action plans for Net Zero social housing by 2030. Monitor and report progress. (new builds & retrofit)
5.6 Support and facilitate Registered Providers to develop costed action plans to decarbonise their housing stock. This should include the costs of material and labour.
5.7 Implement projects to improve the energy efficiency of social housing, focusing on whole house retrofit to PAS2035 standards and identifying joint projects that maximise economies of scale where
5.8 Update & deliver Kent Fuel Poverty Strategy (see: 5.3); supporting vulnerable and fuel poor households to access affordable energy.
5.9 Provide advice and guidance to private sector property owners, taking enforcement action where necessary, to ensure improvements are made on privately rented properties.
5.10 Support SMEs to retrofit energy efficiency and renewable technologies in business premises through Low Carbon Kent support and signposting to local solutions. (LoCASE grant funding ended in
5.11 Assess the feasibility and funding mechanisms for 'place-based' retrofit schemes (e.g. street-by-street, whole business park, community scale), combining business, residential, public realm retrofit
Theme 6: Transport
6.1 Review business mileage, set challenging reduction targets in light of COVID ways of working and expand sustainable travel policies that reduce the need to travel, encourage modal shift to active travel/public transport or increase car sharing.
6.2 Work in partnership to influence and develop plans to transition public sector fleets to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles (ULEV).
6.3 Implement pedestrianisation & Rights of Way Improvement Plans for Kent and for Medway.
6.4 Update and implement the (KCWIP), related strategies, and the Medway Sustainable School Travel Strategy to promote and incentivise active travel through the provision of infrastructure, facilities,
6.5 Prepare and implement local walking and cycling strategies. Measure the amount of new and improved walking and cycling infrastructure delivered in Kent.
6.6 Work with public transport providers to achieve EURO VI emissions standards or better.

6.7. Trial new transport projects that drive the transition to Ultra Low Emission Vehicle public transport.

6.8 Trial and implement projects that support modal shift away from car ownership and/or reduce car dependency.

6.9 Work with private transport sector, including school transport providers and taxi licencing to incentivise and switch to Ultra Low Emission Vehicles.

6.10 Consider future opportunities and interventions for reducing emissions from freight and international traffic including use of rivers and wharfs, improved journey efficiency, improved efficiency of vehicles and Fleet Operator Recognition Scheme and ECOStars schemes.

6.11 Work collaboratively with the public and private sector to roll out electric charging points across Kent and Medway, in line with local EV strategies.

6.12 Support local SMEs to switch to ULEV vans through the Kent REVS Up for Cleaner Air scheme. : Support further measures to encourage Kent business to switch to electric vehicles.

6.13 Support progress in Kent regarding “low carbon multimodal transport hubs” to include measures such as multimodal integrated transport next to Fastrack electric BRT network, train stations, key bus corridors, public EV infrastructure, bike/e-bike share schemes, secure bike storage, electric car clubs with associated EV infrastructure, ecargo bike trials.

6.14 Tackle poor air quality hotspots through the implementation of Air Quality Action Plans.

Theme 7: Renewable energy

7.1 Undertake a Local Area Energy Plan for Kent (or multiple smaller LAEP's) that focus on all existing and emerging technologies.

7.2 Work in partnership to identify, support and promote new renewable energy projects across Kent and Medway, maximising funding from the Growth Fund, future Prosperity Fund and SE Energy Hub.

7.3 Continue to install solar panels on suitable public sector buildings and land, including offices, schools, and landfill sites.

7.4 Develop and implement the Maidstone Heat Project.

7.5 Identify the barriers and local authority role in supporting households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies. Incorporate findings into action 5.3 (Domestic Retrofit Action Plan, exc. social)

7.6 Develop and implement projects to support households to install renewable heat and electricity technologies.

7.7 Provide technical support for community renewable energy projects to include recommendations from Community Energy South on how to support community energy generation across Kent and

7.8 Support the development of future housing micro-grids, smart energy grids, and low carbon heat networks for new build homes.

Theme 8: Green infrastructure

8.1 Undertake an assessment of Kent and Medway's opportunities for natural solutions to climate change.

8.2 Develop a Local Nature Recovery Strategy for Kent and Medway that agrees priorities for nature recovery, maps the most valuable existing areas for nature, and maps opportunities for creating or improving habitat for nature and delivering wider environmental goals (nature-based solutions).

8.3 Develop and implement a strategy to establish 1.5 million new trees (or their carbon sequestration equivalent) in Kent and Medway.

8.4 Develop cost effective and innovative approaches to establishing trees outside woodlands whilst strengthening biosecurity, through the Promoting Trees Outside Woodlands Project.

Theme 9: Supporting low carbon business

9.1 Utilise the Clean Growth South East supply chain analysis to help realise and link the economic opportunities from the low carbon sector across Kent and the wider South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) area.

9.2 Support local SMEs (small and medium sized enterprises) and public sector suppliers to progress through Steps to Environmental Management (STEM) training accreditation and enhance their knowledge of the key themes through Low Carbon Kent's Sustainable Business Toolkit.
9.3 Offer a low carbon support programme for SMEs, including support to signpost to funding, reduce costs, and carbon, and actively contribute to growth of the low carbon and renewable energy economy (LCREE) and environmental goods and services sectors (EGSS) through tailored support and
9.4 Support continued development of onshore & offshore wind sector, green hydrogen, and related local supply chains.
9.5 Drive an increase in the local circular economy within Kent's resident and business communities through effective support, benchmarking, collaboration, and business case support.
9.6 Investigate workforce upskill/ training requirements for retrofit and green business.
9.7 To consider the environmental impact of tourism in Kent and work with partners to measure the impact and benefit of tourism. Also, support tourist business to be more sustainable.
Theme 10: Communications
10.1 Develop a joint communications, engagement and behaviour change strategy and action plan
10.2a Develop a communication working group/network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working.
10.2b Consider the impact of reviewing and potentially rebranding the annual environment conference.
10.3 Maximise the impact of Great Big Green Week in Kent by promoting a shared calendar of events and supporting local activities.
10.4 Implement joint communication campaigns to raise awareness of the health impacts of air pollution and ways to protect health and improve air quality. Include progress on Kent air quality funding
10.5 Implement joint communication campaigns to increase modal shift to active travel / public transport.
10.6 Support joint communication campaigns on behaviour change projects focused on tackling residents carbon emissions.
10.7 Implement joint communication campaigns to help residents reduce their water bills / save water.
10.8 Implement joint communication campaigns to reduce resident's environmental impact
10.9 Implement joint communication campaigns to encourage and support SMEs to adopt environmentally sustainable practices.
10.10 Develop shared resources for public sector staff engagement.
10.11 Monitor and review effectiveness of communication campaigns and develop targeted behaviour change programmes.
10.12 Investigate the training, skills and education needs for climate awareness for Kent & Medway (including schools, residents)

2024 Status	Commentary
Red	REMOVED - following recommendations from KMEG. Local authorities have little control over major emission sources tracking of carbon budgets deemed ineffectual.
Red	REMOVED - as above.
Amber	AMENDED / MERGED with 1.5. NEW ACTION CREATED
Red	REMOVED - beyond scope of the strategy, stakeholder influence or ability
Amber	AMENDED / MERGED with 1.3. NEW ACTION CREATED
Red	REMOVED - beyond scope of the strategy, stakeholder influence or ability
Green	MERGED with 2.3 & 2.4. NEW ACTIONS CREATED
Amber	MERGED with 2.2 & 2.4. NEW ACTIONS CREATED
Amber	MERGED with 2.2 & 2.3. NEW ACTIONS CREATED
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (supporting local carbon business)
Red	MERGED with 3.3. NEW ACTION CREATED
Red	MERGED with 3.1. NEW ACTION CREATED
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions
Red	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions
Red	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions
Red	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (Nature based solutions, Renewable energy)
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (Nature based solutions)
Red	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (Nature based solutions)

Red	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (Nature based solutions)
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (Renewable energy)
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (Nature based solutions)
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (carbon reduction)
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (carbon reduction)
Red	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Red	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Amber	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Amber	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Amber	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Red	RETAINED / UPDATED
Green	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Green	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (low carbon business)
Red	ACTIONS 5.3, 5.4, 5.5, 5.7,5.9,5.11 MERGED. NEW ACTION CREATED
Red	RETAINED & UPDATED
Amber	Retained, unchanged.
Green	REMOVED - no additionality provided / covered in other strategies
Green	REMOVED - no additionality provided / covered in other strategies (specifically, Local Transport Plan)
Amber	REMOVED - no additionality provided / covered in other strategies (specifically, Local Transport Plan)
Amber	RETAINED & UPDATED

Green	RETAINED & UPDATED
Green	REMOVED - lack of influence
Red	RETAINED & UPDATED
Amber	REMOVED - no additionality provided / covered in other strategies (specifically, Local Transport Plan)
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED
Amber	REMOVED - no additionality provided / covered in other strategies (specifically, Local Transport Plan)
Green	REMOVED - no additionality provided / covered in other strategies (specifically, Local Transport Plan)
Amber	RETAINED & UPDATED
Amber	RETAINED & UPDATED (MERGED with 7.3)
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED (MERGED with 7.2)
Amber	REMOVED - local project not of regional interest.
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (resident and community support)
Green	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (resident and community support)
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (resident and community support)
Red	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (planning and development, and resident and community support)
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED
Green	REMOVED - covered in Local Nature Recovery Strategy
Amber	RETAINED & UPDATED

Amber	RETAINED & UPDATED 9.2,9.3, 9.4 MERGED
Red	RETAINED & UPDATED 9.2,9.3, 9.4 MERGEDD
Green	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (renewable energy)
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED 9.2,9.3, 9.4 MERGED
Amber	REMOVED - work programme is referred to in other actions (resident and community support)
Green	REMOVED - beyond scope of the strategy or stakeholder influence or ability / covered in other strategies (Visit Kent Sustainable Tourism Action Plan)
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.1,10.2a,b 10.3 MERGED
Amber	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.1,10.2a,b 10.3 MERGED
Red	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.1,10.2a,b 10.3 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.1,10.2a,b 10.3 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 10.8 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 10.8 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 10.8 MERGED
Red	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 10.8 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED, ACITONS 10.4, 10.5, 10.6, 10.7 10.8 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED 10.9,10.10 MERGED
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED 10.9,10.10 MERGED
Green	REMOVED/REDUNDANT - all actions in the plan are monitored and removed for effectiveness
Green	RETAINED & UPDATED 10.9,10.10 MERGED

REVISED ACTIONS ELES Implementation Plan for 2026

NEW THEME 1: Carbon reduction

1.1. Continue to deliver local energy efficiency and emission management strategies across owned estates and local areas, monitoring progress regularly.

Theme 2: Public Sector Decision Making

Design, test, and implement a Sustainable Procurement Toolkit and an Environmental Impact Assessment framework to align public sector operations with environmental objectives. Provide targeted training and support to upskill staff across Local Authorities in their effective use.

Develop a standardised approach to Scope 3 reporting.

Theme 3: Planning and development

Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth and climate resilience. Integrate advice into Local Planning Authority decision-making by advocating with planners.

NEW THEME 4: Resident and Community Support

Develop and implement a Kent and Medway Homes Retrofit Plan. Outline collaborative actions to improve health, environment and reduce domestic emissions across a range of property types and tenures, while improving the skills capacity within Kent and Medway.

Update the Kent and Medway Fuel Poverty Strategy, supporting fuel poor households to reduce their energy consumption, access social tariffs and other available support.

Collaborate with local residents and communities to promote and champion energy efficiency and renewable technologies.

Support community groups on community-owned energy projects with information, advice and resources.

Theme 5: Transport

Collaborate with public transport providers to develop and implement opportunities that transition petrol and diesel vehicles to sustainable alternatives.

Utilise taxi licensing regulations and Council procurement policies to increase the adoption of EVs in taxi services and school transport, aiming for a reduction in emissions.

Revise staff travel benefits and car user policies to support sustainable transport, including car clubs, EV lease options, and incentives for low-emission vehicles.

Explore and develop council-owned fleet efficiency options that optimises costs, involving a mix of technologies.

Develop a shared EV charge point master plan for Kent and Medway.

Theme 6: Renewable energy

Undertake Local Area Energy Planning for Kent and Medway that focuses on all existing and emerging technologies.

Develop a strategy for renewable energy generation and storage across Kent and Medway.

Theme 7: Green Infrastructure

Support opportunities and ongoing delivery of nature-based solutions within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.

Continue to deliver Kent Plan Tree for 1.5 million new trees in Kent and Medway, reporting on progress.

Develop a Kent and Medway Adaptation Plan.

Theme 8: Supporting Low Carbon Business

Work with supply chains to enhance understanding of sustainable opportunities, particularly business resilience and economic growth. Signpost to local solutions and training.

Work with higher energy-consuming businesses and clusters to ensure low-emissions solutions. Explore renewable energy, heat and resource-sharing within growth plans, by including this in the Kent and Medway Economic Framework.

Support SMEs to improve energy efficiency in premises to reduce emissions by offering financial assistance or signposting to local or other solutions.

Theme 9: Communications

Maintain a communication network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working, including the development of shared resources for public sector staff engagement.

Drive engagement and behaviour change through initiatives such as energy and water saving, active travel, climate-related health awareness.

Investigate the training, skills and education needs for climate awareness for Kent & Medway (including schools, residents).

Updated proposed actions for the Kent and Medway Energy and Low Emissions Strategy Implementation Plan

Current version can be found online [here](#).

ID #	Action Detail	Lead	Timescale
Carbon Reduction			
1.1	Continue to deliver local energy efficiency and emission management strategies across owned estates and local areas, monitoring progress regularly.	CCN	Ongoing
Public Sector Decision Making			
2.1	Design, test, and implement a Sustainable Procurement Toolkit and an Environmental Impact Assessment framework to align public sector operations with environmental objectives. Provide targeted training and support to upskill staff across Local Authorities in their effective use.	CCN	2026
2.2	Develop a standardised approach to Scope 3 reporting.	CCN	2026-27
Planning and Development			
3.1	Refresh the Kent Design Guide to reflect clean growth and climate resilience. Integrate advice into Local Planning Authority decision-making by advocating with planners.	KCC & Local Authority Planning Teams	2027
Resident and Community Support			
4.1	Develop and implement a Kent and Medway Homes Retrofit Plan. Outline collaborative actions to improve health, environment and reduce domestic emissions across a range of property types and tenures, while improving the skills capacity within Kent and Medway.	KCC	2026

4.2	Update the Kent and Medway Fuel Poverty Strategy, supporting fuel poor households to reduce their energy consumption, access social tariffs and other available support.	KCC	2026-27
4.3	Collaborate with local residents and communities to promote and champion energy efficiency and renewable technologies.	CCN	Ongoing
4.4	Support community groups on community-owned energy projects with information, advice and resources.	CCN	Ongoing
Transport			
5.1	Collaborate with public transport providers to develop and implement opportunities that transition petrol and diesel vehicles to sustainable alternatives.	CCN	Ongoing
5.2	Utilise taxi licensing regulations and Council procurement policies to increase the adoption of EVs in taxi services and school transport, aiming for a reduction in emissions.	CCN	Ongoing
5.3	Revise staff travel benefits and car user policies to support sustainable transport, including car clubs, EV lease options, and incentives for low-emission vehicles.	CCN, HR Teams	2026-27
5.4	Explore and develop council-owned fleet efficiency options that optimises costs, involving a mix of technologies.	CCN, Transport Teams	2026-30
5.5	Develop a shared EV charge point master plan for Kent and Medway.	CCN	2026-27
Renewable Energy Generation			
6.1	Undertake Local Area Energy Planning for Kent and Medway that focuses on all existing and emerging technologies.	CCN	2026-27
6.2	Develop a strategy for renewable energy generation and storage across Kent and Medway.	KCC & CCN	2026-27

Green Infrastructure				
7.1	Support opportunities and ongoing delivery of nature-based solutions within the Local Nature Recovery Strategy.	CCN	Ongoing	
7.2	Continue to deliver Kent Plan Tree for 1.5 million new trees in Kent and Medway, reporting on progress.	KCC	Ongoing	
7.3	Develop a Kent and Medway Adaptation Plan.	CCN & KCC	2026	
Supporting Businesses				
8.1	Work with supply chains to enhance understanding of sustainable opportunities, particularly business resilience and economic growth. Signpost to local solutions and training.	KCC & CCN	Ongoing	
8.2	Work with higher energy-consuming businesses and clusters to ensure low-emissions solutions. Explore renewable energy, heat and resource-sharing within growth plans, by including this in the Kent and Medway Economic Framework.	KCC	2026-28	
8.3	Support SMEs to improve energy efficiency in premises to reduce emissions by offering financial assistance or signposting to local or other solutions.	CCN	Ongoing	
Communications				
9.1	Maintain a communication network to ensure consistency of messages and facilitate joint working, including the development of shared resources for public sector staff engagement.	CCN	Ongoing	
9.2	Drive engagement and behaviour change through initiatives such as energy and water saving, active travel, climate-related health awareness.	CCN	Ongoing	
9.3	Investigate the training, skills and education needs for climate awareness for Kent & Medway (including schools, residents).	CCN	Ongoing	

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From: **David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects**

To: **Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport**

Subject: **Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee- 13 January 2026**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All KCC electoral divisions

Summary: This report provides an overview of the progress in implementing the Kent and Medway Economic Framework Ambition 1. It sets out the high-level key actions that have taken place recently and the future activity planned to support sustainable growth of Kent & Medway's economy, through to 2030. This is one of a regular series of updates on the Framework's five ambitions.

Recommendation: The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

1. Background

- 1.1 In April 2024, the [Kent & Medway Economic Partnership](#)¹ (KMEP) approved the publication of the [Kent & Medway Economic Framework](#) (KMEF). This a medium-term strategy that looks to guide actions that support the growth and prosperity of the region (functional economic area) through to 2030.
- 1.2 The Framework focuses on three overarching objectives (Productivity, Sustainability and Inclusivity) which sit above five ambitions for delivery, these being:
 1. Enable innovative, productive and creative businesses
 2. Widen opportunities and unlock talent
 3. Secure resilient infrastructure for planned sustainable growth
 4. Place economic opportunity at the centre of community wellbeing and prosperity
 5. Create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places.

¹ KMEP is the local growth board for this area, and its membership includes the Political leadership of Kent County Council, Medway Council, all district councils, businesses, universities and colleges. Its website is www.kmep.org.uk

2. KMEF Implementation

2.1 Since publication, the KCC Economy Team (which acts as the KMEP Secretariat) has been working to implement the KMEF ambitions in partnership with the KMEP Board Members, the Kent & Medway Business Advisory Board (BAB), and a range of local partners and stakeholders.

2.2 For each of the five ambitions, a private sector board member and a local authority officer acts as a Thematic Lead for the ambition, helping to oversee the implementation of the KMEF and direct the team's activities.

2.3 The information below outlines the focus of the work to date against the ambition 1 of the KMEF: 'Widen opportunities and unlock talent'. The four action areas under this ambition are:

1. Developing an enhanced place-based innovation partnership
2. Focusing support to business on measures that will increase long-term productivity resilience and the adoption of new ideas
3. Attracting and welcoming investors to Kent and Medway
4. Supporting the conditions for growth

2.4 This paper provides updates on:

- The emerging Kent & Medway Innovation Partnership and Local Innovation Partnership Fund bid
- The Kent & Medway Growth Hub and local business support services
- The recent transition of the county's Inward Investment service
- The Kent & Medway Business Fund
- The emerging Kent & Medway Local Growth Plan
- Work to promote investment opportunities in the county

3. Action Area 1 - Developing an enhanced place-based Innovation Partnership:

3.1 KMEP is developing an enhanced place-based Innovation Partnership to tackle a long-standing challenge: historic low investment in research and development by Kent and Medway businesses, and the receipt of fewer national grants in our locality. The new Kent & Medway Innovation Partnership (KMIP) aims to break down barriers, encourage new technologies, and drive growth through innovation.

3.2 KMIP also builds on previous successes that have been developed jointly with KMEP and external stakeholders over the last six years. Initiatives like [Growing Kent & Medway](#) (led by Niab in East Malling), which started in 2019, have shown how collaboration between universities, councils, and businesses can deliver real benefits. Through a UK government investment of £3.6m per annum, the Growing Kent and Medway programme has:

- Connected to over 700 local businesses
- Supported 246 businesses (12 hours of financial support).
- Collaborated with 231 organisations
- Brought 51 new food and drink related products or processes to market.

- Achieved additional Intellectual Property outputs including patent applications, trademarks and a spin-out in process.
- Leveraged a total investment of £42m

By continuing with cluster development, KMIP will ensure these gains are not lost and will create a lasting framework for innovation.

- 3.3 Collaboration is at the heart of the KMIP, which, chaired by KCC, brings together universities' researchers and business schools, colleges, and industry partners to develop clusters in high-growth sectors, including in food, nutrition, health, energy, and digitalisation. These clusters will share knowledge, attract investment, and help smaller businesses access opportunities they might otherwise miss.
- 3.4 A specific funding opportunity was launched in October 2025 that KMIP is also seeking to secure. The Government's Industrial Strategy has concentrated most of its resources and policies on areas with mayoral authorities, large city regions, and major industrial clusters. Few funds announced could be accessed by Kent & Medway. A notable exception is the Local Innovation Partnership Fund (LIPF), which offers a significant opportunity for our region.
- 3.5 The LIPF is a UK-wide funding programme worth £500 million, managed by UK Research and Innovation (UKRI). Its aim is to help innovative clusters grow by turning research and development into real-world products and services, ultimately boosting economic growth and creating jobs. There is an opportunity for Kent & Medway to apply for funding under a competitive strand of up to £20m to be supported by up to £20m of private sector match investment.
- 3.6 Work is underway to submit a readiness check / expression of interest by 12 February. This submission will show alignment with the area's strategic vision, priority clusters, ecosystem maturity, governance, and track record. For Kent and Medway, the evidence base for the Local Growth Plan (see section 6 below) will demonstrate strategic alignment.
- 3.7 In order to develop the bid, KMIP has held workshops with industry representatives and although the exact nature of the content cannot be shared due to commercial sensitivity, more than 80 local businesses have shown interest in the LIPF cluster proposal so far.
- 3.8 The final decision on whether Kent and Medway are granted LIPF funding will rest with the DSIT (Department for Science, Innovation and Technology) Minister, based on recommendations from UKRI. Two key activities are planned to support the bid: using the national Sustainable Foods Conference to showcase Kent & Medway's existing work and sector strengths in agri-food to ministers, civil servants, and industry partners; and a briefing with Kent and Medway MPs to ensure that they are aware of the bid, and are in a briefed position to be supportive, before submission.

4. Action Area 2 - Focusing local business support:

- 4.1 This action area aims to ensure that support available for local businesses contributes to enhanced productivity, decarbonisation and innovation. A number of programmes are in place to support local businesses in Kent & Medway.
- 4.2 Kent County Council receives funding from the Department for Business & Trade (DBT) to oversee the [Kent & Medway Growth Hub](#) service. Growth Hubs are a national business support initiative designed to help businesses improve their performance, address barriers to and facilitate growth by providing tailored advice, resources, and access to funding. They serve as a central point of contact for businesses of all sizes and sectors, offering a range of services, such as networking and workshops and training. While KCC has overall responsibility for the service, it contracts an organisation called Smarter Society to run the local Growth Hub service. Previously KCC had contracted Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce for this service, until July 2025.
- 4.3 Since 1 April 2025, the Kent & Medway Growth Hub has supported 997 individual businesses, with ambitions to grow and progress. Of those: 721 businesses received up to one hour of targeted support, 235 businesses accessed between one and 12 hours of support; and 41 business benefitted from over 12 hours of in-depth support. This year's activity includes a High Street programme that will provide mentoring sessions for 40 businesses, the creation of a high-performance digital gateway (and legacy platform), digital training workshops, and a business survey.
- 4.4 In addition to the above, Kent County Council, utilising South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP) one-off ring-fenced residual funding, has commissioned Smarter Society to deliver an additional 30 structured mentoring assignments (six hours each) through a digitally delivered mentoring and engagement programme designed to support a diverse range of small and medium sized enterprises across Kent & Medway. The programme will launch in 2026.
- 4.5 The SELEP residual funding is also being used to support increased 1-2-1 hours with the Growth Hub's Business Investment Adviser for those businesses who require in depth support to develop a funding application to the Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF) – see paragraph 6.2 below. Since 1 April 2025, the Business Investment Adviser has supported seven businesses who have successfully secured KMBF loan funding to the total value of £538,400.
- 4.6 The KMBF and [Produced in Kent](#) (the county's food & drink promotion agency) have teamed up to ensure wrap around support via Produced in Kent membership is provided to those businesses within the food and drink sector who have recently been approved for or KMBF loan funding. Such support is designed to assist the businesses in showcasing their products and offer, opening additional routes to market, and scaling production. The costs associated with this project are being met from the South East Local Enterprise Partnership residual funding.

4.7 Made Smarter South East is a DBT-funded programme, managed by Surrey County Council, that aims to make it easier for makers, creators and manufacturers in the South East to innovate, upskill and grow their business by adopting industrial digital technologies. The programme helps with technical advice and support, upskilling and small grants. 30 Kent companies have registered interest in the programme which launched in April 2025, of which 14 are eligible for support. Further work is needed in 2026 to promote the programme to local firms to ensure that Kent companies have access to the practical and financial support available through the programme.

5. Action Area 3 – Attracting and welcoming investors to Kent & Medway

5.1 This action area was being delivered through the contractual arrangement for inward investment services previously delivered by Locate in Kent. The company, however, announced its intention to enter voluntary liquidation in September 2025. Prior to ceasing its activity, Locate in Kent reported an active pipeline of 204 investment projects i.e. companies wishing to establish a base in the county or expand their operations locally. Between April and August 2025, four new-to-county company projects completed, creating 54 jobs along with five grow-on space projects creating 236 jobs and retaining 456 jobs in the county.

5.2 In October 2025, following discussions with local stakeholders, Kent County Council and Medway Council started to make arrangements to bring the county's inward investment service in-house along with visitor economy services following Visit Kent's liquidation in September 2025. A new 'brand Kent' team was recruited and has been in place since November 2025 using residual funding that would have been spent on the two contracts.

5.3 The initial focus of the small team with regard to inward investment activity was to restore business critical functions while the core 'Invest Kent' service offer was developed to take into account feedback from local partners and stakeholders.

5.4 Since November, the focus of the team has included:

- (Re-)establishing contact with the pipeline of local, domestic and international investment leads to ensure that investor confidence was not lost and to provide ongoing support to live projects.
- Re-connecting with the DBT to ensure that the county's investment opportunities are on the national radar.
- Working to develop a network of local professional service companies and other contacts to form a soft landing service;
- Securing the county's commercial property database which provides real-time information about sites and premises available to potential investors, district councils and other partners.

5.5 In addition to these core activities, the team will also be working to support the development and promotion of the county's investable propositions which will feature in the forthcoming Local Growth Plan, building on Kent & Medway's high-growth sector opportunities.

5.6 KCC and Medway Council will also be presenting ideas and seeking additional financial contributions from local public and private sector organisations to support additional activities that would enhance the core service such as attendance at key, sector-focused trade shows to enable very targeted lead generation.

6. Action Area 4 – Supporting the conditions for Growth

6.1 This action area aims to unlock economic growth through ensuring that businesses in Kent & Medway:

- a) have their voice heard by national government while they create economic growth policies and
- b) have access to the right commercial space and finances including through the [Kent & Medway Business Fund](#).

Local Growth Plan

6.2 The [English Devolution White Paper](#), published in December 2024, set out central Government's plan for localism in England by devolving power and funding from central government to local leaders who know their area best. A key part of this rests on the development of ambitious Local Growth Plans by Mayoral Strategic Authorities.

6.3 Local Growth Plans provide a long-term 10-year strategic framework for economic growth in a region. They are normally produced and owned by Mayoral Strategic Authorities and should set out the priorities where the authority will focus its devolved powers and funding to drive productivity and growth.

6.4 Plans will also highlight the areas that will benefit from collaboration and joint working between Mayoral Strategic Authorities and central government, with the plans identifying "shared priorities" to underpin joint working. Plans will set out an economic vision for the region (in our case, Kent and Medway) and identify regional sector strengths, informed by the Industrial Strategy.

6.5 Despite Kent & Medway not being part of the Devolution Priority Programme, we are working proactively through KMEP to produce a Local Growth Plan for the whole region with a view to setting the county up for any potential future funding opportunities and further engagement with government.

6.6 An organisation called Metro Dynamics has been commissioned to produce an evidence base of our region's strengths against the high-growth sectors outlined in the Industrial Strategy. This evidence-base work will conclude at the end of January 2026, and then KMEP will liaise with local stakeholders to develop the broader Local Growth Plan priorities that sit alongside the evidence base.

6.7 The evidence-base has already identified Kent & Medway's unique economic strengths and why it is critical to the UK Government to support our region.

KMEP in November 2025 agreed these are the priority sectors for our area, which require a deep dive analysis:

- **Kent and Medway are critical to UK's trade security:** Our region is the UK's primary gateway to the EU for goods and services, hosting key ports such as the Port of Dover, Eurotunnel, Thamesport in Medway, Peel Ports at Sheerness, and the Port of Ramsgate. These facilities provide the UK's most efficient routes for roll-on/roll-off freight and passenger traffic. The Port of Dover alone handles £144 billion of trade in goods annually, accounting for 33% of UK-EU trade and welcomes around 1.3 million tourist vehicles each year.
- **Kent and Medway are critical to UK's energy security:** The Isle of Grain liquefied national gas (LNG) terminal is Europe's largest import facility and boasts a regasification capacity of up to 15 million tonnes per annum and storage of around 1 million cubic metres. At peak utilisation, it can supply up to 20% of the UK's gas demand. Its strategic importance is underscored by the fact that even remote Scottish communities rely on gas delivered via Medway; if the terminal were offline, these areas would lose access to the energy network despite being hundreds of miles away. In addition, Kent and Medway host multiple electricity interconnectors that link the UK to mainland Europe, including ElecLink (UK-France) at Folkestone, Nemo Link (UK-Belgium) near Sandwich, and NeuConnect (UK-Germany), currently under construction at the Isle of Grain. The region also contributes significantly to renewable energy generation, with assets such as Vattenfall's Kentish Flats offshore wind farm - a core component of the UK's energy infrastructure - providing clean, renewable power to thousands of homes and supporting national decarbonisation and energy security goals.
- **Kent and Medway are critical to the UK's food security.** The region contains some of the highest concentrations of Grade 1 arable land in the country, second only to Lincolnshire, and benefits from favourable weather conditions that boost crop yields. Although Kent and Medway account for just 3% of England's land mass, the area hosts 13% of England's horticultural land and produce around 40% of the nation's fruit and vegetables. The food and drink sector employs over 65,000 people across 4,500 companies. We are constantly hearing from businesses in the sector that devolution is required urgently to ensure a strong local voice in national forums - enabling them to drive international trade and expand exports to the EU.
- **Kent and Medway are pivotal to the UK's digital economy.** BAE Systems, a leading defence firm, operates in Medway, manufacturing advanced electronic instruments and appliances for measuring, testing, and navigation—employing over 1,500 people within the Government's Digital and Technology classification. The region also hosts nearly 7,000 creative and digital businesses, making it one of the UK's most dynamic creative hubs. These include digital start-ups, film and TV studios, gaming companies, and design agencies clustered in vibrant locations such as Folkestone Creative Quarter,

Maidstone TV Studios, and Chatham Historic Dockyard. Further strengthening this position is the £13.4m Docking Station project in Medway—a state-of-the-art digital creative hub opening in late 2026, which will feature immersive technology studios, training facilities, and start-up support, cementing Medway's role as a centre for digital innovation

6.8 Work to finalise the Kent & Medway Local Growth plan will continue over the coming months and this key document will set out the area's sector growth potential and investment opportunities.

Access to the right commercial space and finances

6.9 Since its relaunch in November 2023, the Kent and Medway Business Fund has approved 73 loans with a cumulative value of £8,693,881. 31 loans with a cumulative value of £3,890,154 are attributable to the current financial year 2025-26, up to 2 December 2025. Of the 31 businesses supported this year, 15 are in East Kent, eight in Mid/North Kent and eight in West Kent. The types of businesses supported are incredibly diverse, and many are representative of the county's priority sectors; namely, Agri-Tech / Food & Drink, Energy, Digital and Transport & Logistics. Loans have been provided to food and drink manufacturers, transport providers, heating specialists, innovative digital technology companies and hospitality and leisure businesses.

6.10 More [in-depth information about the KMBF](#) was reported to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee in September 2025.

6.11 KCC has also contributed to the creation of new workspace in the county through the No Use Empty Commercial scheme. As presented to [GEDCCC in September 2025](#), work is underway to use £6m of former Regional Growth Funding to launch a new round of No Use Empty Commercial in the coming months. The scheme will administer short-term interest-bearing loans secured as a first charge against a development for a maximum of three years to support specific commercial projects to deliver the creation of new business units/workspace, in Kent & Medway. A recent example would be the recent Tridax Business Park, Whitfield, Dover. These new projects will provide wider economic and employment opportunities. As the newly developed business units and workspaces reach a stage where they are ready for sale or lease, there will be an opportunity for businesses seeking to start up, expand, and create jobs to apply for loan funding through the main KMBF fund.

6.12 On 5 November 2025, KCC launched the latest edition of the Kent Property Market Report to a commercial audience of 250 developers and wider representatives at an event in Ashford, made possible thanks to sponsorship from a number of private sector partners. The 25/26 report highlighted the Kent property market's resilience, with science & innovation hubs, business parks and industrial sites continuing to perform well. High streets showed more mixed fortunes and general office rental rates continue to be depressed, with many older units being converted into residential properties. The report is in its 34th year and is co-produced with Caxtons Property Consultants. [The full report is available to view online.](#)

7. Next steps and Conclusions

7.1 This report has provided an overview of the progress in implementing Ambition 1 within the Kent and Medway Economic Framework. As can be seen above, significant work is underway with more future activity planned to support sustainable growth of Kent & Medway's economy, through to 2030.

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From: **David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects**

Simon Jones, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee - 13 January 2026**

Subject: **2025 Infrastructure Funding Statement**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Past Pathway of report: N/A

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: County Wide

Summary: Kent County Council (KCC) is required by statute to provide a summary of the financial position relating to Developer Contributions for the previous financial year through publication of an annual Infrastructure Funding Statement. This report provides a summary of that Statement.

Recommendation:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Through the Community Infrastructure Levy (amendment) (England) (no.2) Regulations 2019, Local Authorities have a responsibility to provide a summary of all financial and non-financial developer contributions that they have been involved with over the course of a given financial year. The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is the platform through which to do this and must include a report on Planning Obligations relating to Section 106 (s106) of the Town and County Planning Act 1990, Section 278 (s278) of the Highways Act 1980 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 1.2 Along with summary information, the latest IFS also provides some examples of infrastructure projects that Kent County Council (KCC) has delivered within specific District authority areas during 2024/25. This has been included to demonstrate how developer contributions are an essential tool in unlocking and delivering growth across the county. The statement is produced by the Development Investment Team (DIT) within the Growth and Communities Division, with assistance from services across the wider Authority.

2. 2024/2025 Infrastructure Funding Statement

- 2.1 The IFS document has been attached as Appendix 1 or can be viewed online, along with previous versions, via [KCC Infrastructure Funding Statements](#).

2.2 Throughout the IFS there will be references to the following definitions:

Secured – Contributions that have been included within a signed legal document for a planning application. These contributions have not been collected / delivered and if the planning application is not implemented, they will never be received.

Received – Contributions received, either monetary or non-monetary (in kind), that have been transferred to KCC.

Allocated – Contributions that have been received and allocated to specific projects.

Spent / Delivered – Monetary or non-monetary contributions that have been spent or delivered.

This Financial Year - unless stated otherwise, this refers to the period 01/04/2024 – 31/03/2025.

District – unless stated otherwise, this refers to one or more of Kent's District, City and Borough Councils.

2.3 S106 Contributions

2.4 Section 106 monies are secured for a range of infrastructure. **They can only be sought where they meet the three legal tests** as set out in paragraph 122 of the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010:

- they are directly related to the development,
- fairly and reasonably related in scale and kind to the development, and
- necessary to make the development acceptable in planning terms.

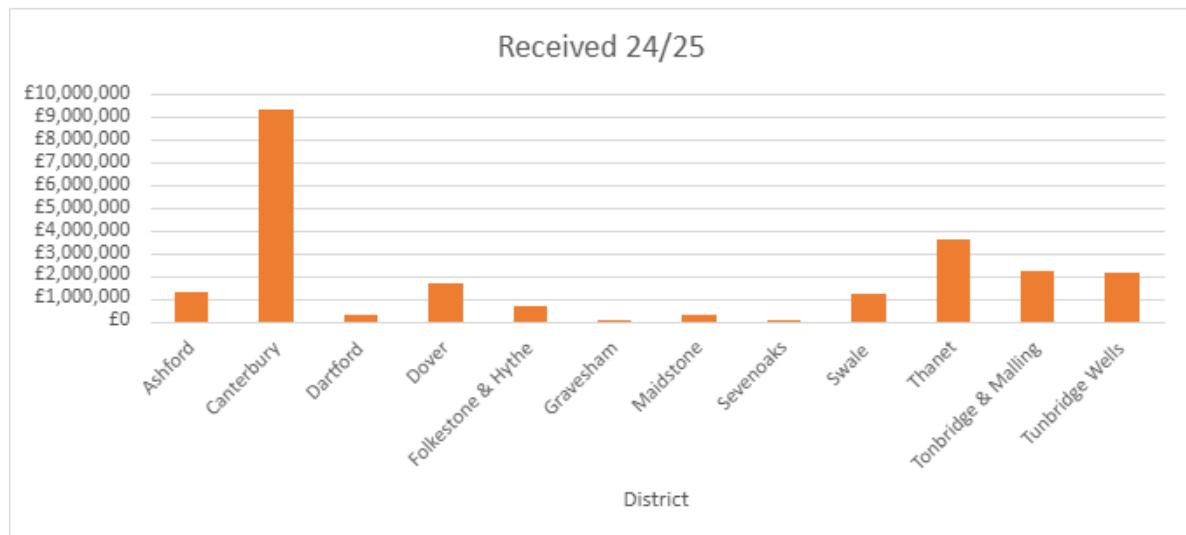
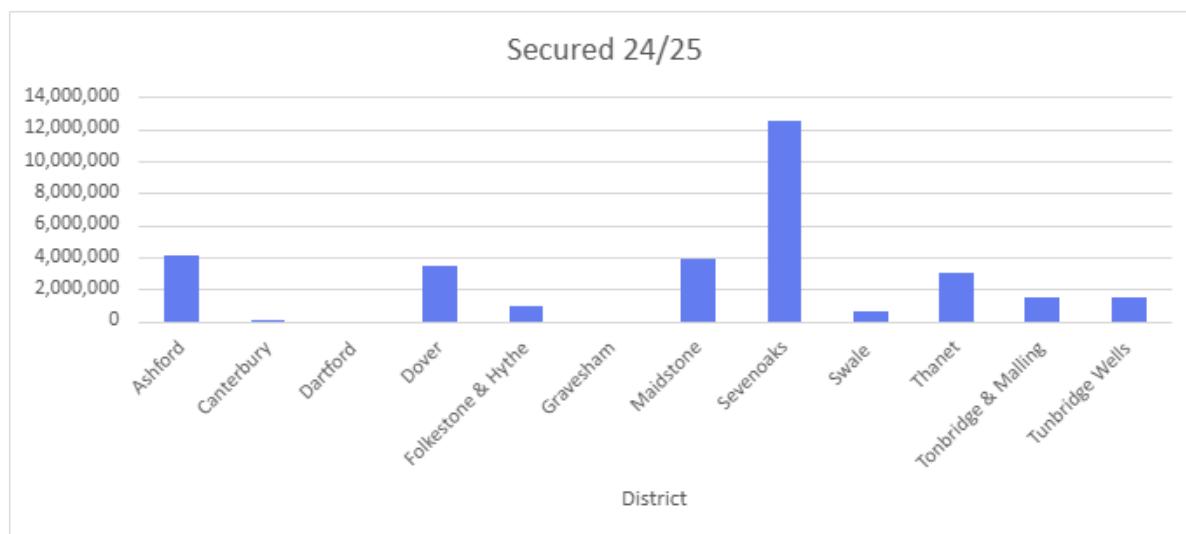
2.5 KCC secures contributions towards primary and secondary education, SEND, highways and transportation, adult social care, sustainable urban drainage, strategic waste disposal services, libraries, adult education and integrated children's services. In most instances KCC will have ten years to allocate funding received.

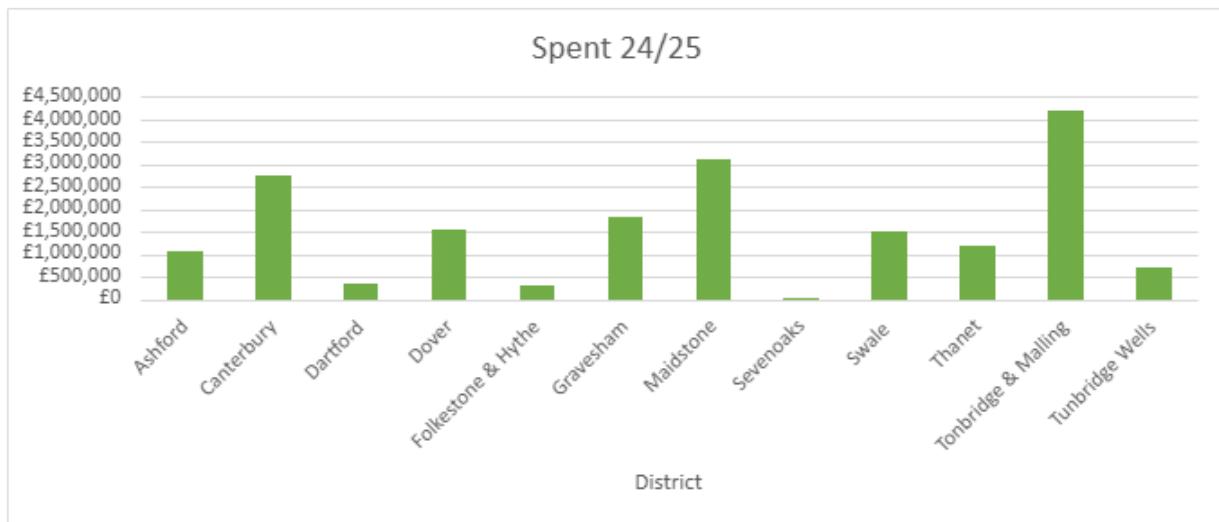
Table 1 below shows the total amount of s106 money secured, received and spent during the financial year 2024/2025.

Service Area	Secured	Received	Spent
Adult Social Care	£360,811	£368,030	£444,084
Community Services	£338,051	£771,400	£910,445
Education	£24,186,873	£15,101,848	£11,081,755
Education Land	£4,301,965		
Highways	£1,605,091	£6,557,792	£4,359,747
PRoW	£152,372	£252,206	£86,116
Strategic Waste Services	£248,485		

Development Investment Monitoring	£23,700		
Travel Plan Monitoring	£23,266		
Public Transport	£472,700	,	
Total	£31,713,314	£23,452,786	£17,179,137

2.6 District Analysis of secured, received and spent contributions in 2024/25





2.7 CIL Contributions

2.8 The Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) is a planning charge, introduced by the Planning Act 2008, as a tool for local planning authorities in England and Wales to help deliver infrastructure to support the development of their area. It came into force on 6 April 2010 through the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations 2010. Changes were subsequently made to the Community Infrastructure Levy Regulations through the Community Infrastructure Levy (Amendment) (England) (No. 2) Regulations 2019 which came into force on 1 September 2019.

2.9 Development may be liable for a charge under CIL depending on rates and criteria that the local planning authority i.e. a district, borough or city council has calculated and set in its area. New developments that create net additional 'gross internal area' of 100 square metres or more, or create new dwellings, are potentially liable for the levy. The levy is a financial tariff paid at a cost per sq. metre of development.

2.10 Developer contributions are secured through the CIL mechanism within five Local Planning Authorities in the county: Canterbury; Dartford; Folkestone and Hythe; Maidstone; and Sevenoaks. In these areas the contributions are collected by the local Planning Authorities. **Table 2** below shows the amount of CIL provisionally secured, received, and spent during the financial year for 2024/2025. Developer contributions for the other Districts are not covered through CIL agreements as these other Districts have not elected at this time to become CIL authorities. A local Planning Authority can be a CIL authority and still seek s106 contributions from a developer. KCC is very supportive of this dual approach. See 2.13 below.

Local Planning Authority	Secured (Provisional)	Received	Spent
Folkestone & Hythe		£547,873	£0

Table 2.

2.11 Of the five CIL authorities, contributions were only received in Folkestone and Hythe. The arrangement with Folkestone and Hythe ensures that KCC receives 35% of FHDC's total CIL receipts for the previous financial year. Funds are being collected towards the provision of a waste transfer station.

2.12 The other authorities invite KCC to submit bids to be made towards projects determining their success through their committee systems. There were no rounds open for bids in the last financial year.

2.13 Recognising a shortfall in developer contributions towards, in particular, education, three of the CIL districts, Folkestone and Hythe, Maidstone and Sevenoaks now allow KCC to seek s106 contributions separately (on top of CIL) through s106 agreements for education contributions. This was secured through officer negotiation.

2.14 Section 278 Contributions

2.15 KCC, as the local highway authority, is responsible for the maintenance and development of the local road network within its boundaries. If planning permission has been granted for a development that requires changes or improvements to public highways, then KCC will often enter into a Section 278 (s278) agreement with the developer. As with s106 agreements this can only take place when the requested improvements are compliant with the CIL 122 regulations listed at paragraph 2.4 of this report. A s278 agreement details and enables highway changes to be made which the developer pays for and constructs. Examples of works that may be featured in a s278 agreement include roundabouts, improved facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, and traffic calming measures.

2.16 The value of s278 agreements takes the form of a performance bond paid to KCC by the developer based on the cost of the highway works (including utility works). A performance bond protects KCC against the risk of unforeseen expenditure if the works are not completed by the developer. If the works are delivered, then the bond is repaid to the developer, generally in a series of payments based on completion stages.

2.17 S278 agreements are subject to reasonable and proportionate fees which KCC can charge as part of delivery and monitoring arrangements outlined within each agreement. These charges cover KCC costs associated with the necessary work involved, for example commissioning road safety audits.

2.18 **Table 3** below outlines the value of bonds within signed s278 agreements and fees received in the financial year 2024/2025.

S278 Contributions	Bonds	Fees
	£12,794,207	£1,575,586

Table 3.

3. Future Spending Priorities and Case Studies

- 3.1 During the financial year 2024/25, KCC's position with unspent s106 contributions has moved from £119,382,942 to £126,204,464. This is a net increase of 5.4%.
- 3.2 It is important to note that this is not uncommon as some projects require a significant amount of starting capital and the sums are spread across 12 Districts and Boroughs. The figures shown should be placed in context of the size of the county and the costs of specific infrastructure items. For example, the current costs of delivering a two-form entry primary school will be in the region of £11m. It is not uncommon for such a sum to be collected over a number of years from more than one development, depending on any development's size.
- 3.3 Significant funding is being held for the Sturry Link Road, Canterbury, (£6.8m) the Chilmington Green secondary school, Ashford (£6.5m), the expansion of Cornwallis Academy, Maidstone (£3.8m) and a number of Primary Schools. It may often be the case that Highways use s106 contributions as match funding for grant bids to the Government's Large Local Major Road (LLMR) fund, or Major Road Network (MRN) fund. Such schemes take many years to deliver through the design, bidding and build phases. Consequently, large amounts of funding can be anticipated to be held.
- 3.4 The [full statement](#) demonstrates the largest planned infrastructure projects that unspent monies are allocated towards and an estimated date of expenditure. It also includes a breakdown of the funding held per KCC service area. The delivery schedule of these infrastructure projects can be influenced by a number of factors, including whether sufficient finance is available but also land availability and central government policy.
- 3.5 This year's IFS contains the details of five service areas highlighting projects delivered through the expenditure of developer contributions during the 2024/2025 financial year. The statement highlights the financial position of developer contributions and case studies within Adult Social Care, Education, Public Rights of Way and Libraries, Registration & Archives. A detailed breakdown of funding for all 12 Districts and Boroughs can be found on an accompanying spreadsheet, via [the district breakdown](#).

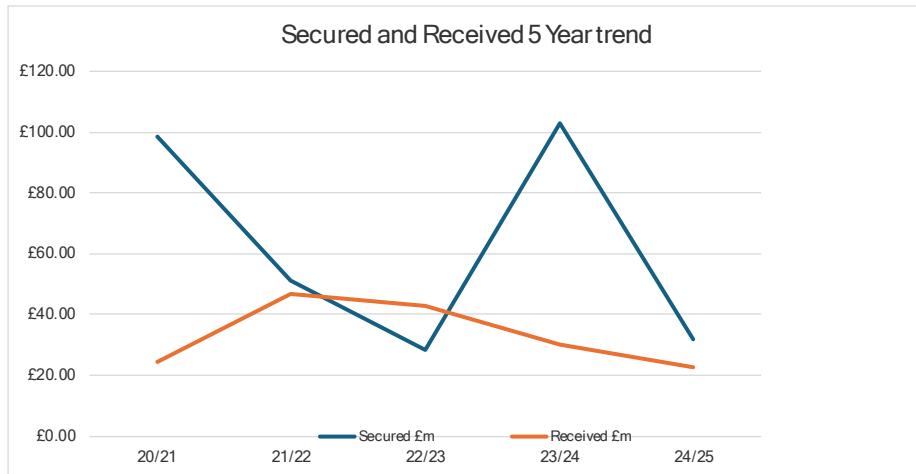
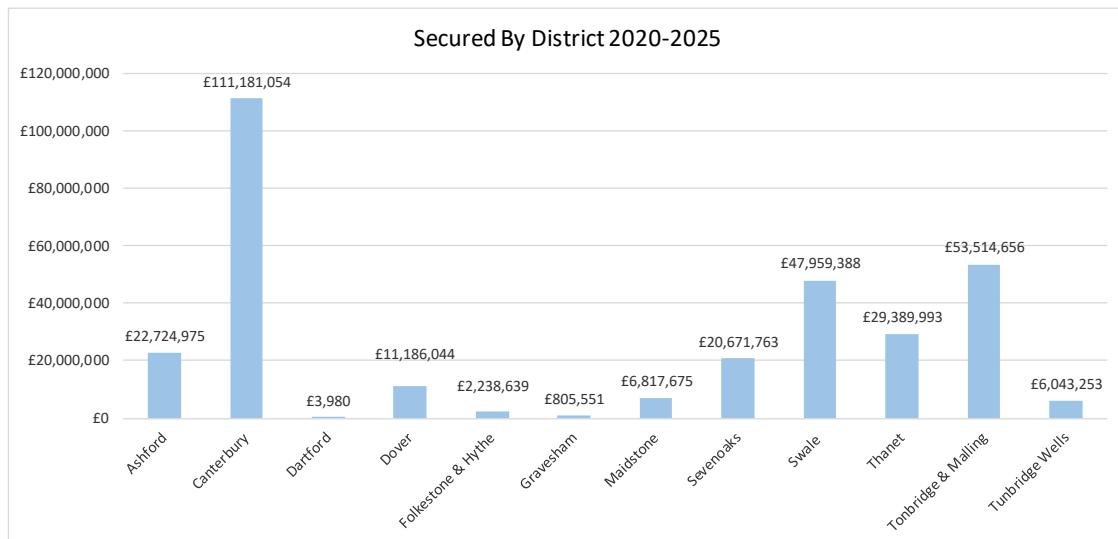
4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The costs of producing the IFS relate to staff resources and are covered within the budget allocated to the KCC Development Investment Team.
- 4.2 Since the adoption of the KCC [Developer Contributions Guide](#) in 2023, the DIT secures a £300 monitoring fee per trigger payment date. Income received will be monitored under existing financial processes and may in part be used to offset costs relating to the production of the IFS. The guide also introduced contributions to be paid towards Strategic Waste Services and Special Education Needs and Disabilities.

4.3 In order to prepare for future infrastructure requirements, KCC has a ten-year capital programme and receiving funds in advance of spend lowers KCC risk and financial exposure. Whilst many projects are forward funded by KCC, projects are not committed to progress until sufficient levels of developer contributions have been both secured and received

4.4 With the IFS only demonstrating a snapshot of a single year it is not particularly helpful in assessing trends. Although not included in the published IFS, the chart below shows the cumulative amounts secured by District over the past five years. The second chart shows the total amounts secured and received over the last five years. Such data is provided by the DIT to give a far more informative picture to Members and assist services and districts in their understanding of forthcoming funding. This information, along with the team's Quarterly Performance Review, reported to Cabinet Committee can be used to highlight the potential income, but also shortfall, of funding to provide KCC's necessary infrastructure.

4.5 Cumulative amounts secured for each district over five years.



5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 Through the Community Infrastructure Levy (amendment) (England) (no.2) Regulations 2019, Local Authorities have a responsibility to provide a summary of all financial and non-financial developer contributions that they have been involved with over the course of a given financial year. The Infrastructure Funding Statement (IFS) is the platform through which to do this and must include a report on Planning Obligations relating to Section 106 of the Town and County Planning Act 1990, Section 278 of the Highways Act 1980 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL).
- 5.2 The document must be published by the 31st December each calendar year demonstrating the financial details of the previous financial year.

6. Other Corporate Implications

- 6.1 The DIT has established strong working relationships with each of the wider KCC service areas to ensure that developer contributions are specified to those services' needs. Work completed during the adoption of the updated Developer Contributions Guide has enabled planning responses to include greater flexibility of infrastructure project descriptions. Moving forward, this will assist KCC service areas' ability to spend the contributions they receive, helping to unlock existing barriers, where overly prescriptive project descriptors within s106 agreements have historically made it harder for service areas to spend. To give an example of the new approach, for Adult Social Care, rather than naming specific buildings, project requests now include wording such as "*adaptation of community facilities or technology to promote independence within the Borough*".
- 6.2 Although the level of unspent contributions has continued to rise, significant progress has been made with KCC service areas holding funding to help them improve oversight of the funding available, with the objective of increasing the in-year levels of spending and infrastructure delivery. Working with colleagues from Integrated Children's Services and from Adult Social Services, new Developer Contributions Boards have been created, providing increased levels of transparency of spend and aiding the placement of funding into areas of need.

7. Conclusions

- 7.1 The County Council continues to demonstrate strong levels of success in securing financial contributions to mitigate the impact of development across the county.
- 7.2 Developer contributions, along with Council Tax and external grant funding, form a key component of securing the Council's financial sustainability and funding infrastructure for our growing population and communities.

8. Recommendation

8.1 Recommendation

The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the contents of the report.

9. Background Documents

Appendix 1, 2024/2025 Infrastructure Funding Statement - [KCC Infrastructure Funding Statements](#).

10. Contact Details

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From: Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

To: **Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee -13 January 2026**

Subject: Highways Enforcement Prosecution Policies

Decision no: **25/00088**

Key Decision

- *It affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions*

Classification: *Unrestricted*

Past Pathway of report: *N/A*

Future Pathway of report: *Cabinet Member Decision*

Electoral Division: *All*

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: KCC is responsible for ensuring safe public use of highways and coordinating utility works. The proposed policies will allow KCC to enforce compliance when landowners or utility companies break the law or disrupt road management.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 As the local Highway Authority, KCC has a statutory duty to ensure that the public can safely use and enjoy all highways under its responsibility, including any associated roadside waste.
- 1.2 KCC is also responsible for coordinating the activities of statutory utility companies on the road network. To meet these obligations, KCC must be kept informed about all works taking place on the roads. All works should be completed promptly, prioritising the safety and convenience of road users.

- 1.3 By enabling KCC to take enforcement action against landowners and utility companies that breach legal requirements or fail to comply with works orders, especially when such actions disrupt road management or compromise safety these policies will improve compliance, reduce disruption and enhance safety on Kent's road network.
- 1.4 Two policies are being proposed. The first is a general enforcement policy and the second relates to street works.

2 Key Considerations

- 2.1 This proposal is aligned with the direction of the emerging 'Reforming Kent' agenda and will only be enacted subject to the adoption of the new Strategic Statement by the Council, specifically to improve the quality the highways network and to reduce the delays caused by road works and to drive improved performance
- 2.2 Whilst there is no statutory requirement under legislation for a Highway Authority to have a prosecution policy and all actions undertaken by the Council are covered by statute, having specific Kent Enforcement Prosecution Policies can support any future prosecution process and offers all those that breach the legislation clarity on the council's actions and intentions with regards to prosecutions.
- 2.3 Enforcement and prosecution are measures of last resort. These actions will only be taken when all reasonable efforts to secure compliance have failed, or immediate intervention is required due to serious public safety concerns
- 2.4 Before issuing legal proceedings, the service will take advice from legal services to confirm a high likelihood of success with the final decision being confirmed by the Monitoring Officer.
- 2.5 All prosecutions will be documented and reported through KCC's enforcement governance framework.
- 2.6 Regular performance reviews will ensure enforcement remains proportionate and effective.
- 2.7 This approach ensures proportionality, fairness, value for money and alignment with KCC's statutory duties.
- 2.8 A copy of the policies will be published on the Kent County Council web pages for Highways and Transportation.

3 Background

- 3.1 Kent County Council (KCC), as the Highway Authority for Kent, has a statutory responsibility to ensure the safe and efficient operation of the public highway network. This responsibility is underpinned by several key pieces of legislation:
 - Highways Act 1980
 - New Roads and Street Works Act 1991

- Traffic Management Act 2004

3.2 While KCC has existing powers to issue Fixed Penalty Notices (FPNs) in respect of street works, and encourage voluntary compliance, these measures are not always sufficient to address repeated or serious non-compliance. In such cases, prosecution becomes necessary to uphold statutory duties and protect public safety.

3.3 The introduction of formal prosecution policies supports KCC's legal powers under the legislation and addresses the objectives in Reforming Kent (Strategic Statement) to drive driving operational improvements and reducing delays caused by non-compliant works.

3.4 Legal advice has been provided on the draft policies.

4 Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

4.1 To not have a specific enforcement policy and rely on existing legislation and ad hoc measures. This option is rejected as there is greater risk of inconsistency in enforcement, weaker position should prosecution action be taken, reduced transparency and accountability pertaining to reputational and financial risk.

5 Financial Implications

5.1 Enforcement actions will be carried out within existing staffing and budget resources.

5.2 Cost including legal fees and officer time for taking prosecution action will be incurred on a case-by-case basis but a simple prosecution may cost from £2500 per prosecution, which is reflective of the relatively low level of preparatory and court hearing time associated with this type of proceeding.

5.3 Prosecutions are expected to be low in volume and will only be undertaken where there is a high chance of a successful outcome. As the county council is likely to recover some of the costs incurred for successful prosecutions the risk to the budget is considered to be minimal.

6 Legal implications

6.1 Kent County Council (KCC) is the Highway Authority for the purposes of the Highways Act 1980 (The Act).

6.2 Section 130 of The Highways Act (1980) places a duty upon the Highway Authority to 'assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are the highway authority, including any roadside waste which forms part of it.'

6.3 Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 local highway authorities have a duty to coordinate the works of statutory utility companies.

6.4 Section 16 of the Traffic Management Act requires authorities to manage their road networks to ensure the expeditious movement of traffic and to facilitate traffic movement on networks managed by other authorities.

6.5 Adopting enforcement prosecution policies does not fetter the Council's discretion by committing the Council to taking or continuing with prosecution action in all cases. All cases will be considered on their own merits and kept under continuous review.

7 Equalities implications

7.1 The equality implications have been reviewed, and no negative impacts have been identified for any Protected Characteristics.

8 Data Protection Implications

8.1 The Enforcement Policy will involve the processing of personal data of individuals and utility companies. The data for utility companies will be obtained via Department for Transport's national Street Manager IT system, with the DfT already having its own DPIA and privacy notice.

9 Other corporate implications

9.1 Not applicable.

10 Governance

10.1 Delegated authority rests with the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport; legal action requires Monitoring Officer approval.

11 Conclusions

11.1 KCC proposes two formal enforcement prosecution policies for highways, allowing action against those who break the law or disrupt road management.

11.2 This will improve compliance, safety, and reduce delays. Enforcement is a last resort, with legal and financial safeguards in place.

11.3 The policy supports transparency, fairness, and aligns with KCC's strategic goals.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

10. Background Documents

- Equality Impact Assessment

11. Appendices

- Appendix A - Proposed Record of Decision
- Draft Enforcement Policies

12. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00088

Executive Decision – key

Highways Enforcement Prosecution Policies

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport PORTFOLIO, I agree to:

To approve and adopt a new enforcement policy enabling Kent County Council (KCC) to take enforcement action against land owners to ensure highways users are not put at risk from non-compliance under relevant statutory provisions.

To approve and adopt a new street works enforcement policy enabling KCC to take relevant enforcement action up to and including prosecution against utility companies and other entities for non-compliance failures under relevant statutory provisions

Reasons for decision:

As the local Highway Authority, KCC has a statutory to ensure that the public can use and enjoy any highway for which they are responsible including any roadside waste which forms part of it. KCC also has a statutory duty to coordinate the works of statutory utility companies.

To meet these obligations, KCC needs to know about all the work happening on the road network. The work must be done in timely fashion with the safety and convenience of all road users in mind. The proposed polices will enable KCC to take enforcement action against landowners and utility companies when they break the law or act in a way that is non-compliant to the works orders. This is especially important when such violations affect the council's ability to manage and coordinate road works or when the work is done unsafely or disruptively.

Financial implications:

Enforcement actions will be carried out within existing staffing and budget resources.

Cost including legal fees and officer time for taking prosecution action will be incurred on a case-by-case basis but a simple prosecution may cost from £2500 per prosecution, which is reflective of the relatively low level of preparatory and court hearing time associated with this type of proceeding.

Prosecutions are expected to be low in volume and will only be undertaken where there is a high chance of a successful outcome.

Legal implications:

Kent County Council is the Highway Authority under the Highways Act 1980, responsible for protecting public rights to use highways, including roadside waste.

KCC must coordinate utility works (New Roads and Street Works Act 1991) and manage road networks for efficient traffic flow (Section 16 - Traffic Management Act).

Adopting enforcement prosecution policies does not obligate KCC to prosecute every case; each will be reviewed individually

Equalities implications:

The EqIA has not identified any negative impacts for Protected Characteristic Groups.

Data Protection implications:

The Enforcement Policy will involve the processing of personal data of individuals and utility companies. The data for utility companies will be obtained via Department for Transport's national Street Manager IT system, with the DfT already having its own DPIA and privacy notice.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Growth, Environment and Cabinet Committee on 13 January 2026

This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

To not have a specific enforcement policy and rely on existing legislation and ad hoc measures. This option is rejected as there is greater risk of inconsistency in enforcement, weaker position should prosecution action be taken, reduced transparency and accountability pertaining to reputational and financial risk

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

Signed

Date

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

STREET WORKS ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Content

1. Introduction
2. General Principles
3. Types of Offences to be Prosecuted
4. The Decision to Prosecute
5. Prosecution Criteria
6. Investigations
7. Disclosure
8. Policy Review

1. Introduction

Under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 (NRSWA) local highway authorities have a duty to coordinate the works of statutory utility companies.

Under section 16 of the Traffic Management Act 2004 (the Network Management Duty) an authority must manage their road network with a view to achieving two objectives so far as may be reasonably practicable having regard for their other obligations, policies and objectives. These two objectives are:

- a) To ensure the expeditious movement of traffic on that network, and
- (b) To facilitate the expeditious movement of traffic on road networks for which another authority is the traffic authority.

In order to comply with these obligations, it is essential that Kent County Council, as the highway authority, is fully aware of operations being undertaken on the road network and that information provided is timely and accurate and that those operations are undertaken having due regard to the safety and convenience of all road users.

This document sets out Kent County Council's policy for discharging its enforcement duty against statutory utility companies where infringement of a utility's legal requirements compromises the local authority's ability to coordinate and manage works or works are undertaken in an unsafe or unduly disruptive manner.

The Street Works Prosecution Policy covers all statutory offences under the New Roads and Street Works Act 1991 as amended by the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA), the Highways Act 1980, the Kent County Council Permit Scheme, the relevant highway offences under the Highways Act 1980 and all other offences related or incidental to street or highway works where Kent County Council is the Street, Highway or Traffic Authority.

Prosecution will be considered when all other reasonable actions have been undertaken by Kent County Council's Street Works Team, such as the offer and payment of fixed penalty notices (FPN), or where the matter is so serious as to require immediate consideration of prosecution. If a street works promoter continues to breach legislation regardless of the offer of the FPNs offered, the authority will prosecute the continued flagrant breaches.

In rare cases safety concerns may dictate that a move straight to prosecution would be the appropriate reasonable step and this would have to be in extreme cases only; This being so as the authority is duty bound to undertake such actions to protect those using the public highways in Kent. An example of an extreme case will be classed as any unsafe practice that poses a serious threat to life or the travelling public.

2. General Principles

Utilities have a statutory obligation to apply for street works permits through Kent County Council (KCC) permit team. This is in accordance with relevant legislation including the NRSWA, the TMA, the Kent Permit Scheme and the associated regulations and Codes of Practice.

Failure to provide accurate information within the relevant notifications, and failure to serve notifications in a timely manner represent offences under the relevant sections of the legislation. Utilities are required to ensure their works are carried out in a safe manner in accordance with the NRSWA and associated Codes of Practice. Failure to do so is an offence under the relevant section of the legislation.

Utilities are required to reinstate the road following their works in accordance with the NRSWA and the associated Code of Practice. Failure to do so is an offence under the relevant section of legislation.

Utilities are required to use their best endeavours to co-operate with KCC as the street authority, in the interests of safety, to minimise inconvenience to people using the street and to protect the structure of the street and the integrity of the apparatus in the street. Failure to do so is an offence under the relevant section of the legislation.

The NRSWA and TMA place a number of other statutory duties and responsibilities on utilities with accompanying offences. Failure to comply with these duties and responsibilities are offences under the relevant sections of the legislation.

Each case will be considered on its own facts and merits. There are, however, general principles that apply to the way in which KCC will investigate and consider proceedings for each case.

3. Types of offences to be prosecuted

KCC may prosecute offences relating to street works activities including but not limited to: -

(a) All street works offences under the New Roads and Streetworks Act 1991 (NRSWA), the Traffic Management Act 2004 (TMA), the Kent Permit Scheme for Road Works and Street Works (KPS), Traffic Management Permit Scheme (England) Regulations 2007 and Safety at Street Works and Road Works Code of Practice 2013.

(b) All relevant highway offences under the Highways Act 1980 where KCC is the Highway Authority

(c) All other offences related or incidental to street or highway works where the KCC is Street, Highway or Traffic Authority.

The above list is not exhaustive and KCC may prosecute other offences relevant or incidental to street works outside the list of offences set out in this policy.

4. The prosecution decision

It is recognised that the decision to prosecute an offence is an important and serious one. KCC will therefore only prosecute if it considers that an offence has been committed and if the evidence shows that there is a realistic prospect of conviction and that prosecution is in the public interest. In making this determination consideration will be given to the Code for Crown Prosecutors

The following will also be taken into account in taking a decision whether to prosecute: -

- (a) Where the relevant offender has shown a previous poor history of compliance under its statutory obligations,
- (b) The offender has failed to discharge its liability under The Street Works (Fixed Penalty) (England) Regulations 2007 or the Traffic Management Permit Scheme Regulations 2007.

In deciding whether there is a realistic prospect of conviction, KCC will have regard to the following:

- (a) Relevance and admissibility of available evidence
- (b) Reliability of evidence relating to the offence
- (c) Reliability of any observation or comment made by the alleged offender
- (d) Reliability of any admissions and confessions including comments recorded by KCC or in a Works Inspection Report
- (e) Reliability of any information or records contained within the KCC Local Street Works Register
- (f) Reliability of prosecution witnesses and whether they are willing to attend court

If KCC considers that there is insufficient evidence upon which to base a prosecution, a prosecution will not be brought. However, consideration may be given to other responses, such as issuing the relevant utility with a Non-Statutory Warning Letter.

If KCC consider that there is sufficient evidence upon which to base a prosecution it will then consider whether it is in the public interest and in the interests of justice to do so. In so doing it will have regard to factors including the following:

- (a) the seriousness of the offence
- (b) the level of culpability of the offender, including the general conduct and performance history of the particular utility
- (c) the harm and/or impact caused by the breach
- (d) the prosecution would be seen as appropriate and proportionate

Section 95A of NRSWA allows KCC to dispose of certain offences under the NRSWA / TMA by issuing the offending utility with a FPN which allows the liability for prosecution to be discharged by payment of a penalty within a prescribed timeframe. Failure to pay the FPN can result in prosecution for the original offence through the Magistrates' Courts.

5. Prosecution decision criteria

The following criteria are examples of the factors which would favour a decision to prosecute-

- (a) Whether the offence was avoidable on the part of the utility company or its agents or where the utility company has shown disregard for regulation and legislation
- (b) Where the offence has caused or could have caused health and safety issues to the person using the public highway or the site operatives themselves
- (c) Where the offence has caused or could have caused avoidable traffic disruption
- (d) Where the offence has caused or may cause substantial damage to KCC assets
- (e) Where the utility company has failed to discharge the offence by way of a FPN issued for that purpose and within the statutory time limit.

(f) Failure to heed to a previous Non-Statutory Warning Letter about other failures to comply with the legislation, regulations or the associated Codes of Practice.

Please see **Appendix 1** for offences for which Kent County Council may prosecute.

In some cases KCC will consider issuing a FPN

KCC will have regard to the following factors against prosecution:

- (a) where there is insufficient evidence.
- (b) Where it appears that, in KCC's opinion, there has been a genuine mistake of fact
- (c) Where, owing to circumstances beyond the offender's control, commission of the offence was unavoidable.
- (d) Where there is no realistic prospect of conviction.
- (e) Where representation made following the issue of a FPN has been accepted by KCC.

KCC will have regard to the following factors in the decision to discontinue proceedings:

- (a) New evidence not previously available to KCC that undermines the original enforcement decision
- (b) It becomes evident that the evidence is no longer sufficient to proceed with the enforcement action.
- (c) Where the continuance of proceedings is likely to lead to an abuse of the process of the courts.
- (d) Where continued enforcement is likely to be deemed malicious or prejudicial to KCC's interest.

Where a case is disposed of other than by prosecution, KCC may seek to recover any administrative costs incurred in processing the case file.

6. Investigations

KCC may investigate any offence relating to street works on the Public Highway using the information contained within Street Manager, or any relevant information from the NRSWA / TMA officer reports and/or notebooks and any other relevant source. All prosecutions will be evidence based and it is possible that there will be a need to carry out interviews in relation to the offence. If this should be the case, such interviews will be in accordance with the Police and Criminal Evidence Act 1984 and the Codes of Practice made thereunder.

7. Disclosure

KCC will have regard to the Criminal Procedure and Investigations Act 1996 as amended by the Criminal Justice Act 2003, the Criminal Procedure Rules 2020 and the associated Code of Practice in the disclosure of prosecution materials. KCC will retain and preserve all evidence that may be relevant to a prosecution, whether or not that evidence is to form part of the prosecution case. KCC will endeavour in all cases to adopt a consistent approach to disclosure by disclosing prosecution materials in advance of any hearing.

8. Policy review

This policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect any changes in the law, regulations, or any KCC policies in force at the time. Any amendments will be reflected in the policy and published as appropriate

Enforcement Policy

An explanation of how we prioritise the enforcement of encroachments, obstructions, damage and unlawful interference with the highway to protect the use and enjoyment of the highway for the public.

In accordance with the Regulators' Code of 2014, we must publish information explaining how we regulate and develop our policies or procedures which influence our regulatory activities, so that we are transparent and consistent in our approach.

This Policy must be considered in the light of the Street Works Enforcement Policy 2024

HIGHWAY AUTHORITY ENFORCEMENT POLICY

Kent County Council

Introduction

Kent County Council (KCC) is the Highway Authority for the purposes of the Highways Act 1980 (The Act). Section 130 of The Act places a duty upon the Highway Authority to 'assert and protect the rights of the public to the use and enjoyment of any highway for which they are the highway authority, including any roadside waste which forms part of it'. The Act contains provisions enabling the Highway Authority to deal with various encroachments, obstructions and unlawful interferences. Each provision prescribes action which the Highway Authority may take where that provision applies. Common Law and other statutory enactments also exist to enable the Highway Authority to remove obstructions and abate nuisances and these are maintained under Section 333 of The Act. Kent County Council is able to take proceedings in the exercise of this duty and is afforded the discretion to take such steps as it deems expedient.

Aim of this Policy

The aim of the Policy is to explain how KCC prioritises enforcement and the level of its response.

KCC believes that people should have the right to the safe use and enjoyment of the highway. The general approach will be to educate occupiers and landowners, developers, farmers, and businesses to enable compliance.

The desired outcome is always to ensure compliance through discussions and negotiations. Where it is not possible to make progress due to lack of willingness on the part of the landowner to work with the Council, enforcement action will be commenced in order to ensure that Highway users are not put at risk.

This policy is to be considered by officers where a defect (see non exhaustive list of defects below) of the highway has been discovered by themselves or where it has been reported to them by members of the public or by those commissioned to undertake work on the highway.

Principles of Enforcement

KCC is committed to good enforcement practices and the proportionality principle set out within the Government's Enforcement Concordat and the Regulators' Code issued under the Legislative and Regulatory Reform Act 2006 and the Legislative and Regulatory Reform (Regulatory Functions) Order 2007 (as amended) will be taken into account when deciding which course of action to pursue: **"The action pursued should be balanced, reasonable and commensurate to the scale of the offence."**

This Policy requires that enforcement activities should be carried out in a way which is:

- 1 **Transparent** – ensuring that those against whom enforcement action is taken are aware of the legislative requirements and aware of the likely consequences of non-compliance. Distinction will need to be made between statutory requirements and what is good practice

or desirable but not compulsory. Transparency should aid those being regulated in complying with statutory requirements and minimise the need for further enforcement action. Where enforcement action is required an explanation (usually in writing) will be given of why that action is necessary and when it must be carried out.

- 2 **Accountable** – having a process for complaints, appeals and feedback which is well-publicised, effective and timely.
- 3 **Proportionate** – relating the enforcement action to the seriousness of any breach of the law and the potential risks or impact on the public. Some incidents have the potential to place the public's health and safety at risk, others interfere with people's enjoyment and rights and the County Council's ability to carry out its activities. Enforcement action will be proportionate to the risks posed and to the seriousness of any breach.
- 4 **Consistent** – fair and impartial, taking a similar approach in similar circumstances, whilst exercising a level of judgment and professional discretion in individual cases. Taking all relevant factors into account, such as the seriousness of the breach, the impact or potential impact on the public, the attitude of those responsible for the breach and the history of previous breaches.
- 5 **Targeted** – ensuring that enforcement action is directed primarily to where the risks or impact on the public is greatest. Action will be focused on those directly responsible for the breach and who are best placed to control it. Prioritisation will be based on a number of factors including assessment of risk, impact on the public and complaints from the public.

Definitions

Highway

The highway is defined as the whole or a part of a highway, including carriageways, footways and grass areas/verges.

Defects include:

- tree branches and vegetation overhanging the public highway (obstructing the passage of traffic, vehicular or pedestrian, or obstructing visibility)
- unauthorised vehicular accesses (vehicle crossings)
- damage to the highway (roads, paths and verges, including highway signs and apparatus)
- advertising on the highway (including posters and banners on street furniture)
- unauthorised excavation of the highway
- mud or other debris on the highway
- encroachments onto highway land

- obstructions/unauthorised objects placed on highway land

This list above is not exhaustive and only gives a small selection of the defects for which we would consider taking enforcement action.

Enforcement Actions

KCC takes an assessed approach when looking to enforce against those that have caused a defect on the highway within Kent. Any enforcement action will be proportionate to the interference and or risk to the use of the Highway. KCC will consider all of its statutory powers in any combination. The action KCC will take may range from providing advice and guidance; issuing a formal letter; serving Notices; carrying out of default action; recovery of costs for carrying out default works from the owner/occupier; or prosecution.

Whilst KCC would normally commence enforcement action by giving *Advice* and only escalate to a more severe course of action if that were unsuccessful, it reserves the right to issue an *Enforcement Notice* or instigate *prosecution proceedings* immediately where it is appropriate to do so. This may be considered justified if the breach was particularly serious or the offender had a history of similar offences.

Where the provision of The Act provides for a Notice to be served, it usually allows for the Notice to be served either on the owner/occupier (tenant) of the land adjoining the defect or any other person having control of it or any person who caused the defect to occur. The Council will consider the circumstances of each case when deciding who should be served with a Notice.

When prioritising cases or deciding whether or not to take action, KCC will take account of the characteristics of the highway and the extent to which the defect interferes with the use and enjoyment of the highway user.

Prosecutions will normally be a last resort but remain an important part of the enforcement process with each case being considered on its own merits, taking into account all the circumstances and in accordance with the Code of Practice for the Crown Prosecution Service.

Prosecution may be appropriate where one or more of the following applies:

- There is a significant risk to public safety.
- There is a flagrant breach of the law, or if notice has been given that legal proceedings will be considered for future breaches.
- There has been a failure to heed advice or instructions or take corrective action.
- There is a history of infringements by the defendant.
- A conviction is likely to result in a significant fine or other penalty.
- The offence is widespread within the KCC area.

Each case will be subjected to an ongoing process of review to ensure the level of enforcement action continues to be appropriate. Once KCC decides to prosecute, it will proceed without undue delay.

Recovery of Costs

Kent County Council will always seek full recovery of enforcement costs.

Appeals and Complaints

Appeals in relation to enforcement action taken should be via the statutory appeals process outlined in the relevant legislation. Complaints about the conduct of officers should be made via the council's corporate complaints procedure.

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Prosecution Policy

Responsible Officer

Pauline Harmer - GT TRA

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

Richard Emmett - GT TRA

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Highways and Transportation

Responsible Head of Service

Richard Emmett - GT TRA

Responsible Director

Andrew Loosemore - GT TRA

Aims and Objectives

KCC is responsible for ensuring safe public use of highways and coordinating utility works. The proposed policies will allow KCC to enforce compliance when landowners or utility companies break the law or disrupt road management.

This will enable KCC to recharge/recoup costs when landowners and or utility companies have been prosecuted. The cost of enforcement actions is initially borne by KCC with costs recovered from the relevant party if they have the means to pay and ordered by the Court. Such costs will be wholly be recoverable.

This will drive compliance to prevent further delays on and around the network, improving journey time and reducing disruption for all Kent residents and those that use the Kent network.

This is to assist the Council with its Statutory Obligations lawfully whilst managing risk.

Implementing the policies will ensure the Highway Operations Teams, in relation to Highway Enforcement and operational matters has an efficient, effective, consistent, fair, equitable and transparent approach to the legislative framework.

It will therefore have positive benefits for the safety of all highway users across the districts and local communities as well as supporting us in dealing with counter accusations regarding enforcement and operational matters.

The Highway team will provide the legal team with data and evidence to confirm acceptance and approval

to commence prosecution. This will be undertaken internally with the Highway and Legal team of KCC. The data and evidence will be taken from Street Manager and site visits undertaken by our officers. This is stored in Street Manager. The teams will ensure this information is archived and retained in line with KCC retention periods.

The information taken and shared for prosecution will be accessible (for those who are colour blind/visually impaired), and user friendly. There are considered to be no negative impacts of implementing this policy on persons with protected characteristics as these policies will only be used on companies and persons that have undertaken work illegally on the highway.

The Policies will only comply with the specific powers granted by legislation e.g the Highways Act 1980. The formal prosecution process will be assessed by Senior Management to ensure officers use discretion when deciding between a formal prosecution or Fixed Penalty Notice to ensure it is applied consistently and without bias.

Section B – Evidence

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

Yes

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

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Not Applicable

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Due to the statutory nature of this policy we have not consulted or engaged with stakeholders as it is outlined in the code of practice.

This will provide a positive impact for all protected characteristics and residents

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

No

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

Staff/Volunteers

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

* KCC is responsible for ensuring safe public use of highways and coordinating utility works.

* The proposed policies will allow KCC to enforce compliance when landowners or utility companies break the law or disrupt road management.

* This will enable KCC to recharge/recoup costs when landowners and or utility companies have been prosecuted.

* This will drive compliance to prevent further delays on and around the network, improving journey time and reducing disruption for all Kent residents and those that use the Kent network.

All characteristics and residents will have a positive impact

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No

Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Not Applicable

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

No

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Disability

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Disability

Not Applicable

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not Applicable

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

No

Negative impacts for Race

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

No
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief
Not Applicable
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Applicable
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Applicable
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Applicable
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Applicable

From: Peter Osborne – Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
Simon Jones – Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee – 13 January 2026

Subject: A28 Sturry Link Road

Decision no: 25/00110

Key Decision: Yes - Scheme involves expenditure of greater than £1m

Classification: *Unrestricted*

Past Pathway of report: ICMM December 2025

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Cllr Mark Mulvihill - Herne Village and Sturry
Cllr Alex Ricketts – Canterbury North
Cllr Alister Brady – Canterbury City North

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

The A28 Sturry Link Road is a critical infrastructure improvement, designed to alleviate severe congestion at the Sturry level crossing and improve journey reliability along the A28 corridor. Following a report to the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee in May 2018, a Record of Decision 18/00027 gave a wide range of authorities to allow the Sturry Link Road scheme to proceed. A further Record of Decision 23/00066 provided authority to progress with the Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) process to secure the land required for the scheme.

To deliver the scheme, the Council has secured funding through S106 agreements and government funding. To fully cover the cost of the viaduct, the Council are in discussions with Homes England regarding the provision of Brownfield, Infrastructures and Land (BIL) Fund towards the scheme, to reduce the financial risk to KCC. This funding, if agreed, will consist of a grant to fully cover the existing funding gap, and a recoverable grant to forward fund the S106 contributions to the scheme which are not yet banked. It is appropriate therefore, to seek a further key decision to accept this funding, but also to progress with the construction in the meantime.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The A28 Sturry Link Road is a critical infrastructure improvement, designed to ease congestion at the Sturry level crossing and improve journey reliability along the A28 corridor. The project will boost economic growth and support the traffic impact of over 6,000 new homes being delivered at Sturry, Hersden, and Herne Bay, while also indirectly enabling growth at other strategic land allocations identified in Canterbury City Council's Local Plan.
- 1.2 The scheme will construct a 5-span viaduct over the River Stour and the Ashford–Ramsgate railway, linking from a new roundabout on the A28 in the south to the spine road being constructed as part of the Land at Sturry development in the north.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 Funding for the scheme is secured from S106 agreements and government funding. A gap remains to fully cover the cost and so the Council are in discussions with Homes England regarding the provision of Brownfield, Infrastructures and Land (BIL) funding towards the scheme. This funding, if agreed, will consist of a non-recoverable grant to fully cover the existing funding gap, and a recoverable grant to forward fund the S106 contributions to the scheme which are not yet banked.
- 2.2 The key considerations are financial and reputational depending on whether the grant funding is secured and the project stays on schedule.
- 2.3 There are no foreseen KCC policy implications caused by this decision. The Sturry Link Road scheme supports the new Strategic Statement's priorities by supporting local investment and job opportunities in Canterbury and the surrounding areas, by backing major infrastructure in Kent, driving investment and not allowing congestion to limit growth. The scheme also ensures that vital infrastructure to support communities and housing is delivered in advance, enabling sustainable growth through improved transport connectivity and resilience on Kent's road network.
- 2.4 Failure to deliver the scheme will significantly impact Canterbury City Council's (CCC) Local Plan delivery.

3. Background

- 3.1 The Sturry Relief Road is designed to reduce congestion at the Sturry Level crossing and the A28 and A291 approach roads. The Relief Road includes the north-south Sturry Link Road being delivered by KCC and the east-west spine road due to be delivered by the Land at Sturry developer. A full plan for the route is shown in Appendix B.
- 3.2 Planning permission for the full route, including the roundabout to the north was granted on 7th September 2021 and expires on 7th September 2026.

- 3.3 A Design and Build contract was awarded to Volker Fitzpatrick Ltd in February 2024. The detailed design has been finalised following the approval of two non-material planning amendments to the scheme. Technical documents have now been submitted to KCC Planning to discharge pre-start conditions.
- 3.4 The Compulsory Purchase Order (CPO) and associated Side Roads Order (SRO) were confirmed by the Secretary of State on 19 February 2025 following a Public Inquiry in October 2024. Notices have been served, providing access to the required CPO land plots from February 2026.
- 3.5 Archaeological investigation works were completed in November 2025, and the start of works have been programmed to April 2026, with pre-commencement works to begin in early 2026.
- 3.6 KCC has estimated an increased cost to deliver the scheme and although it has secured further S106 contributions further funding is being sought from a grant opportunity from Homes England under the Brown Infrastructure Land (BIL) fund,
- 3.7 The Homes England grant discussions are ongoing. Homes England, alongside KCC, has prepared a business case for funding the scheme. This case has progressed through various levels of approvals, including most recently the Homes England Internal Investment Board (16 December) and a Delivery Oversight Board (5 January). The case will be presented to a further Investment Board on 13 January 2026 and to the Ministry of Housing Communities and Local Government on the same day. As such a decision is due imminently; however, a further Grant Funding Agreement (GFA) will be required between the parties prior to the award of funding.
- 3.8 If construction does not begin before the planning permission expires, a new application will be needed, causing further delays and cost increases.
- 3.9 S106 funding is in place to commence the construction of the A28 roundabout from April 2026 ahead of constructing the viaduct. Road space on the A28 at Sturry is severely limited. KCC has booked the road space for the roundabout construction as there is not sufficient road space available to delay this element of the programme closer to when the planning permission expires in September 2026.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 The following alternative options were considered but discarded.

- Option – Delay the project but provide approval for delegation to accept Homes England BIL funding.
 - o Delaying both the roundabout and viaduct could better align with the developer funded portion but would mean planning permission would elapse requiring full resubmission and additional delays and costs (up to £4m).
 - o A delay could lead to significant reputational risk to KCC as the council has committed to delivering this scheme and the Relief Road is required to support the Adopted Canterbury Local Plan and manage traffic growth.

Option – Delay the project and not accept funding from Homes England. In addition to the consequences outlined in the above option

- This option would leave KCC open to a significant funding gap risk. KCC would also be required to forward fund the S106 contributions that have been identified but not yet banked to support the delivery of the infrastructure.
- Option – Cancel the project.
 - This would result in around £9m aborted costs. No asset will be constructed, so these costs become a revenue burden to KCC. The reputational damage to KCC would be significant.
 - The Canterbury City Council Local Plan relies on the Sturry Link Road to unlock housing growth, in particular for development sites with a limit on occupations without the link road. Other consented developments are able to build out regardless meaning that there will be traffic growth without any associated capacity enhancements.
 - The Homes England funding opportunity will be lost, leading to a significant funding gap for the project should it be pursued again in the future.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The scheme is estimated to cost £53.9 million, including £6.4 million recommended for risk and contingency. To date, the scheme has spent £6.5m in undertaking surveys and developing the designs through consultation, planning and CPO. The scheme also now has a fully detailed design and specification. All Highways and Transportation officer time is capitalised to the scheme funding.
- 5.2 The increased cost estimate is partially offset by the indexation on the developer contributions.
- 5.3 £44.1m has already been secured from S106 and government grant. The potential grant funding identified from Homes England will provide up to £24.8m recoverable grant (to forward fund the S106 contributions) and up to 24.8m non recoverable grant (to cover the estimated funding gap and further contingency) A final decision on the Homes England grant funding is expected this month.
- 5.4 Table 1 shows a full breakdown of the funding for the scheme.

Table 1: Funding for the Sturry Link Road scheme.

Funding Source	Amount	Received
Government Funding		
LGF	£5.9m	£5.9m
Developer Contributions		
S106 Contributions	£29.26m	£9.65m
Indexation uplift on s106 contributions, assessed at July 2023	£8.94m	

Total funding secured	£44.1m	£15.55m
Total funding required	£53.9m	
Total Shortfall (before Homes England BIL)	£9.8m	
Total Homes England non-recoverable Grant	Up to £24.8m	

5.5 The final offer has not yet been issued by Homes England. As such, the full terms of this funding grant are currently unknown, but it is expected that this will be a grant to fully cover the funding gap as well as a recoverable grant to the value of the S106 contributions yet to be banked by the Council, to offset the forward funding requirement for KCC. However, it is appropriate that the Council proceed with the governance now to ensure we can meet Homes England's timescales for grant acceptance.

Sufficient developer contributions and the grant from the Local Growth Fund are banked to enable the construction phase of the A28 roundabout to proceed (Table 2).

Table 2: A28 Roundabout funding

	Amount
Funding received to date	£15.55m
Expenditure to date	£6.5m
Expected expenditure to April 26 (premobilisation works)	£1.5m
Funding prior to roundabout construction	£7.55m
A28 Roundabout cost (including risk and contingency)	£4.2m
Remaining	£3.35m

6. Legal implications

6.1 There are significant legal implications associated with the scheme. Legal oversight and advice has been engaged and provided throughout on all aspects the scheme to enable successful delivery. All risks will be considered and managed as part of the overall project management of the scheme.

6.2 Before entering into the Grant Funding Agreement with Homes England further legal advice will be sought to ensure all conditions are acceptable to KCC and can be met.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 The current EQIA Assessment is appended to this report (Appendix C). The EQIA was most recently update in November 2025 and identifies that individuals who fall within the Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Carer Responsibility groups may face minor, short-term negative impacts during the construction. However, these groups are expected to experience significant long-term benefits from the scheme and no negative long terms impacts have been identified.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 A DPIA is not required for this decision or scheme. There are no foreseen data protection implications.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 It is not considered that this decision will have further corporate implications to other Directorates within KCC.

10. Governance

10.1 Under the officer scheme of delegation, should the recommended decision be progressed, the Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport will make decisions for the ongoing delivery of the scheme, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport. Financial grant funding acceptance will be delegated to the S151 Officer, in consultation with relevant parties including KCC legal.

11. Conclusions

11.1 The Sturry Link Road is critical for reducing congestion, supporting the delivery of over 6,000 homes, and enabling further strategic growth in Canterbury.

11.2 Approval to proceed with construction and accept Homes England funding is recommended to ensure the project remains on track and is implemented within required planning permission timescales

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A).

10. Background Documents

10.1 Equality Impact Assessment
10.2 Scheme detailed design drawings
10.3 Scheme construction programme

11. Appendices

Appendix A – PROD
Appendix B - Scheme Plan
Appendix C – EQIA

12. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00110

Executive Decision – key

A28 Sturry Link Road

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport PORTFOLIO, I agree to:

- I. Give approval to progress the construction of the Sturry Link Road A28 roundabout and associated works utilising banked S106 funding in order to implement the planning permission for the scheme.
- II. Subject to a successful Homes England bid, delegate to the Corporate Director of Finance (S151 Officer), the authority to accept Brownfield, Infrastructure and Land (BIL) funding from Homes England to deliver the A28 Sturry Link Road viaduct.
- III. Confirm that other decisions in Record of Decision 18/00027 and 23/00066 remain extant.
- IV. Approval for any other further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through construction to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

Reasons for decision:

The Sturry Link Road is a major infrastructure project aimed at reducing congestion at the Sturry level crossing and improving journey reliability along the A28. It is essential for supporting the delivery of over 6,000 new homes and enabling further economic and housing growth in East Kent, as outlined in the Canterbury City Council's Local Plan.

Financial implications:

The total estimated cost of the scheme is £53.9 million, which includes £6.4 million set aside for risk and contingency.

So far, £6.5 million has been spent on surveys, design development, consultation, planning, and compulsory purchase order (CPO) processes.

All officer time from Highways and Transportation has been capitalised to the scheme funding.

To date, £44.1 million has been secured from Section 106 (S106) agreements and government grants. However, there remains a funding gap of £9.8 million, which the council hopes to fill with a grant from Homes England. A final decision on this grant is expected within the month.

Legal implications:

There are significant legal implications associated with the scheme,

Legal oversight and advice has been engaged and provided throughout on all aspects the scheme to enable successful delivery. All risks will be considered and managed as part of the overall project management of the scheme.

Before entering into the Grant Funding Agreement with Homes England further legal advice will be sought to ensure all conditions are acceptable to KCC and can be met.

Equalities implications:

The scheme brings long-term benefits for people in Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Carer Responsibility groups—improving access and connectivity. While there may be minor, short-term impacts during construction, no lasting negative effects are expected

Data Protection implications:

None

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Growth, Environment and Cabinet Committee on 13 January 2026

This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee Members to review ahead of the meeting.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Delaying the project risks planning permission expiring, leading to costly resubmission (up to £4m) and reputational damage, as the scheme is vital for the Local Plan and traffic management.

Delaying without Homes England funding increases financial risk, leaving a funding gap and requiring KCC to advance S106 contributions not yet received.

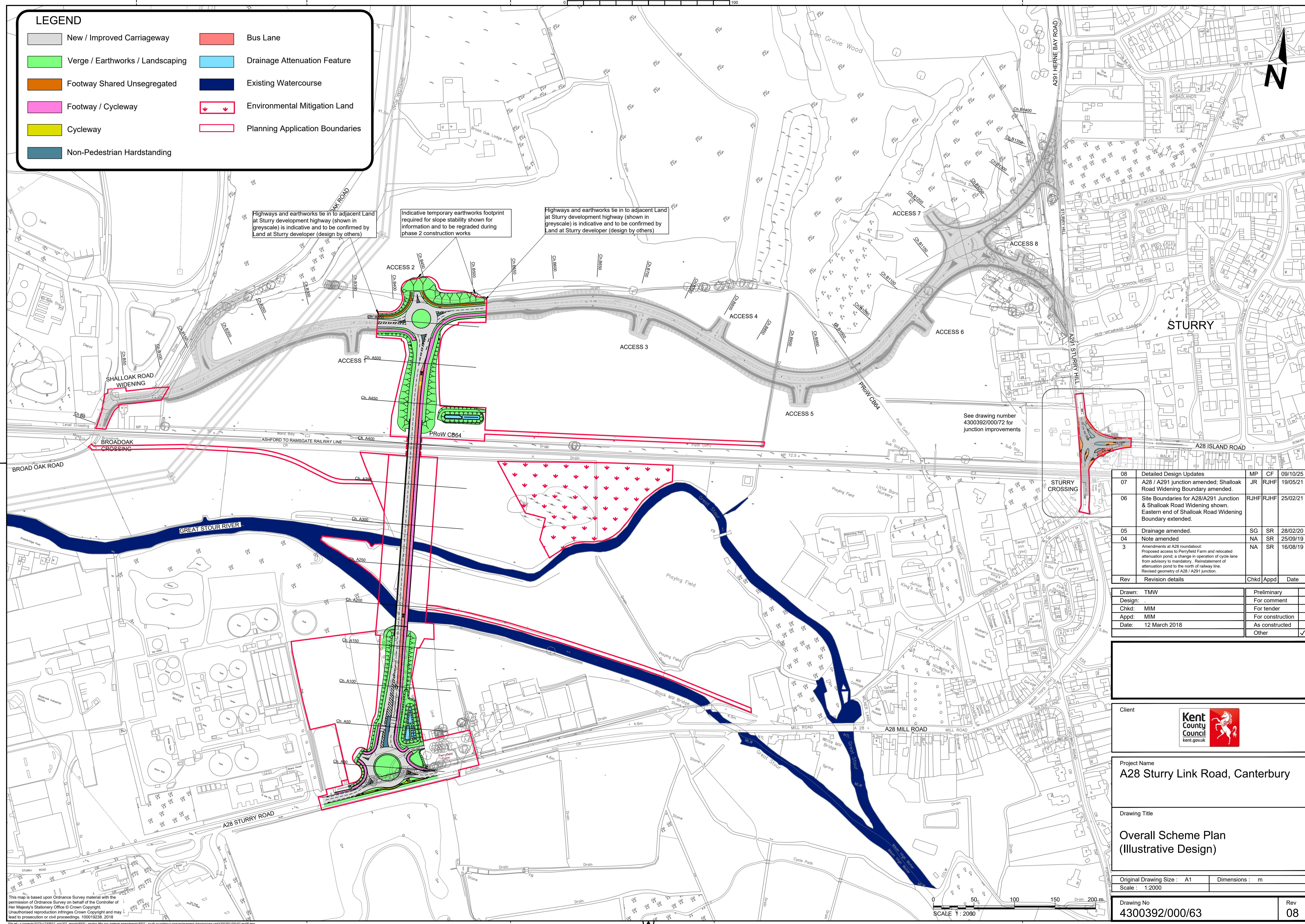
Cancelling the project would result in £9m of sunk costs, significant reputational harm, loss of future funding opportunities, and undermine housing growth plans, while traffic would increase without capacity improvements.

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

.....
.....
Signed

.....
.....
Date

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EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

A28 Sturry Link Road

Responsible Officer

Emma Palmer - GT TRA

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

Tim Read - GT TRA

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Major Capital Programme Team

Responsible Head of Service

Tim Read - GT TRA

Responsible Director

Simon Jones - GT CDO

Aims and Objectives

Overview:

The Sturry Link Road scheme is designed to remove the need for traffic on the A28 and A291 to cross the level crossing at Sturry. The scheme consists of a viaduct over the river Stour connecting the A28 to the south and a proposed development to the north. The scheme is required to support the Adopted Canterbury Local Plan and the policy to provide a 5-year plan growth and housing. Growth proposed to the northeast of Canterbury will put additional strain on an already highly constrained network. It is, therefore, crucial that the Sturry Link Road progress to relieve the congestion and unlock development.

Aims and Objectives:

The primary objective of this scheme is to decrease travel times and improve journey reliability for all road users along the A28 corridor, thereby creating additional capacity to support anticipated traffic growth as well as growth from economic and community development. Additionally, the scheme aims to enhance the efficiency of both the Sturry Road bus priority measures and Park & Ride initiatives. The implementation of this project further enables Canterbury City Council, as the local planning authority, to explore opportunities for increased housing and business development in the surrounding area.

This will be achieved by providing a new route to bypass the severely congested junction of A28 (Island Rd)/A291 (Sturry Hill), including a viaduct over the railway line and Great Stour, linking to the A28 Park & Ride site and the provision of cycle lanes and bus lanes.

Previous EQIAs: This is the eighth iteration of the EQIA for the Sturry Link Road scheme. The original version was written on 12/6/2015 and has since been updated to incorporate the updated design. Prior to this iteration, the most recent published version of this EQIA is dated 05/10/2023.

Summary of equality impact:

Equality & Diversity Screening found that Age, Disability, Pregnancy & Maternity, and Carer Responsibility groups may face minor, short-term negative impacts due to construction. However, these groups are expected to experience significant long-term benefits from the scheme.

Negative Impact:

The potential adverse effects of the proposed scheme on the mobility of vulnerable groups are expected to be temporary. While construction activities may cause some disruption to these individuals' journeys, alternative routes and schedules will be provided and advertised to ensure continued access. The benefits to mobility following completion of the schemes are anticipated to significantly outweigh any short-term impacts.

Once the scheme is complete, the majority of negative effects on vulnerable populations should be alleviated. Although there is a possibility that mental health concerns such as heightened anxiety, loneliness, depression, or stress may persist for some time, improvements to the environment are expected to enhance the travel experience and potentially support quicker recovery. With advanced notice and information about the works publicised appropriately, the possible adverse effects can be minimised.

Positive Impact:

The positive impacts from this scheme are wide ranging and will have long lasting effects on every user group in this assessment on some level. The scheme will improve access to sustainable transport and active travel routes which connect important transport and local hubs and the new housing development. As a result of this, the opportunities for employment and education for local people increase. The improved network will also help some people to work towards goals relating to health, social interaction, and recreational activities. In turn this will strengthen communities, improve a sense of wellbeing, and create opportunities to explore more of the local area.

Judgement:

The scheme may have a temporary adverse effect on protected groups during the period of works, but this can be clearly mitigated using the actions outlined in the assessment, with little or no residual impact. The benefits to the community are long lasting and therefore outweigh the temporary negative aspects identified leaving a positive impact on the whole community and visitors to the area. Assuming that the mitigation outlined in the sections below is implemented, it is judged that the proposed scheme can adjust and continue with minor implications on Protected Groups.

Section B – Evidence

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

Yes

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

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

There have been public engagement events that consulted with local residents, community groups and representatives of protected characteristic groups under the Equality Act 2010. Engagement was carried out through public exhibitions, consultation, and feedback sessions to ensure accessibility, safety and inclusivity were addressed throughout the project.

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

No

Staff

No

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

In addition to the positive impacts identified for all residents and users of the scheme, specific positive impacts have been identified for the following protected characteristics:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender
- Pregnancy and Maternity

Age: Bus routes are used frequently by older people and young people (particularly to and from school) and improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in both walking and cycling and therefore, increase its use for learning, education, leisure, and health. The scheme will improve connections from the new housing development to key destinations meaning that those with decreased mobility will be able to travel more directly and easily. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase access to vital hub locations. Improvements in infrastructure such as improved pedestrian crossings will significantly improve the user experience, leading to increased use, improved traffic safety and increased confidence to make independent journeys for school, social, recreation and travel to essential services. Clear, signed routes help avoid confusion in new areas often experienced by young or older people.

Disability: The design has incorporated inclusive facilities and has been designed in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB) and DfT Inclusive Mobility Guidance, which gives guidance based on current legislation for non-motorised users and vulnerable groups. The scheme will improve connections from the Sturry and Broad Oak developments meaning that those with decreased mobility will be able to travel more directly and easily. This will increase access to the service and subsequently increase

access to vital hub locations. Works will include improvements to pavements and highway surfaces. Cycle routes are often infrequently used by disabled people with mild to moderate disabilities due to a lack of accessible facilities. Improvements to access and facilities will increase confidence in the routes and use for learning, education, leisure, and health. Pedestrian crossings will also be upgraded. Improvements in infrastructure such as improved pedestrian crossings will significantly improve the user experience, leading to increased use, improved traffic safety, reduced fear of crime and increased confidence to make independent journeys for school, social, recreation and travel to essential services.

Gender: Enhancing the route and installing a wider footway may improve perceptions of safety, thereby increasing confidence when traveling for work, education, healthcare, and social activities.

Pregnancy and maternity: The improvements to pavements, pedestrian crossings, and highway surfaces will decrease risk of falls or injury, that may disproportionately impact pregnant women. Wide footways will also benefit parents with prams and pushchairs.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

Construction will result in temporary closures of footpaths for users; this may result in uneven footway surfaces which could affect young and older pedestrians. Pedestrians and road users may have to find alternative and more lengthy routes to access services (such as hospital, schools, public transport etc.). Noise disruption from the construction works could cause anxiety and confusion for some people. If access to services and access to transport is disrupted it could disproportionately impact elderly people's health and wellbeing as they may stop attending social groups, being active or attending health appointments.

Mitigating Actions for Age

A safety audit will be completed at the construction stage. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users. Access to services kept clear with ramps where required. The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind. Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works. Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations.

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Victoria Soames

20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Construction will result in temporary closures of footpaths, for road users including pedestrians & cyclists. This may temporarily disrupt access to essential services for disability groups meaning alternative routes may be required. Construction works can cause major obstructions on key walking routes and unexpected changes to the 'landscape' for blind and partially sighted people. Construction works can be sprawling and noisy – causing confusion and anxiety for some disabled people.

Mitigating actions for Disability

A safety audit will be completed at the construction stage. NMU audits will be undertaken to ensure due consideration is given to all road users. The design will meet all statutory requirements including the Equality Act 2010, with all good practices in mind. It will be ensured that designs are carried out in accordance with the Design Manual for Roads and Bridges (DMRB), which gives guidance based on current

legislation for non-motorised users (NMU) and those with disabilities. The design will meet recommended guidance from the Department for Transport on inclusive mobility, the Kent Design Guide and associated standard details. The need for the scheme has been identified assessment by KCC in partnership with local District development and transport strategies. Risk assessment to be completed for affected groups prior to construction. Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works. Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations with access to services kept clear with ramps where required.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Victoria Soames

21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Sex

During construction, women may feel unsafe using diversions away from usual walking or cycling routes or waiting in temporary structures or adjacent to construction sites due to fear of crime.

Mitigating actions for Sex

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure residents can access and use the highway safely during the construction works. Ensure appropriate, lit diversion routes are chosen and well signed during the construction works.

Responsible Officer for Sex

Victoria Soames

22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

No

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race**Are there negative impacts for Race**

No

Negative impacts for Race

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Not Applicable

24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief**Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief**

No

Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Not Applicable

25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

No

Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Not Applicable

26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Yes

Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

There is a possible increased risk of falls during work if pregnant women are walking unfamiliar routes.

Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Construction sites and diversion routes to follow health and safety regulations. Diversion routes to be lit and well signed with ramped access to services as required.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Victoria Soames

27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

No

Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Not Applicable

Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Not Applicable

Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Not Applicable

28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

Yes

Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

During construction, diversion and major construction work could impact on travel plans if works are not known in advance. Additionally, construction works and changes to the site area could affect planning for independent travel with client groups.

Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Mitigating Actions for Carer's responsibilities

Public engagement, via letter drops, websites, social media, and public meetings where appropriate, to ensure all users are aware of construction works/programme and any temporary access arrangements to ensure they can access and use the highway safely during the construction works.

Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities

Victoria Soames

From: Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 13 January 2026

Subject: The future of library provision in Folkestone Town Centre and the next steps for the 2 Grace Hill building

Decision no: 25/00104

Key Decision: Yes, affects more than 2 Electoral Division and Involves Significant Service Development

Classification: Part Exempt – Appendices C and D

Past Pathway of report: Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services
Key Decision 22 January 2025 - 24/00116

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All divisions within Folkestone and Hythe district

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This paper follows the previous Cabinet Member's decision (24/00116) taken in January 2025 and sets out next steps and timescales in respect of the Library and Registration service provision in Folkestone town centre and the future of the 2 Grace Hill building (the "Grace Hill building" throughout).

It sets out: the current position in respect of the Grace Hill building and the temporary library provision at 14 Sandgate Road; reviews the remaining options; and confirms next steps to ensure that Folkestone town centre has a sustainable, deliverable, and comprehensive statutory Library and Registration service.

Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make recommendations to The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision as set out in the Proposed Record of Decision (PRoD) (Appendix A).

1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Council has a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 '*to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons who live, work or study in the area*'.

- 1.2. Folkestone Library is part of the Council's statutory network of Libraries which deliver services across the County. It operated at the 2 Grace Hill building (referred throughout as the "Grace Hill building") until December 2022 when it was temporarily closed due to building condition issues including water ingress and mould, rendering it unsafe for occupation by staff and customers.
- 1.3. Since this temporary closure the Council has undertaken steps to mitigate the impact and to identify options for the future of the town centre library service in Folkestone.
- 1.4. An interim decision 24/00116 was taken in January 2025 outlining next steps and options which remained under consideration.
- 1.5. Due to the progress made since January 2025 the Council is now able to take a further decision on next steps in relation to the future of the Folkestone Library service and the Grace Hill building, and the timings associated with these.

2. **Background**

- 2.1. Until the temporary closure of the Grace Hill building in December 2022, a comprehensive library and registration service was offered from this location including book lending service, access to local studies collections, public computers and registration functions.
- 2.2. Due to the extent of condition issues, it was not considered economically viable for the Council to carry out the necessary works to allow the building to safely reopen, and an exercise was commenced to fully cost the level of capital expenditure required. These costs were later established to be c£2.9m, which continues to be an accurate reflection of the level of capital expenditure required to reopen the building.
- 2.3. The nature of the Council's financial challenges, and the controls in place to manage spend across Council, mean that limited property maintenance budgets are prioritised towards buildings which are used to provide the Council's welfare related services.
- 2.4. In 2022 the total estimated cost of repairs needed to the Grace Hill building would have represented over a third of the Council's total 22/23 FY annual property maintenance budget.
- 2.5. Since this point in time the pressure on the Council's property maintenance budgets has continued to increase and it remains clear that such costs cannot be justified.
- 2.6. While the Grace Hill building has been closed, temporary service provision has been put in place for service users and local residents to access a library and registration service which consists of:
 - Town centre access to the local history collections and public computers at 'Folkestone Library – Heritage and Digital Access' operating at 5 Grace Hill. This also includes a free library book (and other materials) borrowing and reservation service.

- Extended branch opening at nearby Wood Avenue and Hythe libraries.
- Additional public computers and an additional location where public can complete birth and death registration appointments at Wood Avenue Library.
- Promotion of other ways to access free library services via online, the Mobile Library and the Home Library Service

2.7. At the point of drafting this paper, Folkestone town centre has been without a full town centre library and registration service for three years.

2.8. Following the temporary closure, the Council has explored various options for the future provision of the service. An eight-week public consultation took place in 2024 which outlined the options at the time and the basis of the criteria that would be used to assess options, the outcome of which was reported to the Cabinet Committee and Cabinet Member in January 2025.

2.9. The subsequent key decision confirmed which options were discounted, and which would continue to be developed.

2.10. Some limited capital works were undertaken in the 25/26 financial year to the Grace Hill building to improve the roof drainage network in consultation with the Conservation Officer at Folkestone and Hythe District Council. These works were designed to stabilise the building's condition and slow further deterioration of the internal heritage fabric of the building, to provide additional time for options analysis and decision taking over the 25/26 winter period.

2.11. The interim decision (24/00116) taken by the Cabinet Member on 22nd January 2025 recognised the consultees' views and agreed that further work be undertaken to explore the two remaining options, with all other options outlined in the papers being discounted.

2.12. The **discounted options** in January 2025 were:

- Continue with temporary provision (5 Grace Hill) permanently and exit the Grace Hill Building. This option would not meet the service requirements due to spatial limitations and a clear message from the consultation feedback was that people wanted to see either the re-opening of the library at the Grace Hill building or the service moved to a single alternative location.
- Make repairs to the Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library and co-locate with other services there. While recognising consultees' views about the Grace Building, it was not considered that making the necessary repairs to the building was financially justifiable.
- Relocate the library service to another existing KCC building. There was no significant support within consultation responses for a move to any existing KCC building in Folkestone and from a review of KCC buildings there was no suitable KCC space available which made this option deliverable.

2.13. The **remaining options** in January 2025 were:

- Selling or issuing a long lease of the Grace Hill building to another party and then leasing back part of the building. This option would enable KCC to relinquish its interest in and responsibility for maintenance and repair of the Grace Hill building, whilst retaining the library and registration service at the Grace Hill building. This option is the subject of ongoing engagement with Creative Folkestone. This option may also involve the consideration of proposals from other individuals or groups, should any such proposals be made (including through the ACV process).
- To exit the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the LRA service.
- The decision authorised officers to continue to explore other alternative town centre locations (including continued exploration of the FOLCA option with FHDC) and to look at the options for improved temporary provision while the Council took forward work on a remaining options.

2.14. The principal parts of the 2025 decision were that the following steps were approved:

- That further work be undertaken to explore and implement an alternative town centre location for the temporary library and registration service, from which a greater range of services could be delivered, within current budgets, until a permanent library and registration service location is opened in the town centre.
- That the options for the future of the Grace Hill building which involve KCC retaining responsibility for maintenance and repair of the building, be discounted, acknowledging that this will very likely require KCC to make a disposal of the building to a third party (by way of freehold transfer or grant of a long lease), and progress actions relating to its listing as an asset of community value (ACV), including issuing a notice to Folkestone & Hythe District Council of intention to dispose (Folkestone & Hythe District Council being the statutory body that administers the ACV process under the Localism Act 2011)
- That further work be undertaken on the two remaining options, including further engagement with Creative Folkestone and, if appropriate, other individuals or groups who may make proposals for the Grace Hill building (including through the ACV process).

2.15. While the above summarises the considerations and outcome of key decision 24/00116 the full details of the decision are set out within the paper taken to Committee in January 2025 and as Appendix B.

2.16. The Grace Hill building is listed as an asset of community value (ACV) under relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011. The Council therefore cannot enter into a “relevant disposal” of the building unless a number of statutory conditions are met.

2.17. A relevant disposal is a sale of the freehold estate of the land or the grant of a leasehold interest with a term of over 25 years.

2.18. The January 2025 key decision authorised officers to trigger the notification of intent to dispose in respect of the Grace Hill building, and progress to openly market the site. This was designed to enable all interested parties, including community groups, to develop and submit proposals for consideration.

2.19. The key decision acknowledged that both remaining options would take time to investigate and ultimately deliver, therefore certain measures were necessary:

- The carrying out of limited capital works to the Grace Hill building to slow the deterioration of internal heritage fabric.
- The establishment of a new single temporary library in the town centre which would be capable of providing the full range of services expected of a town centre Library and Registration facility.

2.20. The above steps have been progressed since the January 2025 key decision.

2.21. Marketing of the Grace Hill building took place for a 12-week period, concluding on 31st October 2025. Following the conclusion of this, and the evaluation of other options, the Council is now able to take a decision which sets out next steps and timescales in respect of the Folkestone Library and registration service and the Grace Hill building.

3. Status of 2 Grace Hill building and ACV / Marketing process

3.1. The Grace Hill building remains closed on condition grounds and is managed as part of the Council's vacant property estate – with regular monitoring visits being undertaken and security management in place.

3.2. A programme of works to the roof and rainwater drainage network were undertaken in 2025 as permitted under listed building consent (24/1768/FH). These works were developed in close liaison with Folkestone and Hythe District Council's Conservation Officer. Works were limited to improving the capacity and design of elements of the roof rainwater network to reduce the risk of further water ingress from the roof, and improved access to the roof to allow more regular monitoring.

3.3. These limited works were not sufficient to allow the building to return to operational use, and significant condition works would still be required to allow the building to reopen to staff and visitors.

3.4. The full cost of necessary works was estimated to be in the region of £2.9m in 2024. Due to further deterioration in the building's condition this figure is still considered to be a realistic reflection of the capital investment required for the building to be reoccupied.

3.5. Following key decision 24/00116, notification was served on Folkestone and Hythe District Council of the County Council's intention to dispose of the building per the Asset of Community Value (ACV) legislation. As outlined in the key decision this was considered necessary as all remaining options involved a 'relevant disposal' per the legislation.

- 3.6. The ACV legislation does not confer a right of first refusal to community groups, nor does it define how marketing must take place; it provides groups additional time to prepare to bid for assets, alongside other interested parties, which have been nominated and adopted as being of “community value”.
- 3.7. Once an asset owner notifies the local authority, in this case the District Council, of an intention to dispose of an asset an initial 6-week moratorium is triggered, during which no disposal can take place. If any qualifying community group expresses an interest in bidding during the initial 6-week moratorium it automatically extends the moratorium to 6-months. During a moratorium no relevant disposals can take place.
- 3.8. Once the moratorium process ends the asset enters a ‘protected period’ during which disposal can take place without the need to renotify the District Council of an intention to dispose. This protected period runs for 18-months from the point of the initial notification to the local authority.
- 3.9. Per the legislation, qualifying community groups were given an initial 6-week period in which to express an interest in bidding for the Grace Hill building. This commenced on 7th March 2025.
- 3.10. Three community organisations expressed an interest in preparing a bid for the Grace Hill building, this triggered the full 6-month moratorium to come into effect.
- 3.11. This full moratorium period concluded on 7th September 2025.
- 3.12. While they were not one of the three groups who expressed an interest in developing a bid as part of the ACV process, Creative Folkestone’s interest in the Grace Hill building and future of the Folkestone library service is documented in paperwork supporting key decision 24/00116.
- 3.13. Regular engagement with Creative Folkestone and other community groups has continued to take place since.
- 3.14. While not required under the ACV legislation, open marketing of the Grace Hill building was considered necessary to allow all parties interested in developing a proposal to be treated equally and the process to be handled transparently. This was an active decision by the Council to go beyond the requirements of the legislation in the interests of ensuring parity.
- 3.15. Kent County Council wrote to all groups who put forward an Expression of Interest as part of the ACV process and to Creative Folkestone in July 2025 outlining next steps, the details of the open marketing process, and the criteria by which the Council would assess bids and encouraged bidders to contact KCC if further information was needed to help them prepare their bids.
- 3.16. The Council continued to engage directly, and via its appointed agents, with any interested party during the marketing process, offering relevant information on the building, facilitating site visits, and clarifying service requirements. This included meetings with Creative Folkestone in addition to information being supplied to support their proposal drafting.

3.17. The open marketing period was supported by news articles, adverts, and external boards on the building to ensure that any and all interested parties were aware of the opportunity to develop a bid.

3.18. The open marketing process concluded on 31st October 2025. This represents a period of over seven months from the notification of intention to dispose to Folkestone and Hythe District Council, and over nine months from the point that the Council confirmed next steps in the January 2025 key decision.

3.19. Only one proposal, submitted by Creative Folkestone and framed around a shared partnership vision, was received during the marketing process. The full details of this are set out in an exempt appendix C. Officer analysis of options are also included at exempt appendix D.

3.20. The Creative Folkestone proposal as submitted includes:

- A joint partnership approach between Creative Folkestone and other community groups to integrate the building into Creative Folkestone's Creative Campus initiative and restore the building as a multi-use cultural hub.
- Acknowledgement of the significant condition issues with the Grace Hill building and an indicated intention to raise c£6.5m from external grant funding sources towards works to the Grace Hill building, as part of a wider c£10m package of grant seeking to support the Creative Campus Project. Potential grant funders are indicated in addition to references to positive engagement to date.
- The proposal did not set out detail of proposed ownership structure for the Grace Hill building but indicated a willingness to abide by the limitations set in 24/00116 around the Council's ongoing maintenance obligations.
- The Council is requested to join a partnership of various groups and allow a period of 18 months in order for the partnership to raise required funds.
- Once repaired and refurbished it is envisaged that the building could be occupied by the library service on the Ground Floor, and creative / community uses elsewhere.
- That Creative Folkestone take the lead role in ongoing management of the building, and that each user would make contribution to the running costs of the building to ensure financial sustainability and manage ongoing risk.
- That the areas of the building other than ground floor would be fragmented to provide individual studio and community spaces.
- A high-level revenue model is set out on the basis of a 90% occupancy assumption, and assumptions on rental rates for areas of the building. However, it is not clear whether these rates would be achievable in the context of more fragmented / ad hoc hireable spaces.

- The alignment of the proposal with various policy initiatives is highlighted, along with potential economic/employment benefits of the wider campus proposal.

4. Update on 14 Sandgate Road, enhanced temporary library provision 24/00116

- 4.1. Key decision 24/00116 accepted that all future options which remained would take significant time to deliver, whether this was disposing of the Grace Hill building to another party to carry out necessary repairs and refurbishment or procuring an alternative town centre library building and conversion works. Therefore, it was considered necessary to deliver a further temporary provision within the town centre, which could provide a single, full and comprehensive Library and Registration service.
- 4.2. No suitable venues were identified within the Council's existing estate. A market search for options was therefore conducted.
- 4.3. The ground floor of 14 Sandgate Road (Sandgate Road building) was identified due to its location within the town centre, good accessibility, and spatial adequacy for not just the Library and Registration service, but other Council services which required a town centre presence in Folkestone i.e. Adult Education. The County Council seeks to co-locate services where feasible.
- 4.4. An interest in the Sandgate Road building has been secured within existing revenue budget constraints allocated to the co-locating services. It has been confirmed that Adult Education service will locate here when the building is ready.
- 4.5. Proposals for the conversion of the space to serve the needs of co-locating services have been agreed, and planning consent has been obtained for the temporary change of use for community purposes for an initial five-year period under consent FH/25/1711.
- 4.6. Conversion works have been tendered per the Council's procurement arrangements, and conversion works are due to commence in January 2026, with completion scheduled for Spring 2026.
- 4.7. Once open the building will allow for a full and comprehensive Libraries and Registration service to be delivered within the town centre; it will also be occupied by the Council's Adult Education function, with ancillary office and storage functionality.
- 4.8. Due to the temporary nature of Library and Registration service's occupation in the building, fitout will be achieved through use of existing furniture stock sourced from closed sites across the County with some new furniture where needed.

5. Status of FOLCA

- 5.1. During the 2024 consultation the Council's preferred approach was to exit the Grace Hill building and relocate to another Town Centre site. At the time the

FOLCA project being delivered by Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) was considered to be the most likely option for a future venue, and at time of the public consultation was KCC's preferred option.

- 5.2. The FOLCA building is owned by Folkestone & Hythe District Council, a former Debenhams store made up of 2 distinct buildings, one fronting onto Bouverie Place (FOLCA 1) and the other onto Sandgate Road (FOLCA 2).
- 5.3. FHDC decided in July 2025 to dispose of its interest in the Bouverie Place fronting building, FOLCA 1, due to viability challenges with its proposed use. A decision to progress a mixed-use scheme for FOLCA 2 is anticipated in early 2026 as part of a proposed which may be "fully commercial or a combination of public sector, medical and commercial uses."
- 5.4. Based on recent communications FHDC have confirmed that:
 - FHDC's preference, as outlined in KCC's decision in January 2025, remains for the library service to be reinstated at Grace Hill building and FHDC supports Creative Folkestone's proposal for the building and service.
 - Should Kent County Council rule out the Grace Hill building then FOLCA 2 may provide an alternative town centre location which could meet service requirements subject to further clarification.
 - Autumn 2028 is a realistic timeline for construction works to have concluded and space to become available in the FOLCA building.

6. Critical Success Factors and Key Considerations

- 6.1. The Council established criteria within the 2024 consultation which set out the approach to appraising options for the future of the library service:
- 6.2. **Service requirements:** Does the option meet the Library, Registration and Archive (LRA) service requirements? These requirements are covered in more detail below:
 - **Location:** It is important to be somewhere really visible and accessible, which is why high-street locations will generally be our preference as this is where most people will go or be able to get to. Libraries can also play an important part in wider high-street regeneration. As a rule, we want to be in a location that lots of people will naturally pass so that we can advertise and be visible for those who are not yet users of the service with the desire that they do become users. Where the best location is in a community may change over time and we should always keep this under review.
 - **Space:** We need adequate space to meet service needs and is affordable for KCC.
 - **Partnership potential:** The LRA service is in general keen to co-locate with other customer and community services. This brings more services to people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who don't currently use them. This has the wider to

potential to maximise usage of buildings and where possible enable surplus buildings to be released or disposed off where no longer needed which can support revenue budget savings and also generate capital receipts.

- 6.3. **Financial:** How much will it cost KCC, both in terms of capital and revenue both short and long term? Does the option rely on securing grant funding? If so, what timescales are associated with this? Will the option generate any income for KCC, given the already-described financial challenge facing the Council?
- 6.4. **Deliverability:** Can the option be delivered and what is the timeline for delivery?
- 6.5. **Environmental:** Does the option reduce the carbon footprint therefore supporting KCC's net zero target?
- 6.6. These criteria continue to be valid for the appraisal of options currently identified. These criteria also formed the basis for the letter sent to community groups who expressed an interest in bidding for the Grace Hill building as part of the Asset of Community Value process.
- 6.7. While the prospect of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) does have an impact on how services will be delivered in the future, it is not considered to have a material impact on the current necessary decisions in Folkestone in respect of the library service. As a principal town within Kent it is considered that the need to deliver a comprehensive library service from a town centre location will continue to be a necessity for whichever local government entity inherits statutory responsibilities for the delivery of library services.

7. Options:

- 7.1. At the time of drafting the following remaining options are under consideration. Options 1A-C relate to the progressed option: "To exit the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the LRA service", and option 2A relates to the progressed option: "Selling or issuing a long lease of the Grace Hill building to another party, and then leasing back part of the building":
- 7.2. **1A) Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in-line with adopted policy. Confirm that, for the foreseeable future, 14 Sandgate Road will provide the library and registration facility in Folkestone town centre.**
1B) Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library until and if it has become possible to finalise terms and agree to occupy FOLCA with FHDC.
1C) Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library while the Council works to establish an alternative town centre library site which is not FOLCA or 14 Sandgate Road.

2A) Confirm that the Council will accept Creative Folkestone's proposal to work towards an alternative grant-funded vision for the Grace Hill building which may include the provision of space for the library service, and until this point in time the temporary library will operate at 14 Sandgate Road.

- 7.3. A detailed appraisal of each of these options is set out in appendix D, with a summary provided below:
- 7.4. **1A) Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in-line with adopted policy. Confirm that, for the foreseeable future, 14 Sandgate Road will provide library and registration facility in Folkestone town centre.**
- 7.5. **Service requirements:** The Sandgate Road building is in the town centre, and works have been specified to ensure the building would be spatially adequate to provide the full remit of library and registration services in this single location. The building's size and location will allow co-location with KCC's Adult Education service and other office-based staff.
- 7.6. **Financial:** Works are already specified and budgeted to convert the building to facilitate its temporary use as a library per decision 24/00116. Some additional capital expenditure may be required to upgrade provision if it is confirmed at any future point as the permanent Library and Registration facility in the town. The building will operate within existing revenue budgets allocated to the co-locating services.
- 7.7. In respect of options 1A-C, all recognise that there is a need to dispose of the Grace Hill building if an alternative town centre site is selected. The disposal of the Grace Hill building will generate a capital receipt for reinvestment back into the Council's adopted capital priorities, it will also reduce revenue expenditure holding the building vacant which is projected to cost over £100k pa.
- 7.8. **Deliverability:** A 15-year interest in the Sandgate Road building has already been secured, and works are currently underway to convert the building for use by co-locating services with a view to completion Spring 2026.
- 7.9. **Environmental:** The building has an EPC-A 25 rating and ensures spatial allocations to services are optimised in line with the Council's Asset Management Strategy which emphasises the need to improve the efficiency of the estate.
- 7.10. **Conclusion:** For the reasons above and set out in appendix D this option is identified as the preferred approach.
- 7.11. The Council will remain open to considering options as part of its ongoing approach to asset management which is set out in detail in subsequent sections of this paper.
- 7.12. **1B) Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library until and if it has become possible to finalise terms and agree to occupy FOLCA with FHDC.**

7.13. **Service requirements:** FOLCA is located within the town centre, and it is understood that sufficient space is likely to be available to meet the library and registration service's needs once the project is completed. There is the potential that other public sector services will operate from the building which would be of benefit to service users.

7.14. **Financial:** It is understood FHDC's intention is to pursue a Cat A fitout standard. Therefore, the necessary level of capital investment which the Council would need to make into the building is likely to be limited.

7.15. Revenue implications are addressed in the exempt appendix. It is projected that it would be less costly to occupy than 2 Grace Hill, but more costly than 14 Sandgate Road.

7.16. The financial benefits of exiting the Grace Hill building are outlined under option 1A.

7.17. **Deliverability:** It is understood FHDC intend to take further decisions in Q4 2025/26 which will inform the next steps of the FOLCA project. Subject to these, it is understood that it is likely FOLCA will be capable of occupation from Q3 2028/29.

7.18. **Environmental:** FHDC has secured support from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for the development of FOLCA, and this should enable the building to achieve an EPC A rating. Relocation to FOLCA would allow the Council to ensure spatial allocations to the library and registration service were optimised to ensure efficient use of the estate.

7.19. **Conclusion:** At present it is premature to confirm the Council's approach to FOLCA occupation, and this option should be discounted. The Council remains open to considering options as part of its ongoing approach to asset management. Should further information become available in respect of space available within the FOLCA building this will be considered in the future as part of the Council's asset review process.

7.20. **1C) Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library while the Council works to establish an alternative town centre library site which is not FOLCA or 14 Sandgate Road.**

7.21. **Service requirements:** This option would ensure town centre provision, but in the absence of an identified alternative site it is not possible to assess the full service implications. An extensive site search was carried out as part of the identification of the 14 Sandgate Road property which was selected as the most appropriate option for the enhanced temporary library provision. No other suitable available sites were identified.

7.22. **Financial:** The financial implications are unknown. But it would be reasonable to assume that alternative town centre venues would be offered on market terms close to those associated with 14 Sandgate Road and FOLCA.

7.23. The financial benefits of exiting the Grace Hill building are outlined under option 1A.

7.24. **Deliverability:** While it is likely that other town centre opportunities will come forwards it is not possible to estimate the likelihood or timescales attached.

7.25. **Environmental:** While this option would allow the Council to ensure the spatial requirements were optimised to ensure efficiency of the estate, the EPC rating of alternative sites is not known.

7.26. **Conclusion:** The Council has no rationale for selecting an alternative town centre venue when alternative town centre options under 1A and 1B are better defined. But the Council remains open to considering options as part of its ongoing approach to asset management.

7.27. **2A) Confirm that the Council will accept Creative Folkestone's proposal to work towards an alternative grant-funded vision for the Grace Hill building which may include the provision of space for the library service, and until this point in time the temporary library will operate at 14 Sandgate Road.**

7.28. As noted earlier in the paper, all three community groups who submitted an Expression Of Interest as part of the ACV process, in addition to Creative Folkestone, were contacted in advance of marketing activity to clearly set out the Council's expectations of the level of detail which would be required to adequately assess any bid based on the criteria formalised as part of the public consultation exercise.

7.29. **Service requirements:** The Grace Hill building is the current site of the library service, it is located outside of the immediate town centre, and in closer proximity to more deprived areas of Folkestone. This was highlighted by multiple respondents to the public consultation as a key factor.

Spatially the proposed area of the ground floor of the building is adequate for the library and registration service, subject to further revisions on layout.

In terms of partnership potential, the possible co-locating with creative / arts based individuals and organisations aligns with the Council's aspirations for co-located local government and third sector services.

7.30. **Financial:** Creative Folkestone's proposal suggests a figure of c£6.5m is needed to repair and reinvent the building as a multi-purpose cultural hub. It is indicated that external grant funding could be secured to fund these works as part of a wider £10m bid towards Creative Folkestone's Creative Campus vision.

7.31. The Council has consistently maintained and reiterated in key decision 24/00116 that it would not be in a financial position to make any capital contribution towards the proposal.

7.32. The estimated hold costs of the Grace Hill building are c£100k pa. Creative Folkestone have requested an 18-month period in which to secure funding.

7.33. Creative Folkestone's proposal signals a willingness to adopt a legal arrangement which complies with 24/00116 in respect of ending the Council's ongoing commitment to repair or maintain the building, however no terms or conditions are outlined in the proposal for the Council to evaluate. Nor is any rent or capital payment outlined which would allow the Council to assess compliance with its s123 Best Consideration duties under the Local Government Act 1972.

7.34. While a high-level revenue model has been supplied with the proposal it is not clear whether the assumptions in the model are deliverable, including a 90% occupancy assumption across the multi-let spaces.

7.35. The proposal states that Creative Folkestone would take the lead in managing the ongoing risk and maintenance of the building, however in a scenario where the Council took a lease of the Ground floor it's liabilities would remain through service charge contributions. There is therefore a strong link between the level of capital investment / refurbishment, and the level of service charge liability future occupiers would be exposed to.

7.36. **Deliverability:** While the Council recognises Creative Folkestone's highly successful track record of securing funding and delivering artist-led regeneration schemes in the town, there remains significant risk and uncertainty attached to the likelihood that such a significant amount of funding could be raised within the requested 18 month period. The ability to source external funding is intrinsic to the deliverability of the proposal.

7.37. The proposal anticipates that the Council will remain exposed to the statutory responsibilities and financial implications of managing the Grace Hill building during the grant seeking period.

7.38. **Environmental:** The Grace Hill building is currently rated as an EPC C – 73. The scope to improve this rating will be constrained by the listed nature of the building.

7.39. The proposal that the Council reduces its operational footprint within the building is however aligned to estate efficiency aspirations set out in its adopted Asset Management Strategy.

7.40. **Conclusion:** In summary the proposal from Creative Folkestone does not align with KCC's key decision in January 2025 with particular regard to clearly demonstrating how the Council relinquishes its ownership and ongoing building maintenance liabilities.

7.41. As outlined in this paper, the Grace Hill building suffers from significant condition issues, and the fabric of the building continues to deteriorate. The hold liabilities associated with allowing Creative Folkestone a further 18-month hold period are projected to exceed £100k pa due to the listed nature of the building and its deteriorating condition.

7.42. All community groups, including Creative Folkestone, were written to, clearly outlining the information which would be required as part of a bid to enable the

Council adequately to appraise the terms and the risks. The proposal received from Creative Folkestone does not sufficiently address the points requested.

- 7.43. The proposal does not set out legal and contractual details, nor does it set out any capital purchase price or rental payment to the Council to enable the Council to assess whether the proposal complies with its adopted approach to asset management, its best value duties, or its statutory obligations in respect of asset disposals.
- 7.44. Given the Council's current financial situation and its fiduciary duties to all residents of Kent, the Council acknowledges that despite best endeavours it has not been possible to secure any sufficiently certain proposal for the Grace Hill building.
- 7.45. As such, and for the reasons also set out in the attached appendix, it is considered that option 2A does not provide sufficient confidence for the Council to accept the risks associated with the approach. Nor does it ensure that there is a clear plan in place for a sustainable and comprehensive library and registration service in Folkestone town centre. Therefore, for the reasons above, and set out in the appendix, it is discounted.
- 7.46. By proceeding with Option 1A the Council continues to provide Creative Folkestone, or other community groups, with the opportunity to acquire the Grace Hill building transparently via the open market.

8. Opportunity for review

- 8.1. As part of the Council's approach to asset management the Asset Strategy team regularly review upcoming lease break options. For 14 Sandgate Road the first break option for the Council is projected to be in December 2030. The Asset Strategy team typically begin their review 18-24months in advance of break date to provide adequate time to implement alternative arrangements if these are considered preferential.
- 8.2. Therefore, there is a point in late-2028 during which the Council has a window to consider the future of the Folkestone Town Centre library service, and based on the information provided by stakeholders, this coincides with further information becoming available in respect of FOLCA.
- 8.3. This also provides an opportunity for any future purchaser of the Grace Hill building, who may be minded to independently pursue a mixed occupancy development to make provision for space which could be occupied by the Library and Registration service, for consideration in the future by the Council.
- 8.4. At the time of drafting Folkestone town centre has been without a comprehensive Library and Registration service for three years, and by Q3 2028/29 this will be six years.
- 8.5. It is therefore considered necessary to give the residents of Folkestone comfort that a sustainable and comprehensive Folkestone Library and Registration service is in place by confirming that for the foreseeable future the Sandgate

Road building will be used to provide the Library and Registration service, and that KCC remains open to viable and deliverable alternatives as part of its ongoing asset management activities.

- 8.6. The potential late calendar-year 2028 review of options would also allow for a scenario in which Creative Folkestone, or other community groups, could continue to independently develop community provisions capable of providing alternative space for the library service. This would allow the Council to take an informed view of options in full sight of necessary information.

9. Financial Implications

- 9.1. The selected option 1A will ensure that the Library and Registration service is delivered from a sustainable premises capable of operating within currently adopted revenue budgetary constraints.
- 9.2. The disposal of the Grace Hill building will generate a capital receipt for reinvestment back into the Council's adopted capital priorities. It will also limit the Council's revenue exposure in respect of holding costs estimated to be in the region of £100k pa.

10. Legal implications

- 10.1. The Council will need to engage suitably qualified legal support to assist with implementation of the decision. This will be arranged through the Council's Office of General Counsel.
- 10.2. Cabinet Committee is asked to note KCC's ongoing statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service' for all those who live, work or study in the area. Officers consider that the enhanced temporary library provision at Sandgate Road Building meets this duty. The proposed decision will ensure that the Council is able to demonstrate its compliance with this duty.
- 10.3. The Committee is also asked to note the legal requirement that KCC gives conscientious consideration to consultation responses. The Council has done so throughout its previous decision making. Committee Members should give careful thought to the analysis of previous consultation responses in this report and appendixes
- 10.4. KCC must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty in s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Cabinet Members are referred to the Equality Impact Assessments (EQIA) at Appendix E.
- 10.5. The statutory requirements relating to the status of the Grace Hill building as an Asset of Community Value are covered above.
- 10.6. The Council has an overarching duty under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972 to obtain best financial consideration in the disposal of surplus property assets. For the purposes of the act, disposal includes the granting of leases more than seven years.

11. Equalities implications

11.1. An EqIA has been undertaken for the earlier decision. A further EQIA has also been completed for the further temporary provision on Sandgate Road and both EQIA's are included as Appendix E to this report. The key findings from this support the recommendations of this paper:

- KCC is committed to providing a full town centre library service for everyone. This is restated to mitigate any concerns raised that certain customer groups e.g. children would be disadvantaged.
- There was feedback that any move of the library away from Grace Hill may increase the distance from the immediate area and make the service less accessible for those with age, disability, mat/paternity, or carer protected characteristics in that area. Whilst the immediate location in Grace Hill does have high levels of deprivation, it is considered that a high street location does have the advantages of greater accessibility across the district as a whole. The Sandgate Road building is located 0.2 miles from the Grace Hill building
- 14 Sandgate Road provides open and level access throughout the building from the High Street. The library and Adult Education services can also all be offered and delivered on the ground floor.

12. Data Protection Implications

12.1. There are no direct data protection implications arising from the proposed decision.

13. Governance

13.1. The decision is to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services due to direct link to the Library and Registration service provision.

13.2. Delegations are to be granted to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Deputy Leader given that the implementation of the decision requires property-led activities.

14. Conclusions

14.1. This paper outlines options currently available to the Council in respect of the Folkestone library service, and the risks associated with each. It concludes that the Council does not have sufficient detail to accept Creative Folkestone's proposal for a joint partnership approach despite best endeavours.

14.2. Therefore, the paper outlines the preferred option to confirm that 14 Sandgate Road will provide the Library and Registration service in Folkestone town centre for the foreseeable future.

14.3. The paper notes that no sufficiently certain option for the retention of the Grace Hill building has come from the Asset of Community Value and open marketing process, and therefore as part of the Council's adopted policies and fiduciary duty to residents, open market disposal will take place in Q4 2025/26 to deliver a capital receipt and minimise revenue hold cost expenditure. This provides

Creative Folkestone or other community groups the opportunity to secure an interested in the building under open market conditions and to independently progress their proposals.

14.4. The paper notes that as part of the Council's normal asset management activities there will be an opportunity in late 2028 to review future options for the library service which can be compared against continued occupation of 14 Sandgate Road.

14.5. Importantly the paper sets out a route forwards which provides confidence to the people of Folkestone that a comprehensive and sustainable Library and Registration service provision will be provided by Spring 2026 and will continue to be in place for the foreseeable future. Ensures compliance with the Council's statutory obligations and alignment with adopted policy, including its Asset Management Strategy, while providing an opportunity for Creative Folkestone, and other community groups to independently pursue options which may provide alternative space for the library service in the future via direct acquisition of the Grace Hill building as part of the Council's disposal process.

15. Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make recommendations to The Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision as set out in the Proposed Record of Decision (PRoD), (Appendix A).

16. Appendices

Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix B- (1) Folkestone library decision paper taken to Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee in January 2025 and (2) key decision [25/00116](#).

Appendix C – Creative Folkestone's submitted proposal (exempt)

Appendix D – (1) Options appraisal and financial summary (2) Exempt addendum to appendix D

Appendix E –(1) EqIA supporting 24/00116, (2) Sandgate Road temporary library EqIA

17. Contact details

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00104

Executive Decision – key

25/00104 - The future of library provision in Folkestone Town Centre and the next steps for the 2 Grace Hill building

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services, I agree to:

- Reaffirm the Council's commitment to delivering a sustainable, comprehensive town-centre Library and Registration Service in Folkestone.
- Note the outcome of the 2 Grace Hill Asset of Community Value and marketing process, including the outcome of the KCC evaluation of Creative Folkestone's proposal alongside other options for the library service.
- Confirm 14 Sandgate Road as the location of the Folkestone town centre Library and Registration service for the foreseeable future.
- Confirm that the Council remains open to considering the location of the library service as part of its ongoing estates management best practice. With the next review now likely to take place in late 2028.
- Confirm that the Council will progress with open market disposal of the Grace Hill building.
- Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in liaison with the Deputy Leader, to finalise terms and enter contracts necessary to implement the decision regarding the Grace Hill building and the Sandgate Road building.

Reasons for decision:

A Key decision is needed to confirm the long-term location of Folkestone Library in the town and to determine the future of the 2 Grace Hill building.

Financial implications:

Works are already specified and budgeted to convert the building to facilitate its temporary use as a library per decision 24/00116. Some additional capital expenditure may be required to upgrade provision if it is confirmed at any future point as the permanent Library and Registration facility in the town. The building will operate within existing revenue budgets allocated to the co-locating services.

There is a need to dispose of the Grace Hill building if an alternative town centre site is selected. The disposal of the Grace Hill building will generate a capital receipt for reinvestment back into the Council's adopted capital priorities, it will also reduce revenue expenditure holding the building vacant which is projected to cost over £100k pa

Legal implications:

Kent County Council (KCC) must provide a comprehensive and efficient library service under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964. The temporary library at Sandgate Road is considered to meet this statutory requirement.

The Council will engage qualified legal professionals, coordinated by the Office of General Counsel, to implement the decision regarding Folkestone Library.

Because the Grace Hill building is listed as an Asset of Community Value (ACV), Kent County Council must follow legal steps before selling or leasing it, including notifying the local authority and allowing community groups time to bid. There are set moratorium periods (6 weeks, then 6 months if a group is interested) during which no sale can happen. After this, the Council can proceed with disposal but must still get the best financial value for the asset.

Under s123 of the Local Government Act 1972, KCC must obtain the best financial consideration when disposing of surplus property assets, including leases over seven years.

Equalities implications:

Moving the library away from Grace Hill could increase the distance for some users, particularly those in deprived areas or with mobility challenges. However, the new location at 14 Sandgate Road is just 0.2 miles away and offers open, level access from the High Street, which improves accessibility for most users.

KCC is committed to providing a full town centre library service for everyone, including children and those with protected characteristics. The EQIAs support the recommendation that the new site will not disadvantage these groups.

The Council has considered feedback from consultations and taken steps to ensure that any negative impacts are minimised, such as ensuring ground floor access and co-locating services for convenience.

The EQIAs are part of a continuous process. KCC will keep monitoring the impact of the decision and remains open to further adjustments if needed.

Data Protection implications:

None

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 13 January 2026.

This version of the PROD is included in the agenda pack for committee members to review ahead of the meeting.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library until and if it has become possible to finalise terms and agree to occupy FOLCA with FHDC.

Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library while the Council works to establish an alternative town centre library site which is not FOLCA or 14 Sandgate Road.

Confirm that the Council will accept Creative Folkestone's proposal to work towards an alternative grant-funded vision for the Grace Hill building which may include the provision of space for the library service, and until this point in time the temporary library will operate at 14 Sandgate Road.

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

Signed

Date

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From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services
Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded services
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth Environment and Transport
Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee - 22 January 2025

Subject: The future of library provision in Folkestone town centre

Decision no: 24/00116

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of Report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All divisions within Folkestone and Hythe district

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary: This paper covers the results of the recent public consultation on the future town centre location of the Folkestone Library and registration service, analysis of the options available and the proposed next steps KCC proposes to progress to find a long-term solution.

Recommendation(s):

The Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to:

- A. APPROVE to issue the draft consultation report set out in Appendix B.
- B. APPROVE to Issue the consultation response set out in Appendix C.
- C. Note that KCC remain committed to a full town centre library provision in Folkestone Town Centre.
- D. APPROVE that further work be undertaken to explore and implement an alternative town centre location for the temporary library and registration service, from which a greater range of services could be delivered, within current budgets, until a permanent library and registration service location is opened in the town centre.
- E. APPROVE that the options for the future of the Grace Hill building which involve KCC retaining responsibility for maintenance and repair of the building, be discounted, acknowledging that this will very likely require KCC to make a disposal of the building to a third party (by way of freehold transfer or grant of a long lease), and progress actions relating to its listing as an asset of community value (ACV), including issuing a notice to Folkestone & Hythe

District Council of intention to dispose (Folkestone & Hythe District Council being the statutory body that administers the ACV process under the Localism Act 2011) This notice will trigger the ACV process.

- F. APPROVE that further work be undertaken on the two remaining options, including further engagement with Creative Folkestone and, if appropriate, other individuals or groups who may make proposals for the Grace Hill building (including through the ACV process).
- G. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport to issue the draft consultation responses
- H. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Community and Regulatory Services to proceed with the work required on the remaining two options, noting that these will be subject to further governance and decision making
- I. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A
- J. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A

1. Introduction

- 1.1 Folkestone town centre library and registration service is located in the Grade II listed building at 2 Grace Hill (referred to throughout as the 'Grace Hill building'). This building had to be closed due to health and safety reasons in December 2022. This necessitated the temporary closure of the service and provision of temporary services and facilities nearby. The latest cost estimate to repair the Grace Hill building is £2.9m. Following the temporary closure, KCC has been exploring the options for the future provision of the service and undertook an eight-week public consultation in 2024.
- 1.2 This report covers the outcomes of the public consultation and recommends next steps.

2. Background

- 2.1 The Library, Registration and Archives (LRA) service is a statutory and highly valued public service which is currently delivered through; a network of 99 libraries, five register offices, five mobile libraries, an archive centre, the stock distribution and support function building at Quarry Wood, the information service 'Ask a Kent Librarian'; and 24-hour accessible online services.
- 2.2 Library authorities have a statutory duty under the Public Libraries and Museums Act 1964 'to provide a comprehensive and efficient library service for all persons who live, work or study in the area'.

- 2.3 Folkestone Library is part of this network and until December 2022, the town centre library and registration service was provided at the Grace Hill building.
- 2.4 The Grace Hill building temporarily closed in December 2022 because it became unsafe for customers and staff. Since then work has been undertaken to, investigate the extent and cost of the works needed to bring the building back into use, exploring ways to fund the works, explore other locations in Folkestone town centre where the library could be located, and consider the future of the Grace Hill building.
- 2.5 While the Grace Hill building has been temporarily closed, temporary service provision has been put in place for service users and resident to access a library and registration service which consists of:
 - Town centre access to the local history collections and public PCs at 'Folkestone Library – Heritage and Digital Access.' This also includes a free library book (and other materials) borrowing and reservation service.
 - Extended branch opening at nearby Wood Avenue and Cheriton libraries.
 - Additional public PCs and an additional location where public can complete birth and death registration appointments at Wood Avenue Library.
 - Promotion of other ways to access free library services online, the Mobile Library and the Home Library Service.
- 2.6 A petition was lodged with KCC and ran from 28/03/2023 to 29/06/2023. This called on KCC to 'fix Folkestone library and re-open it to the public.' The petition was signed by 3,647 people and as a result there was a petition debate at the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee in September 2023
- 2.7 The Grace Hill building was listed by Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) as an asset of community value (ACV) in July 2023.

3. Consultation

- 3.1 An eight-week public consultation on the future of Folkestone Library ran from 18 July to 11 September 2024.

Consultation process

- 3.2 The consultation document was available online at www.kent.gov.uk/folkestonelibrary via our Let's talk Kent website, promoted and highlighted to local partners and stakeholders, and paper copies were available in all Folkestone and Hythe district libraries. It was also available in large print and easy read formats. All consultation and promotional materials included contact details to request hard copies and any other formats or languages.
- 3.3 Alongside the consultation document the following supporting documents were also made available:
 - Consultation stage Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA).
 - Breakdown of the estimated costs to repair the Grace Hill building.

- Frequently Asked Questions, which were updated throughout the consultation period.

3.4 During the consultation period there were 5,180 visits to the consultation webpage by 4,673 visitors.

3.5 Feedback was captured via an online questionnaire and paper copies were available in Folkestone and Hythe district libraries and on request. A word version of the questionnaire was also made available online for anyone who did not want to complete the online version. Emails and letters received during the consultation period have been analysed and considered alongside the questionnaire responses.

3.6 Four in-person drop-in sessions were advertised and took place at Wood Avenue Library and 5 Grace Hill (Folkestone Library – Heritage and Digital Access). These were to raise awareness of the consultation and provide the opportunity for people to ask questions. The sessions were scheduled on different days and times to allow as many people as possible to attend. As well as asking questions face to face, attendees could fill in the questionnaire during drop-in sessions or take away the questionnaire to fill in at home and return via any library.

3.7 A wide range of communication methods were used to promote the consultation, including:

- Press releases at the start and towards the end of the consultation and a half page local newspaper advert.
- Email to key stakeholders including community groups, schools, town and parish councils, local voluntary and charity organisations and library groups and partners.
- Promotion via the LRA staff and displays in all the Folkestone and Hythe district libraries.
- An invite to 549 people and organisations registered with Let's talk Kent who had expressed an interest in hearing about new consultations on libraries in the Folkestone and Hythe district.
- Posters displayed at the Grace Hill building and other public buildings in Folkestone.
- Social media posts from Folkestone Library, Kent Libraries and KCC's corporate social media accounts. This included paid Facebook adverts to extend the reach of the consultation beyond those who follow KCC's channels.
- Promotional links from the Folkestone Library service webpage on Kent.gov.
- Articles in KCC's residents' e-newsletter.

3.8 The Save Folkestone Library group and other members of the community also undertook extensive promotional activity. They organised handing out of the promotional posters, took paper copies of the questionnaire to distribute, highlighted the consultation on social media and organised several events during the period. KCC is grateful to the group and all local partners in ensuring that the consultation was promoted as widely as possible.

3.9 The consultation received 600 responses. 510 were submitted online, and 86 questionnaires were submitted in hard copy or by email. An additional four emails and letters were received, and this feedback has been analysed alongside responses provided via the consultation questionnaire.

Consultation proposals

3.10 The consultation explained that, since the temporary closure of the library in December 2022, KCC had been investigating the extent and cost of works needed to bring the Grace Hill building back into use, exploring ways to fund the repairs, looking at other locations in Folkestone town centre where the library could be located, and considering the future of the Grace Hill building. The consultation explained the options KCC had been considering and that, while these were at a formative stage, they had developed to the point where KCC wished to seek the public's views before progressing any further.

3.11 The consultation explained that KCC's preferred option, at that stage, was to:

- Permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the Folkestone town centre library and registration service; and
- Take forward work with Folkestone & Hythe District Council on moving the service to the FOLCA¹ building on the high street.

3.12 The consultation addressed the following alternative options:

- Continue with temporary provision permanently and exit the Grace Hill building.
- Make repairs to the Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library within the Grace Hill building and co-locate with other services.
- Relocate the library service to another existing KCC building.
- Sell or issue a long lease to another party and then lease back part of the building. It was noted that Creative Folkestone had expressed an interest to KCC in taking forward an idea/proposal of this nature (see Section 6 below).
- Move the library service to an alternative leasehold site.

4. Overview of Consultation Feedback

4.1 Lake Market Research have independently analysed consultation responses. Cabinet Members have been briefed on the results, but Cabinet Committee Members are invited to carefully consider the full consultation report as set out at Appendix B.

4.2 In summary:

- 55% of consultees disagreed with KCC's proposal to permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the library and registration service, while 38% of consultees agreed.

¹ This is the name of the building owned by Folkestone & Hythe District Council, which was the former Debenhams store on the High Street in Folkestone.

- The most common reasons for disagreement with this proposal related to how the Grace Hill building is seen locally, for example its historic and heritage character, the fact that it is a listed building, as well as the view that the building should be restored and preserved as a library. Consultees noted that Grace Hill was purpose built as a library, and that it was gifted to Folkestone as a public asset. Some consultees also preferred the location of Grace Hill to any other in the town centre.
- The most common reason for agreement was that the library should be in a central, convenient location, and that moving the library as proposed would be beneficial to the town. Some consultees expressed general agreement with moving the library to another location. Other consultees in agreement referred to understanding the financial considerations.
- When asked about agreement or disagreement with KCC's preferred option to move the library and registration service to FOLCA, 51% disagreed and 43% agreed.
 - The most common reasons for disagreement included specific factors relating to the Grace Hill building and a desire to restore the building as a library. Some consultees also expressed concerns about the suitability of the FOLCA building, the cost of moving to FOLCA, and concerns about KCC renting rather than owning a library building.
 - The most common reasons for agreement again related to a desire for the library to be in a central, convenient location. Some expressed the view that FOLCA would be accessible, including by public transport, had good parking nearby, and would attract more people to use the service.

- 4.3 Several other specific themes emerged from consultation feedback which have informed the consideration of next steps, as explained elsewhere in this report.
- 4.4 Cabinet Committee are invited to review Appendix C. This is the consultation response and reflects the options analysis and proposals set out in this report.

5. Engagement with Creative Folkestone

- 5.1 Prior to, during and following the consultation Creative Folkestone continued, with the support of others, to express an interest in the future of the library service at the Grace Hill building. Creative Folkestone is an independent arts charity established in 2002 to regenerate Folkestone and the surrounding area, with a focus on 'making it a great place for people to live, work, study, play and visit through creativity'.
- 5.2 Creative Folkestone has indicated that it may be prepared to take over responsibility for the Grace Hill building from KCC by way of a disposal (either a gift or long-term lease at peppercorn rent), with the intention of allowing it, as a charity, to raise funding that may not be available to KCC to address the physical condition of the building. This idea is linked to Creative Folkestone's broader proposals for a Creative Campus. Creative Folkestone envisages that

the library could remain on the ground floor of the Grace Hill building, with other parts of the building put to community use and use as a space for artists. KCC has engaged with Creative Folkestone on this since late 2023.

5.3 Following the consultation, officers met with Creative Folkestone to further discuss their ideas with a view to ensuring that KCC has full information about the proposed approach, was aware of any changes, and to explain officers' working views. The meeting was constructive with a shared understanding that further discussion would be needed to further develop. The purpose of further engagement is to enable KCC to take an informed decision regarding this option in due course.

6. KCC Financial Position and Capital Maintenance Budget

6.1 Like many other councils, KCC is facing significant financial challenges. Since 2011, KCC has had to make almost £1 billion in savings and income generation to manage services and assets within the funding available to us. However, the demand for and cost of providing services was such that, for the first time in 22 years, KCC ended the 2022-23 financial year with a significant overspend of £44.4 million, followed by an overspend of £9.6m in 2023-24. KCC funded these overspends by using reserves, but this is not a sustainable solution.

6.2 The biggest pressures were related to services for the most vulnerable residents in the areas of adult and children's social care, and home to school transport. These services are continuing to present financial pressures in 2024-25 and again KCC is forecast to overspend. We estimate the additional demand and costs for these service areas alone will total £83 million in 2025-26.

6.3 The draft budget for 2025-26 identifies core funded spending growth of £150.4m, compared to funding increase of £96.5m (Council Tax, Business Rates and General Grant increases/growth) so once other minor adjustments are reflected, this leaves a shortfall of £62.7m that needs to be closed through savings and income. A balanced budget is being proposed to County Council for 2025-26 but this relies on several one-off initiatives that require base funding in 2026-27 onwards, as well as any additional savings and income that will be necessary in latter years as core funded spending growth continues to exceed available funding increases each year. We are continuing to look across all our services to identify where savings can be made, and income can be raised. Spending controls are in place and difficult decisions across KCC's services, and regarding the disposal of surplus buildings, are having to be considered. All of this highlights the significant financial pressure KCC remains under.

6.4 At present the annual capital budget for maintenance of all KCC property assets, is £3m just to maintain the status quo, alongside which KCC faces an estimated £159m backlog of maintenance and condition works across all buildings. An additional £5.6m has been allocated in 2025-26 and 2026-27 to complete some of the most urgent back-log maintenance issues. This however falls significantly short of what is required across the estate and at the present time it is necessary to prioritise spend to support safeguarding and essential services such as care homes and highways depots. No funding was able to be allocated to the Grace Hill library. In 2024/25 an allocation of £500k was made for works across KCC's 99 libraries, nine country parks and seven picnic sites.

6.5 The financial climate of local government and KCC are such that unfortunately it has and continues to be necessary to consider difficult decisions across a range of service areas and must also consider disposal of buildings to meet the financial challenge.

6.6 Budget papers for the 2025-26 financial year have been taken to all KCC Cabinet Committees. The proposed budget contains specific proposals for savings and income with a view to offsetting the growth pressures facing the Council and for which an increase in Council Tax, Business Rates and General Grants is insufficient to meet the budget gap. The proposed budget for 2025-26 will be presented to County Council in February 2025 and covers both revenue and capital budgets.

7. Critical Success Factors and Key Considerations

7.1 The critical success factors and key considerations which options are considered against are as outlined below:

- Service requirements: does the option meet LRA's service's requirements? These are:
 - Location. It is important to be somewhere visible and accessible, which is why high street locations are generally the service's preference. They are where most people will go or be able to get to. Libraries can play an important role in wider high street regeneration. As a rule, we want to be in a location that lots of people will naturally pass so that we can advertise and be visible for those who are not yet users of the service with the desire that they do become users. Where the best location is in a community may change over time and we should always keep this under review.
 - Space. We need adequate and affordable space to meet service needs.
 - Partnership potential. The service is in general keen to co-locate with other customer and community services. This brings more services to people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who do not currently use them. There is extensive evidence of successful partnership working and co-locations across Kent.
- Financial factors: How much will it cost KCC, both in terms of capital and revenue both short and long term? Does the option rely on securing grant funding? If so, what timescale could we be looking at? Will the option generate any income for KCC, given the already-described financial challenge facing the Council?

7.2 Other key considerations are:

- Deliverability. Can the option be delivered and what is the timeline for deliverability?
- Environmental. Does the option reduce the carbon footprint therefore supporting KCC's net zero target?

8. Options Analysis

Overview

8.1 Each of the options identified in the consultation document have been assessed against the critical success factors and key considerations above. Taking this into account and the outcomes and feedback from the public consultation it is proposed that the following options should be discounted:

- Continue with temporary provision permanently and exit the Grace Hill building.
- Make repairs to the Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library and co-locate with other services there.
- Relocate the library service to another existing KCC building.

8.2 It is recommended that further consideration given to the following two options:

- Selling or issuing a long lease of the Grace Hill building to another party, and then leasing back part of the building. This option would enable KCC to relinquish its interest in and responsibility for maintenance and repair of the Grace Hill building, whilst retaining the library and registration service at the Grace Hill building. This option is the subject of ongoing engagement with Creative Folkestone. This option may also involve the consideration of proposals from other individuals or groups, should any such proposals be made (including through the ACV process).
- KCC's original preferred option to exit the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the LRA service.

Options analysis detail

Continue with temporary provision permanently and exit the Grace Hill building

8.3 This option would be the most financially advantageous, as it would not involve additional capital spend on repairing the Grace Hill building and enable KCC to realise the capital value of the asset. It would be deliverable (it is the option currently in place) and would help KCC achieve its net zero target (reflecting the smaller library space currently being made available).

8.4 However, this option would not meet the service's requirement and therefore only meets one of the critical success factors. The current temporary provision does not allow full library and registration services to be delivered from one town centre location, it is scattered across the town, and beyond the branch libraries there is no town centre book browsing or children's library. The current temporary provision was never intended to be a permanent replacement for the services delivered from the Grace Hill building, and this remains the case.

8.5 Consultees also raised concerns about the current temporary provision. A number of consultees, when asked about the alternative options for Folkestone library, expressed the view that the current temporary provision is not suitable

for the long term. Others expressed the view that permanent library facilities were required as soon as possible, with no preference as to location. A clear message from the consultation feedback is that people wanted to see either the re-opening of the library at the Grace Hill building or the service move to a single permanent alternative location.

- 8.6 It is therefore recommended that this option should be discounted.

Make repairs to the Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library and co-locate with other services

- 8.7 This option is not considered financially affordable, notwithstanding the strong views and wishes of many consultees concerning repairing and re-opening the Grace Hill building. This is because the cost of undertaking necessary repairs to the building, with a view to re-opening the library making the building sound for the short-term, is estimated to be £2.9m (as at the time of consultation). This is based on an assessment undertaken in May 2024 by a Chartered Building Surveyor. Estimated costs may change over time.
- 8.8 As explained above, KCC is faced with significant financial challenges. We have had to make difficult decisions in a number of areas regarding service provision, the disposal of other assets in KCC's estate, and regarding the amount we spend on capital maintenance.
- 8.9 Given the age, construction and listed status of the building, there is a risk that significant additional costs may be required in future or that there may be a closure in the future should there be another significant failure.
- 8.10 Many consultees disagreed with KCC's proposal to leave the Grace Hill building and felt that KCC should find a way to repair the building. When asked whether they agreed or disagreed with the proposal to permanently leave Grace Hill and find an alternative town centre location for the service, roughly a third of consultees raised points relating to the broader value of the building as, for example, a historic, attractive, community, listed building, and a landmark in Folkestone. A similar proportion expressed the view that the building should be restored and preserved as a library. Around a fifth of consultees expressed views connected with seeing the building as a public space which belongs (and was gifted) to the community. Some consultees expressed a preference for the location of the building at Grace Hill (albeit fewer in number than those who indicated support for a high street location).
- 8.11 A number of potential ideas for enabling KCC to retain ownership of the building and make repairs were proposed in response to the consultation. For example, it was suggested that KCC could fundraise with the local community, and that KCC could reach out to local businesses to make the cost of repairs cheaper as well as using volunteers to undertake the works. It was also suggested that KCC should apply to other sources of grant funding and that other uses could be made of the space at Grace Hill, some of which (such as venue hire and a café) could raise revenue. Given the £2.9m estimated cost of the repairs, and the complex nature of any restoration project, which would need to be undertaken by expert contractors, we do not consider these

options to be viable. The alternative ideas suggested by consultees are further considered as part of Appendix C.

- 8.12 The service considers that there are both advantages and disadvantages of the space at Grace Hill. The building maintenance issues have impacted on the ability to deliver a reliable and quality service over the years, for example unplanned closures or necessitating buckets around the building to capture water ingress. It does however provide sufficient space from which to deliver the service, and is an existing, known building. There may be some scope for revising and improving the layout to maximise space. On the other hand, the structure, nature and layout of the building has previously prevented KCC from taking forward the co-location of KCC services or maximising the use of the space, adult education for example. Overall, the service has a preference for a high street location, which it considers would help make the service more visible and attract more customers.
- 8.13 Regarding environmental considerations, while some improvements could be made, due to the age and construction of the Grace Hill building this option would not significantly contribute to achieving KCC's net zero target.
- 8.14 The main deliverability challenge for KCC in regard to the Grace Hill building is financial, as explained above. Cabinet members as well as Cabinet Committee should have careful regard to consultees' views, and the other factors above. Taking everything into account and particularly the financial circumstances facing KCC, it is felt that spending £2.9m on a single building is not justifiable or a responsible use of KCC funds.
- 8.15 It is therefore recommended that this option should be discounted.

Relocate the library service to another existing KCC building.

- 8.16 Opportunities have been explored to relocate the service to other KCC services in Folkestone town centre, namely: The Cube (KCC Adult Education); the KCC Family Hub buildings around Tontine Street; and the KCC offices at Cheriton House, Cheriton High Street.
- 8.17 None of these buildings would provide enough space taking into account other service usage of these buildings from which to deliver the library service or offer an improved location in the town. Additionally, Cheriton House is not in Folkestone town centre.
- 8.18 There was no significant support within consultation responses for a move to any existing KCC building in Folkestone.
- 8.19 From a review of the KCC buildings there is no suitable KCC space available which makes this option undeliverable.
- 8.20 We therefore recommend that this option should be discounted.

Sell or issue a long lease to another party and then lease back part of the building

- 8.21 This option would involve selling the building or granting a long lease to another party on the basis that KCC could lease back part of the building for the library to use. Creative Folkestone is the only potential partner so far to have proposed taking forward this type of arrangement.
- 8.22 As explained above, many consultees felt that the Grace Hill building should be repaired and remain as a library, often highlighting the building's specific characteristics. Some consultees also preferred the location of the Grace Hill library to the high street. 17 consultees (3% of those answering the question), when explaining their agreement or disagreement with the proposal to permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative location on the high street, expressed a view that KCC should consider the Creative Folkestone proposal. When asked to provide comments on alternative options, 25 consultees (7% of those answering the question) said that KCC should consider the Creative Folkestone proposal, and a further 14 (4%) gave positive responses regarding a sale and leaseback. 64 consultees (18% of those answering the same question) indicated that KCC should share the Grace Hill building with partner services as a way of keeping the library there. A smaller number of consultees referred to the Creative Folkestone proposal when providing any further comments not already covered in their consultation response.
- 8.23 This option is subject to ongoing engagement with Creative Folkestone and may also involve the consideration of proposals from other individuals or groups, should any such proposals be made (including through the ACV process). Continuing to explore this option is consistent with important elements of consultation feedback. Officers intend to return to Cabinet Members and Cabinet Committee with further information and analysis in due course.

Permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the library

- 8.24 This remains a potential option for returning a full town centre library and registration service to Folkestone. The consultation explained that, following its purchase of the former Debenhams store on the high street, now named FOLCA, Folkestone & Hythe District Council's (FHDC) ambition was to deliver a mixed-use building in the heart of Folkestone. KCC officers have engaged with FHDC's officers around the potential for the library to be part of the project which is looking at concept design for a combination of public sector, community and commercial space. KCC's proposal, subject to consultation feedback, was to take forward the detailed work needed with the District Council to realise this project. If, for any reason it was not possible to progress a move to FOLCA, then the consultation explained that KCC would commit to finding an alternative town centre site.
- 8.25 This option would meet the service's requirements. The FOLCA building could provide a public library space that is equivalent to the public library and registration spaces at Grace Hill. It would offer potential advantages in terms of the ability to develop a new modern library layout design and the potential to work and collaborate with other public services. It would also offer advantages in terms of its location. A high street location for the library service

would bring greater visibility and opportunities to attract customers to the service. If, for any reason, it was not possible to take forward the FOLCA building, officers would look at other leasehold sites available on or close to the High Street. Officers have initially identified some potential alternative leasehold sites.

8.26 This option would be financially viable. It would avoid the need to spend an estimated £2.9m on repairing the Grace Hill building which, as explained above, is not considered to be affordable given KCC's financial position. If the library service were to leave the Grace Hill building, the building would be declared surplus to requirements, enabling KCC to potentially realise a capital receipt, after following the ACV process. This option would also avoid the risk of exposure to significant future maintenance liabilities if KCC remained responsible for the Grace Hill building. KCC currently estimates that the capital investment needed to move into the FOLCA building and transform the empty space into a functioning library would be around £150,000 to £200,000. The service and building operating costs (including staffing and service charge) would be expected to be similar to how much it cost us at Grace Hill.

8.27 Officers assess that this option is deliverable, although there are areas of uncertainty. The FOLCA option is subject to more detailed development, working with the District Council. Prior to consultation, officers at KCC and FHDC drew up indicative costs and principles of a potential lease arrangement. Further details would need to be developed and formal agreement would be needed. FHDC submitted a consultation response making clear that its first preference was for KCC to make repairs to, and re-open the Grace Hill building, co-locating with other service, with a second preference of selling and leasing back part of the building for the library service. FHDC explained that:

If KCC decides against these options, then our preference is the library service be retained in Folkestone town centre. However, this option should not be considered without full public disclosure of both the outcome of this consultation together with the basis for the final decision made.

It is only at that point that this Council would be able to consider progressing a decision about using Folca for the library and registration services.

8.28 Some consultees raised concerns about the cost and time involved in converting FOLCA or another town centre site, including specific concerns about the condition and suitability of the FOLCA building and possible maintenance issues. Any building issues would need to be addressed as part of the project. Ultimately, responsibility for the building would rest with FHDC as owners of the building. It is also acknowledged that time would be needed to complete all necessary works and that overall timescales for delivery are still to be confirmed and subject to FHDC's governance and processes.

8.29 Relocating to the FOLCA building would be likely to reduce KCC's carbon footprint relative to remaining at the Grace Hill building. The same would likely be true of an alternative town centre site.

8.30 There was support for KCC's proposed option among a significant proportion of consultees. While more consultees disagreed than agreed, 38% of consultees indicated that they agreed with KCC's proposal to permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the library service (21% agreeing, and 17% tending to agree). The most common reason for agreement related to the view that the library should be located in a convenient town centre location. A significant minority of consultees also agreed with KCC's proposals given the financial reasons described in the consultation. Some consultees expressed enthusiasm for the FOLCA project on the basis that FOLCA is itself an important building for the town centre. 43% of consultees indicated they agree with KCC's preferred option to move the service to FOLCA. Again the most common reason for agreement related to the location of FOLCA (including access, parking and transport).

8.31 50% of consultees disagreed with the proposal to leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the library and registration service, and 51% disagreed with KCC's preferred option to move the library and registration service to FOLCA. The most common reasons for disagreement with the proposal to leave Grace Hill are discussed above (see paragraph 8.10). Consultees also raised specific concerns about the suitability of the FOLCA building (see paragraph 8.28 above).

8.32 Considering KCC's critical success factors, other relevant considerations, and consultation feedback, it is considered that KCC's proposal for the service to permanently leave the Grace Hill site and find an alternative town centre location remains viable, and should not be discounted.

ACV Status of the Grace Hill building and Recommendation to Issue Notice of Intention to Dispose

8.33 As explained above, it is recommended that further consideration should be given to the two options referred to at paragraph 8.2.

8.34 It should be noted that both of these involve inherent uncertainties and would require detailed work with partners over an extended period of time, including on legal agreements, funding, and redevelopment works.

8.35 Both recommended remaining options would very likely involve a disposal of the Grace Hill building to a third party (by way of freehold transfer or grant of a long lease) in line with KCC's **disposal policy** (link to policy). This would free KCC of responsibility for maintenance and repair of the Grace Hill building which would pass to the third party.

8.36 The Grace Hill building is listed as an asset of community value (ACV) under relevant provisions of the Localism Act 2011. KCC therefore cannot enter into a "relevant disposal" of the building unless a number of statutory conditions are met. A relevant disposal is a disposal of the freehold estate of the land with vacant possession or the grant of a lease of a term of at least 25 years. Both recommended remaining options would very likely involve KCC entering into a relevant disposal.

8.37 Given the above, it is recommended that KCC now issues a notice of intention to dispose to Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC). This would trigger the ACV process. Separately, bids would be invited on an all-enquiries basis including freehold disposal or via a long-leasehold structure and would be compliant with KCC's disposal policy. KCC would invite bidders to set out the detail of proposals that could allow the LRA service to remain in part of the building. This would enable consideration of all proposals regarding the building. It would also allow both the recommended remaining options to continue, and officers to return to Cabinet Members and Cabinet Committee with further information and analysis, and recommendations for decision-making.

8.38 Issuing a notice of intention to dispose will trigger an initial six week moratorium period, during which any community interest group may submit to FHDC a written request to be treated as a potential bidder for the land. If no such request is received from a community interest group within the six week moratorium, then from an ACV perspective KCC will be free to dispose of the Grace Hill building in line with its disposal policy. However, if a written request is received within the initial moratorium, it will trigger the six-month 'full moratorium period' during which KCC may not enter into a relevant disposal other than to a community interest group. KCC is not obliged to accept any bid from a community interest group. At the end of the full moratorium, from an ACV perspective KCC will be free to dispose of the Grace Hill building as it wishes in line with its disposal policy.

9. Commercial Bids

9.1 Under section 123 of the Local Government Act KCC has a statutory duty to obtain best consideration in the disposal of land, unless the purpose for which the land is to be disposed is likely to contribute to the promotion or improvement of economic, social, or environmental well-being. KCC's approach in relation to freehold asset disposals is set out in the Council's disposal policy, including how value in relation to KCC statutory services can be considered alongside commercial bids as part of an open marketing process. KCC will need to consider any potential disposal in light of its disposal policy in due course.

10. Temporary Provision

10.1 As explained above, temporary town centre library and registration service provision has been put in place following the closure of the library in December 2022. Some consultees raised concerns about the sufficiency of this as well as the time it was taking in bringing back a full town centre library and registration offer. Cabinet Committee is asked to note that either of the two recommended remaining options will take a significant period, possibly years, to deliver.

10.2 It is therefore proposed to explore further and implement an alternative town centre location where temporary library and registration services could better be delivered with a greater range of services, within current budgets, until a permanent library and registration service location is opened in the town centre. This could include a single site temporary library and registration

service which could include a children's library, public PCs, birth and death registration, the heritage collections and lending book collections for example..

11. Legal Implications

- 11.1 Cabinet Committee is asked to note KCC's ongoing statutory duty relating to the provision of a 'comprehensive and efficient' library service across the County. Officers consider that the current temporary provision in Folkestone meets this duty although, as above, we recommend that further enhancements of the temporary provision are explored.
- 11.2 The Committee is also asked to note the legal requirement that KCC gives conscientious consideration to consultation responses. Committee Members should give careful thought to the analysis of consultation responses in this report, the analysis set out in the draft consultation response at Appendix C, and the consultation report at Appendix B.
- 11.3 KCC must comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty in s. 149 of the Equality Act 2010. Cabinet Members are referred to the Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) at Appendix D.
- 11.4 The statutory requirements relating to the status of the Grace Hill building as an asset of community value are covered above.

12. Equalities implications

- 12.1 An EqIA has been undertaken for this project which has been updated following the public consultation. The key findings from this support the recommendations of this paper:
 - KCC is committed to providing a full town centre library service for everyone. This is restated to mitigate any concerns raised that certain customer groups e.g. children would be disadvantaged.
 - There was feedback that any move of the library away from Grace Hill may increase is distance from the immediate area and make the service less accessible for those with protected characteristics in that area. Whilst the immediate location in Grace Hill does have high levels of deprivation, it is considered that a high street location does have the advantages of greater accessibility across the district for those that have protected characteristics.
 - Equally there was also feedback that a town centre location would be an improvement with parking and public transport links close by.
 - Any design of future library and registration space for Folkestone would consider feedback to ensure that wherever it is located we deliver an inclusive and accessible space for all.
 - The EQIA will continue to be developed as part of next steps.

- 12.2 The full EQIA is included as Appendix D

13. Financial Implications

- 13.1 The £2.9m estimated costs are simply to repair the building. As explained in the options analysis, spending £2.9m on repairing just one building is not justifiable. KCC also needs to be mindful of the risk that significant additional costs may be required in future, given the age, construction, and listed status of the building. It is recommended that other options (i.e. continuing with the current temporary provision and relocating the service to another existing KCC building) are discounted for non-financial reasons. The financial implications of the recommended remaining options will be further addressed in a future decision report.
- 13.2 The Best Value Duty is a statutory requirement for local authorities under Part 1 of the Local Government Act 1972 and 1999. The financial context of the Council remains challenging, and any decision will be taken considering both the capital and revenue financial position in determining the best value solution.

14. Governance

- 14.1 Future Key Decision paper to come to Cabinet Committee on the location of the permanent provision once further work on the recommended remaining options has been undertaken.

15. Conclusions

- 15.1 While recognising consultees' views about the Grace Hill building, it is not considered that making the necessary repairs to the building is financially justifiable.
- 15.2 It is recommended to undertake further work on the two remaining options set out at paragraph 8.2 above.
- 15.3 Both these options would very likely involve a disposal of the building to a third party, which would free KCC of responsibility for maintenance and repair of the Grace Hill building. It is recommended that KCC now issues a Notice of Intention to Dispose in respect of the Grace Hill building to FHDC. This would allow further work to continue on both remaining options. It would also allow KCC to consider any further proposals or options that come forward.
- 15.4 Officers intend to continue to explore other alternative town centre locations including continued exploration of the FOLCA option with FHDC.
- 15.5 It is also recognised as set out in the feedback the desire to see town centre library provision return to a single location as soon as possible. It is proposed to look at the options for improved temporary provision while we take forward work on a permanent solution.
- 15.6 Officers propose to return to Cabinet Members and Cabinet Committee in due course with further information and analysis to enable an informed decision to be made about the future of Folkestone Library and the registration service.

16. Recommendation(s):

16.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to:

- A. APPROVE to issue the draft consultation report set out in Appendix B.
- B. APPROVE to Issue the consultation response set out in Appendix C.
- C. Note that KCC remain committed to a full town centre library provision in Folkestone Town Centre.
- D. APPROVE that further work be undertaken to explore and implement an alternative town centre location for the temporary library and registration service, from which a greater range of services could be delivered, within current budgets, until a permanent library and registration service location is opened in the town centre.
- E. APPROVE that the options for the future of the Grace Hill building which involve KCC retaining responsibility for maintenance and repair of the building, be discounted, acknowledging that this will very likely require KCC to make a disposal of the building to a third party (by way of freehold transfer or grant of a long lease), and progress actions relating to its listing as an asset of community value (ACV), including issuing a notice to Folkestone & Hythe District Council of intention to dispose (Folkestone & Hythe District Council being the statutory body that administers the ACV process under the Localism Act 2011) This notice will trigger the ACV process.
- F. APPROVE that further work be undertaken on the two remaining options, including further engagement with Creative Folkestone and, if appropriate, other individuals or groups who may make proposals for the Grace Hill building (including through the ACV process).
- G. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport to issue the draft consultation responses
- H. DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Community and Regulatory Services to proceed with the work required on the remaining two options, noting that these will be subject to further governance and decision making
- I. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A
- J. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A

18. Appendices

Appendix A- Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix B- Folkestone Library consultation report

Appendix C- Draft KCC consultation response themes consideration
and alternative proposal and alternative ideas consideration.

Appendix D- Folkestone Library EQIA

19. Contact details

<p>Report Authors: James Pearson Job title: Head of Libraries, Registration & Libraries Telephone number: 03000 414923 Email address: james.pearson@kent.gov.uk</p> <p>Rebecca Anderson Job title: Head of Business and Information Strategy and Assurance Telephone number: 03000 417731 Email address: Rebecca.anderson2@kent.gov.uk</p>	<p>Relevant Directors: Stephanie Holt-Castle Job title: Director for Growth and Communities Telephone number: 03000 412064 Email address: stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk</p> <p>Rebecca Spore Job title: Director of Infrastructure Telephone number: 03000 416716 Email address: Rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</p>
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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY:

Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory services

DECISION NO:

24/00116

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision

The future of library provision in Folkestone town centre

Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services I agree to:

- A) APPROVE to issue the draft consultation report set out in Appendix B.
- B) APPROVE to Issue the consultation response set out in Appendix C.
- C) Note that KCC remain committed to a full town centre library provision in Folkestone Town Centre.
- D) APPROVE that further work be undertaken to explore and implement an alternative town centre location for the temporary library and registration service, from which a greater range of services could be delivered, within current budgets, until a permanent library and registration service location is opened in the town centre.
- E) APPROVE that the options for the future of the Grace Hill building which involve KCC retaining responsibility for maintenance and repair of the building, be discounted, acknowledging that this will very likely require KCC to make a disposal of the building to a third party (by way of freehold transfer or grant of a long lease), and progress actions relating to its listing as an asset of community value (ACV), including issuing a notice to Folkestone & Hythe District Council of intention to dispose (Folkestone & Hythe District Council being the statutory body that administers the ACV process under the Localism Act 2011) This notice will trigger the ACV process.
- F) APPROVE that further work be undertaken on the two remaining options, including further engagement with Creative Folkestone and, if appropriate, other individuals or groups who may make proposals for the Grace Hill building (including through the ACV process).
- G) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport to issue the draft consultation responses
- H) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Community and Regulatory Services to proceed with the work required on the remaining two options, noting that these will be subject to further governance and decision making
- I) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.
- J) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

Folkestone town centre library and registration service is located in the Grade II listed building at 2 Grace Hill (referred to throughout as the 'Grace Hill building'). This building had to be closed due to health and safety reasons in December 2022. This necessitated the temporary closure of the service and provision of temporary services and facilities nearby. The latest cost estimate to repair the Grace Hill building is £2.9m. Following the temporary closure, KCC has been exploring the options for the future provision of the service and undertook an eight-week public consultation in 2024.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee considered and endorsed the proposal at their meeting on 22 January 2025.

Following due consideration and discussion at the Cabinet Committee, the Cabinet Member has reviewed and updated the decision wording for bullet E. The original wording was ambiguous as it implied that Kent County Council was giving the building to Folkestone Hythe District Council, rather than issuing a notice to FHDC to trigger the ACV process.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

- Continue with temporary provision permanently and exit the Grace Hill building. This option would not meet the service's requirement for location. The current temporary provision does not allow full library and registration services to be delivered from one town centre location, it is scattered across the town, and beyond the branch libraries there is no town centre book browsing or children's library. The current temporary provision was never intended to be a permanent replacement for the services delivered from the Grace Hill building, and this remains the case
- Make repairs to the Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library and co-locate with other services there. This option is not considered financially affordable
- Relocate the library service to another existing KCC building. Opportunities have been explored to relocate the service to other KCC buildings in Folkestone town centre, however, none of these buildings would provide enough space taking into account other service usage of these buildings from which to deliver the library service, or offer an improved location in the town.

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

None

Clair Bell

29/01/2025

.....
signed

.....
date

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Subject: Appendix D1 - The future of library provision in Folkestone Town Centre and the next steps for the 2 Grace Hill building

Decision no: 25/00104

Key Decision: Yes, affects more than 2 Electoral Division and Involves Significant Service Development

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Cabinet Members for Community and Regulatory services Key Decision 22 January 2025 - 24/00116

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All divisions within Folkestone and Hythe district

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Page 283

1. Summary

This paper should be read in conjunction with the main committee report.

2. Options Appraisal

The table on the subsequent pages sets out KCC Officer analysis of the options outlined in the main paper. As noted in the main paper, it is proposed that option 1A is selected and all others discounted. Additional commercially sensitive considerations are outlined in appendix D2.

OPTION 1A

Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in-line with adopted policy. Confirm that, for the foreseeable future, 14 Sandgate Road will provide the library and registration facility in Folkestone town centre.

Service Requirements: Location/Space/Partnership Potential	<p>Location: This option would locate the library on the high street where it would expect to benefit from good passing footfall.</p> <p>Space: The space requirements for the full offer library and registration service can be accommodated as covered in all the options. This includes all elements of the lending library, the local history collection and a children's library. Spatial allocation and layouts have been agreed with services.</p> <p>Partnership potential: This option allows for the colocation of the Adult Education Service (CLS) as well as space available for another service (potentially ASCH) and hot desking capacity. This would bring more KCC services together making it easier for people to access multiple services in one location and increase the number of desks available to staff, providing both customer service access and KCC efficiency savings by maximising use of estate.</p>
Financial: Page 284	<p>Capital: Works have been tendered and planning consent obtained as part of the delivery of the temporary library, approved under 24/00166 – these works will be undertaken irrespective of the option selected.</p> <p>Minor additional fitout spend may be required in Q3 2028/29 if continued occupation of 14 Sandgate Road is planned. This investment likely to be lower in cost than the FOLCA capital investment option as majority of works have already been undertaken as part of the temporary provision.</p> <p>Revenue: Lease terms agreed with landlord. KCC is sole occupant of building and revenue costs of operation can be met within existing corporate landlord revenue budgets for respective services. Building is of modern construction, and KCC's financial exposure to service charge is therefore more limited when compared to other options, such as 2A, which involve occupation of buildings with more heritage fabric with a correspondingly higher maintenance burden.</p>
Deliverability:	<p>As this location was chosen as the temporary library location, works are already programmed with a timetable to completion in Spring 2026 with library occupation commencing immediately, other services would begin to occupy during Q2 of 2026.</p> <p>Highly deliverable given building will open for temporary service delivery from Spring 2026 and secure future under negotiated leasehold. KCC has secured lease with 15yr term and 5yr tenant only breaks providing KCC with ongoing flexibility. If this site does become the permanent library in the future then there will be some cost to look at furniture and layout on the basis this has been developed on the basis of being a temporary location to a last a few years at present.</p>

Environmental:	<p>This would be a smaller footprint than the Grace Hill building, which would reduce KCC's carbon footprint in line with Asset Management Strategy objectives. Also, the building would be more environmentally efficient.</p> <p>EPC A – 25 rating.</p>
Ownership Structure and Commercial Arrangements	<p>Long lease terms agreed in line with existing budgets.</p> <p>Adheres to principles of key decision 24/00116.</p>
Compatibility with key decision 24/00116:	
Consultation feedback	<p>While not an explicit option included within the 2024 consultation the process invited views on leaving the Grace Hill building for an alternative town centre location and therefore the Council can consider public feedback in respect of the current option 1A. At the time of the public consultation 600 people responded. We asked responders to give their views on KCC's proposal to permanently leave the Folkestone Library building at 2 Grace Hill and find an alternative town centre location for the Library and Registration service. 38% indicated they agreed with KCC's proposal and over half- 55% indicated they disagreed.</p> <p>The main themes covered in responses to this question included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grace Hill is Historic/Part of Folkestone Heritage/listed- 34% - Grace Hill should be repaired /restored- 30% - Library should be in a good location/central/convenient/town centre- 21% - Grace Hill is suitable and purpose built to be a library- 15% - Grace Hill has been left to deteriorate by KCC- 13% - Prefer the current Grace Hill location/accessible- 11% - Highlighting repair/maintenance costs are high at Grace Hill- 10% - Cost effective to move to town centre/recognising KCC doesn't have money for repairs- 10% <p>Further detail is included in the full consultation feedback report.</p>

OPTION 1B

Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library until and if it has become possible to finalise terms and agree to occupy FOLCA with FHDC.

Service Requirements: Location/Space/Partnership Potential	<p>Location: This option would locate the library on the high street where it would be expected to benefit from good passing footfall.</p> <p>Space: The future space requirements for the full offer library and registration service can be accommodated. While subject to further detailed work this space would enable the development of a new library layout to reflect the ever-evolving nature of the modern library service. The space proposed for the library and registration service in FOLCA would be the same as requested for all other options covered in this document.</p> <p>Partnership potential: Co-locating with other public sector and community services would bring more services together making it easier for people to access services in one place and should enable more use and take-up of all services. Co-location benefits have softened as prospect of other non-commercial occupiers is in question. Depending on space available within the building KCC may have the opportunity to consider relocating non-library services to the building, however this would need to be supported by an independent business case.</p>
Financial: Page 6	<p>Capital: The capital investment needed to move the library and registration service to FOLCA and transform the empty space into a functioning library is estimated to cost around £200,000, however this figure would need to be reviewed once the actual space within the building, and its condition, had been confirmed.</p> <p>Revenue: Moving to FOLCA would reduce future maintenance liabilities and would support reducing KCC revenue costs. The costs to maintain the library in FOLCA would be lower than at Grace Hill as it will be a newly refurbished space, with a more efficient footprint. The building is not listed so does not have the limitations that there are at Grace Hill and KCC would only be responsible for the area it uses and not all of the expensive building maintenance (such as the roof, boiler etc), recharged to KCC via service charge.</p> <p>Ongoing costs anticipated to be higher than 14 Sandgate Road as service charge liability will be linked to refurbishment specification which is currently unconfirmed. Direct comparison between open 1B and 2A is problematic given the unfinalised nature of capital works to either building which may help to mitigate ongoing running costs.</p>

Deliverability:	<p>At the current time FHDC's position is that active engagement on FOLCA will not be possible until the future of 2 Grace Hill has been determined. Subject to future of Grace Hill, should the library wish to occupy FOLCA in the future there may be potential for a further conversation and space available.</p> <p>As with any significant redevelopment project it may take years to come to fruition and the temporary provision will need to remain in place until that point. FHDC have indicated that subject to decisions in 2026 it is envisaged the space may be occupiable by Q4 2028.</p> <p>High dependency on FDHC for both further details on space, cost and timeline.</p>
Environmental:	<p>This would be a smaller footprint than the Grace Hill building, which would reduce KCC's carbon footprint, contributing to our 2030 carbon neutral target.</p> <p>The building would be more environmentally efficient.</p> <p>FHDC has secured support from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Fund for the development of FOLCA, and this should enable the building to achieve an EPC A rating.</p>
Ownership Structure and Commercial Arrangements Compatibility with key decision 24/00116:	<p>High level HOTs discussed but not formally agreed. Likely long leasehold occupation.</p>
Consultation feedback	<p>At the time of the public consultation 600 people responded. We asked responders to give their views on KCC's current preferred option to move the library and Registration service to/rent space at FOLCA on the high street. 43% indicated they agree with the proposal and 50% indicated they disagree.</p> <p>The main themes covered in responses to this question included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -It would be a central location/good location/convenient- 27% -Grace Hill should be repaired/restored/renovated and remain a library- 18% -It would be accessible/easy to get to/good parking/public transport- 15% -Makes sense to use FOLCA building- 14% -FOLCA is unsuitable/too much work to Convert FOLCA/requires maintenance- 14% -FOLCA should be used for something else (Not a library)- 11% -FOLCA is acceptable/good choice- 10% <p>Further detail is included in the full consultation feedback report.</p>

OPTION 1C

Exit the Grace Hill building and progress market disposal in line with adopted policy. Confirm 14 Sandgate Road will continue as the temporary library while the Council works to establish an alternative town centre library site which is not FOLCA or 14 Sandgate Road.

Service Requirements: Location/Space/Partnership Potential	<p>This would enable a town centre provision for the service.</p>
Financial:	<p>A move to an unknown town centre location would need to be evaluated based on locations available, currently no other locations sourced..</p> <p>KCC would need to take on a lease or acquire the freehold of an alternative site.</p> <p>The service and building operational costs are unknown at this time but it would be reasonable to assume these would be in the region of those outlined in options 1A and 1B.</p>
Deliverability: Page 288	<p>This option would be subject to the right property being available in the right place and at the right time. If the right property was found it may need adaptations to be suitable for library and registration services. It could take time for the right property to become available.</p> <p>As such the timescales associated with this open cannot be defined and it is not considered deliverable when contrasted with the early 2026 opening associated with 1A and 18+ month target for fundraising and capital works as part of 2A</p>
Environmental:	<p>Unknown currently.</p> <p>Any building the library service moves to is likely to be more environmentally friendly than 2 Grace Hill but it would depend on the specific building identified.</p>
Ownership Structure and Commercial Arrangements Compatibility with key decision 24/00116:	<p>Unknown at this time.</p> <p>An appropriate location has not been identified at this time but is likely to be a leasehold property.</p> <p>No draft lease terms, rent levels, or maintenance obligations can be provided at this time</p>

Consultation feedback	<p>At the time of the public consultation 600 people responded. We asked responders to give their views on KCC's proposal to permanently leave the Folkestone Library building at 2 Grace Hill and find an alternative town centre location for the Library and Registration service. 38% indicated they agreed with KCC's proposal and over half- 55% indicated they disagreed.</p> <p>The main themes covered in responses to this question included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Grace Hill is Historic/Part of Folkestone Heritage/listed- 34%- Grace Hill should be repaired /restored- 30%- Library should be in a good location/central/convenient/town centre- 21%- Grace Hill is suitable and purpose built to be a library- 15%- Grace Hill has been left to deteriorate by KCC- 13%- Prefer the current Grace Hill location/accessible- 11%- Highlighting repair/maintenance costs are high at Grace Hill- 10%- Cost effective to move to town centre/recognising KCC doesn't have money for repairs- 10% <p>Further detail is included in the full consultation feedback report.</p>
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OPTION 2A

Confirm that the Council will accept Creative Folkestone's proposal to work towards an alternative grant-funded vision for the Grace Hill building which may include the provision of space for the library service, and until this point in time the temporary library will operate at 14 Sandgate Road.

Service Requirements: Location/Space/Partnership Potential	<p>Location: 2 Grace Hill is the existing location of library service and is known to users. It is located outside of the main High Street, and closer to areas of deprivation within Folkestone</p> <p>Space: Ground floor allocated for library; appendices show indicative layout – however engagement with service to refine would still need to take place. No detailed fit-out plan, costings, or compliance with KCC service specification covered in proposal. Broadly the spatial allocation within the building is considered suitable by the service and is in-line with spatial offering under 1A and 1B.</p> <p>Partnership potential: Co-location with creative organisations is a potential positive, as is the proximity to Creative Folkestone's Creative Campus. However, the exact nature of other partners in other spaces is not detailed.</p>
Financial: Page 290	<p>Capital: Proposal states that £6.5m is required for Grace Hill building as part of a wider c£10m grant seeking exercise to support required to implement Creative Folkestone's Creative Campus concept; mentions potential sources (govt, heritage, private donors) but does not provide application criteria, confirmed funding streams, or likelihood of success. No timeline for securing funds beyond a broad "18 months target". The proposal is dependent on assumption that required capital can be secured from grant funding opportunities.</p> <p>Requested detail on funding certainty and timescales is missing. While Creative Folkestone have a very successful track record for securing external funding and initial positive conversations with some funders have taken place, the scale of the capital requirement is significant.</p> <p>Revenue: Draft model included (income ~£182k vs costs ~£185k at 90% occupancy). No sensitivity analysis, contingency plan, or evidence of secured tenants. Requested detailed business plan not provided. Referenced model is for the operation of the building. KCC's continued occupation of the property and ongoing financial commitment via lease service charge creates significant revenue risk given listed nature of building even if capital works carried out. The ongoing running costs of the building are linked closely to the level of capital investment as part of any refurbishment exercise, however the heritage fabric and design will increase maintenance burden when compared to a more modern alternative.</p> <p>During the 18th Month period to gain the capital funding KCC would still be the building owner and responsible for ongoing maintenance costs and liabilities. These have been estimated at c£100k pa at present and there may be call for additional spend to maintain the current stable building condition.</p>

Deliverability:	Experienced lead partner but proposal is high-level and contingent on multiple external factors (funding, lease, planning). No risk register or mitigation plan provided. Significant capital works to a listed heritage building present an inherent risk of unexpected discoveries mid -project which can impact both deliverability and timescales.
Environmental:	Positive narrative on reuse and heating upgrades; no quantified targets or compliance plan provided. The Grace Hill building currently has an EPC C – 73 rating. The ability to improve this EPC rating will be limited due to the listed nature of the building.
Ownership Structure and Commercial Arrangements	States KCC will divest maintenance via sale or full repairing lease; no draft lease terms, rent levels, or maintenance obligations provided. Requested commercial detail missing despite efforts to engage.
Compatibility with key decision 24/00116:	
Consultation feedback Page 291	<p>At the time of the public consultation 600 people responded. We asked responders to give their views on KCC's proposal to permanently leave the Folkestone Library building at 2 Grace Hill and find an alternative town centre location for the Library and Registration service. 38% indicated they agreed with KCC's proposal and over half- 55% indicated they disagreed.</p> <p>The main themes covered in responses to this question included;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Grace Hill is Historic/Part of Folkestone Heritage/listed- 34% - Grace Hill should be repaired /restored- 30% - Library should be in a good location/central/convenient/town centre- 21% - Grace Hill is suitable and purpose built to be a library- 15% - Grace Hill has been left to deteriorate by KCC- 13% - Prefer the current Grace Hill location/accessible- 11% - Highlighting repair/maintenance costs are high at Grace Hill- 10% - Cost effective to move to town centre/recognising KCC doesn't have money for repairs- 10% <p>There was also some responses that said KCC should consider the Creative Folkestone proposal (3%). Further detail is included in the full consultation feedback report.</p>

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Revision History

Version	Date	Authors	Comment
V0.1	08/03/24	Anna Hendy and Sarah Bedingfield	First draft
V0.2	08/03/24	Anne Wynde and James Pearson	Comments
V0.3	15/03/24	Sarah Bedingfield	Data inputted
V0.4	15/03/24	Anna Hendy	Responding to comments
V0.5	15/03/24	James Pearson	Review and responding to comments
V1	28/06/24	Anna Hendy and Donna Marie Dunn	Adaptation for refocused consultation. Consultation Stage EQIA
V1.1	02/09/24	Anna Hendy	Review considering consultation feedback
V1.2	02/10/24	Anna Hendy	Review with feedback from James Pearson, Aisha Affejee, Sarah Bedingfield, Donna-Marie Dunn, Anne Wynde
V1.3	07/10/24	James Pearson	Review of feedback and comments
V1.4	25/10/24	Anna Hendy and Sarah Bedingfield	Comprehensive review of consultation equality feedback ensuring responses incorporated into EqIA
V1.5	02/01/25	James Pearson and Anna Hendy	Further review following initial legal review
V1.6	09/01/25	Sarah Bedingfield, Anna Hendy and Aisha Affejee	Further review & data verification
V2 (this should be assigned to the version to be uploaded to the app)	10/01/25	Sarah Bedingfield/Anna Hendy and Anne Wynde	

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Submission

Section A

EQIA Title

Folkestone Library

Responsible Officer

Anna Hendy - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

Service Change

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth, Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Libraries, Registration & Archives

Responsible Head of Service

James Pearson

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle

Aims and Objectives

Folkestone Library at 2 Grace Hill temporarily closed on 20 December 2022 because it became unsafe for customers and staff. Kent County Council's (KCC) financial situation remains very challenging and means that the Council does not have the budget to repair and reopen the building. The current estimated costs to repair the building is £2.9 million.

Services have been put in place since the temporary closure of the Grace Hill building to minimise the impact of the closure on our customers. These will be kept in place until a long-term town centre location for Folkestone Library opens. The temporary services we have put in place include:

- "Folkestone Library - Heritage and Digital Access" which opened in November 2023 at 5 Grace Hill (previously the Shepway Youth Centre). This is temporarily the location for the complete local studies collection, public PCs, Wi-fi, microfilm reader, photocopying and study space.
- A free reservation service provided at 5 Grace Hill. The service means that customers can order anything from the Kent library catalogue and have it delivered for free to the building for collection.
- The opening hours at the libraries closest to Folkestone town centre have been increased so that there is library provision available six days a week. Hythe Library has increased by 7.5 hours from 37 hours to 44.5 hours per week and Wood Avenue Library has increased by 15.5 hours from 23 hours to 38.5 hours per week. While Folkestone Library was also open on Sundays the temporary provision offers library opening across six days. Sunday usage

was lower compared to the weekdays so to maximise the offer we put the extra hours into the other libraries across Folkestone and Hythe during the week.

- Additional services have been provided at Wood Avenue Library including three additional public computers and increased loanable stock. We have also added this as a location to register a birth or death, in addition to Hythe library.

The temporary provision at 5 Grace Hill was subject to a separate EQIA.

As well as the temporary measures, the following existing library services are also available to help mitigate the impact of the temporary closure:

- E-library service - we have a large digital offer with thousands of free e-books, audiobooks and online newspapers and magazines for all ages and interests.
- Library services direct - including the Home Library Service, where we can deliver library items to people if they cannot visit a library, and also our Mobile Library Service.
- Other libraries in the Folkestone and Hythe district - Hythe, Cheriton, Wood Avenue, Lyminge, Sandgate, Lydd, and New Romney.

KCC is committed to securing a permanent town centre location for the library and registration service. Having carefully considered the options at the point of consultation, KCC proposed to:

- **Permanently leave the Grace Hill building and find an alternative town centre location for the Folkestone library and registration service.**
- **Take forward work with Folkestone & Hythe District Council on moving the library and registration service to FOLCA on the high street.** Ahead of the consultation and subject to any feedback, we considered this to represent the best long-term option for Folkestone's town centre library.

FOLCA is Folkestone & Hythe District Council's project to transform the former Debenhams store (which the District Council owns) on Sandgate Road into a mixed-use building in the heart of Folkestone. The District Council has appointed an architect to develop a concept design for a mixed-use building with a combination of public sector, community and commercial space, including potentially space for KCC to deliver the Folkestone town centre library and registration service. If agreement with the District Council about the FOLCA was not possible then KCC would look for an alternative town centre, high street location to move the library service into.

Discussions with the District Council have progressed positively to the point where we believe this option to move Folkestone Library into FOLCA is feasible and viable.

Before reaching our consultation proposals, a number of other options were considered, and these were detailed in the consultation documentation:

1. **Continue with temporary provision permanently and exit the 2 Grace Hill building.** The temporary provision does not allow full library and registration services to be delivered from one town centre location. The temporary provision was never envisaged or considered as a permanent replacement. The temporary provision at 5 Grace Hill was subject to a separate EQIA.
2. **Make repairs to the 2 Grace Hill building, re-open Folkestone Library and co-locate with other services.**
3. **Relocate full library service to another existing KCC building.** There is no viable alternative KCC building identified so this will not receive any further EQIA analysis.
4. **Sell/lease the 2 Grace Hill building and then lease back part of the building for Folkestone Library.** Creative Folkestone has indicated that it may be prepared to take over responsibility for the Grace Hill building by way of a disposal (either a gift or long-term lease

at peppercorn rent), with the intention of allowing it, as a charity, to raise funding that may not be available to KCC to address the physical condition of the building. This is the subject of ongoing engagement with Creative Folkestone. This option may also involve consideration of proposals from other individuals or groups, should any such proposals be made (including through the ACV process). There is not enough information available at present to undertake a full screening.

5. **Move service to an alternative leasehold site.** There is not enough information available at present to undertake a full screening. KCC's Property team continue to investigate potential sites which may be viable alternatives to the FOLCA building. Impacts identified with alternative sites will be assessed as part of future decision-making, as appropriate.

KCC is committed to ensuring that all statutory services previously provided at 2 Grace Hill will be provided in any new location within Folkestone town centre.

The Sassoon Gallery would not be included in the service provision in the options detailed above. other than possibly Option 4, this could impact negatively across all protected characteristic groups. The Gallery is not a statutory function for the library service or KCC to deliver. While KCC recognises the support for a gallery, KCC has to balance that against cost of space as well. In that context we are not looking to re-provide the Sassoon Gallery space as a must-have space requirement. We will continue to explore the potential to work in partnership with others to see if there are other options to providing community gallery space in Folkestone. A gallery remaining at the 2 Grace Hill building may come forward as part of any proposal made by other individuals or groups to return to the 2 Grace Hill building.

This EQIA analyses how all viable options might affect or impact the protected characteristic groups and, where adverse impacts are identified, addresses how such impacts may be mitigated. This EQIA is intended to help ensure the Council complies with its duty to have due regard to the need to: (a) eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (c) foster good relations between persons with who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

An eight-week public consultation has been completed and the EQIA has been updated to reflect the feedback from this including additional ward data which has been followed up through KCC data and analytics team and subsequently further data from the 2021 census has been included within. This EQIA will be part of the paperwork that will be presented to decision makers to inform the decision.

This EQIA will continue to be developed as KCC undertakes further work on the options proposed to progress as detailed in the Cabinet Committee Report for 22 January 2025.

Equality RISK: Low:

It is recommended that KCC takes a key decision in January 2025 to discount some of the options covered at the time of the public consultation.

Option 1, which is the continuation of the temporary provision, has been analysed and it is clear that it presents a number of negative equalities impacts. Whilst there are ways to mitigate the negative impacts, this EQIA supports that option 1 should be rejected.

While it is recommended that option 1 is rejected, in response to consultation feedback officers are proposing to explore and implement an alternative location where temporary library and registration services could better be delivered. This could include a single site temporary library and registration service which could include a children's library, public PCs, birth and death registration, the heritage collections and lending book collections.

This EQIA identifies that the impacts across the protected characteristics for options 2 and 4 (which would involve the library service remaining at 2 Grace Hill) and our consultation proposal of moving to FOLCA or an alternative town centre location (option 5) are similar overall (although there would be some different impacts on some individuals and groups).

All could represent viable locations for a town centre library and registration service providing mitigations are put in place as detailed in this EQIA. This EQIA will be further updated as part of the next stage of work to inform a future further key decision on the long-term future of Grace Hill and the location of the Folkestone town centre library and registration service.

The findings of this EQIA support the recommendation that option 4 and 5 continue to be explored, considered and evaluated.

Section B – Evidence

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

Yes

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

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

No

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

A public consultation ran from 18 July to 11 September 2024. The consultation questionnaire included a question to capture feedback on the consultation stage EQIA and if there was anything else consultees felt we should consider relating to equality and diversity. 22% of consultees provided a response to this question. An analysis of responses can be found within the consultation report. An appendix (Appendix 3) with the full list of responses to this question is attached. It details how the comments have been recognised, considered and incorporated into the EQIA where applicable.

Feedback was captured via a consultation questionnaire which was available on consultation webpage (www.kent.gov.uk/folkestonelibrary). Hard copies of the consultation material, including the questionnaire were also available in all Folkestone and Hythe district libraries and on request. Easy Read and large print formats were also available. The consultation material and webpage included details of how people could contact KCC to ask a question, request hard copies or an alternative format. In addition, four in person drop-in sessions were held at Wood Avenue Library and 5 Grace Hill. A Word version of the questionnaire was provided on the webpage for people who did not wish to complete the online version.

The consultation was promoted in a mix of digital (for example, social media, emails, website) and non-digital methods (for example, posters, postcards, newspaper advert). Library staff were briefed to promote the consultation to service users and provide support as required. Library public computers could be used to access the consultation website and complete the online questionnaire.

Emails were sent to key stakeholders, including Folkestone & Hythe District Council, the town and parish councils, community groups, local charity organisations, library groups and partners encouraging their participation in the consultation and support promoting it to their residents, members or the people they work with. Local schools were contacted twice, at the beginning and towards the end of the consultation. The consultation period coincided with the annual library school age children's Summer Reading Challenge which is a busy time of year seeing many families visiting libraries.

This EQIA has been updated following the consultation and will be used to inform any decision KCC then takes.

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Residents of Folkestone and key local stakeholders. In detail:

- Library customers
- Wider Folkestone and Hythe residents
- Folkestone district library staff
- Folkestone and Hythe KCC members
- Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Key interest/campaign group or key customer contacts
- Local MP
- Creative Folkestone
- Folkestone Town Council, Sandgate Parish Council and Hythe Town Council
- Cheriton Nepalese Group
- Library related groups, such as Books Groups, Baby Rhyme, Books Beyond Words etc.
- Folkestone Community Fridge (currently partners at Wood Avenue Library)
- Living Words (displaced due to Folkestone temp closure)
- Local schools and colleges
- Department for Culture Media and Sport

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes. This is version 2 of this EQIA. A consultation stage EQIA (version 1) formed part of the public consultation. We have also completed an EQIA on the temporary provision.

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes. Since the temporary closure of the library local people and community groups have been providing feedback through a variety of means and so we recognise the strength and depth of local feeling regarding the 2 Grace Hill building and the importance of Folkestone's town centre library and registration service. We have reviewed all comments provided on the EQIA in the consultation feedback and adapted the EQIA to a new version mindful of the feedback where relevant.

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff/volunteers

Staff/volunteers

Residents/communities/citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

Following the temporary closure of the 2 Grace Hill building, Folkestone's town centre library and registration services are being delivered from a number of different buildings.

Option 1 Making the temporary provisions permanent does not provide any positive impacts as it would not return a full statutory library service to one location in Folkestone's town centre.

Option 2 and 4

Re-opening Folkestone Library in 2 Grace Hill would ensure that the full town centre service, with equivalent book stock and event space is delivered in one building and available for everyone.

Opening Folkestone Library in 2 Grace Hill with other public and community services, such as the option being discussed with Creative Folkestone, would offer opportunities such as partnership working with other customer and community services. This brings more services to people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who don't currently use them.

Grace Hill is accessible from the high street and there are nearby public transport services and parking options.

Grace Hill is located in the Folkestone Central ward next to the Folkestone Harbour ward which is an area of high deprivation. The 2 Grace Hill library building is closer to parts of the community who could particularly benefit from accessing library services although there are areas of need across Folkestone. Those living in areas of high deprivation may face greater challenges in accessing services.

The consultation proposal/option 5

A move to a building co-located with other public and community services offers opportunities such as partnership working with other customer and community services. This brings more services to people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who don't currently use them.

Re-opening Folkestone Library in FOLCA or an alternative town centre location would ensure that the full town centre service, with equivalent book stock and event space is delivered in one building and available for everyone.

Moving to a high street location like FOLCA or another high street building would offer a positive impact for many customers as it would remain accessible to public transport links.

A high street location could be more accessible for those with mobility impairments due to the proximity to other shops and services that people will want to access. The high street is also accessible from public transport and parking options.

Library usage data (Appendix 2) from before 2 Grace Hill temporarily closed, showed that the largest proportion of library users travelled from Folkestone East and Folkestone Central wards which would make the library closer for them if the decision is taken to relocate to FOLCA on the high street. While concern has been raised that a high street location would make the library less accessible for those from the Folkestone Harbour ward it is felt that any high street location would be positive overall given that other services, retail and leisure facilities are also in the town and the distances involved are reasonable.

The consultation proposal and options 2 to 5 would all restore the full town centre library and registration provision.

Consultation proposal and options 2, 4 and 5

Re-instating a full town centre library and registration service would provide the following benefits:

Age/Children/Pregnancy and Maternity

- Early years activities, such as Rhyme Time and Summer Reading Challenge can return to Folkestone town centre providing greater accessibility.
- Birth and death registration appointments would resume in Folkestone town centre.

- Customers would be able to access a full library and registration service/full public computers/activities in the town centre again.
- All of these activities would be available to attend in a town centre location.

Disability/Carers

- Books Beyond Words reading group (reading group for people with learning disabilities) could resume at a town centre location and this option would be discussed with the group.
- Specialist book stock to support those with disabilities would be available again at a town centre library location.

Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation

- Specialist LGBTQIA+ book stock would be available again at town centre library location.

Race

- Dual language and specialist book stock to support those whose first language is not English would be available again at town centre library location.
- Potential for meet and practice English groups to be setup in a town centre location once more.

Marriage and Civil Partnerships

- Notice of marriage and/or civil partnership appointments could return to a town centre library location.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for Age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Library customers would need to travel to one of the other Folkestone and Hythe district libraries to access full library services and there is no children's library provision in the temporary town centre library at 5 Grace Hill. The closest libraries to Folkestone town centre are in Wood Avenue or Cheriton. This additional travel could be more of a challenge for elderly customers or those with young children and babies.
- Early years library initiatives such as the Rhyme Time and Playground sessions for pre-schoolers, would not be available in Folkestone town centre because there is not the space to run these in the temporary provision.
- People with young children, young people in their teens or older people may find it difficult to travel to libraries further away.
- Use of public transport may have a cost attached and for those using an older person's bus pass, which has time restrictions.
- No public toilets available at the other district libraries (although provision available in current Folkestone Library - Heritage and Digital Access).

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- Under option 4 the library may be split over two floors depending on which other organisations or services are co-located within the building. This could be more of a challenge to elderly customers, or those with babies. It should be noted that this was the case before the library was temporarily closed, with the main library downstairs and the local

studies upstairs. How the building is kept accessible would be key to consider moving forward.

- 2 Grace Hill is located at the bottom of a hill, and there is a walk needed to the high street and other local services which could be a challenge for some older customers or those with babies.
- While 2 Grace Hill has nearby parking, the nearest is only available for short term parking.
- 2 Grace Hill is located on a very busy road which could pose accessibility challenges that could disproportionately impact, elderly people and those with young children.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- The journey from the current building to the proposed new location at FOLCA is uphill. This could be more difficult for some older customers or those with babies if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building. This could be more of a challenge to elderly customers or those with babies. How the building is kept accessible would be key to consider moving forward.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.

Mitigating Actions for Age

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Promote digital resources and Home Library Service (HLS) which is where a volunteer can deliver books direct to people's homes.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.
- Review of district opening hours and consider making permanent the extended opening hours in place at Wood Avenue and Hythe Libraries.
- Customers can ask to use the staff toilets in locations without public toilets, but these may not be suitable for people with disabilities. This also may be a barrier as customers may be embarrassed to ask.
- The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- Ensure working lift is available. Like all mechanical lifts it is to be expected that they will have periods of mechanical breakdown.
- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street. FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (there may be future

changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre). There is a car park located very close to the FOLCA building.

- Ensure clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.
- For those customers unable to travel to a high street location we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone Library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to FOLCA.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- If the service is split over two floors we would ensure a working lift is available and that the building is accessible for all including having accessible public toilets.
- Considering equality feedback, we would look to engage with young people (teens) to ensure the layout is optimal for all. A new layout would be considered in line with ensuring accessibility, this could include quieter spaces, dimmable lighting (not available in Grace Hill). We would work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

20. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- To access a physical library service, Folkestone town centre customers would need to travel to one of the district libraries - the closest are in Wood Avenue or Cheriton. This could be more of a challenge for customers with disabilities, for example, mobility impairments, anxiety, visual impairments or people with learning disabilities, who might struggle to get to a non-town centre location.
- The Books Beyond Words group would remain at Wood Avenue Library meaning potential access issues as described above for this group.
- Book stock which supports different disabilities (for example, Access 2 Books – Braille and Giant Print, Books Beyond Word – supporting people with learning disabilities, Children’s mental health Reading Well book stock etc) may not be readily available at the smaller libraries so customers may have to use the reservation service. This means they may have to pay reservation fees for books they wouldn’t normally have to if there was a full town centre library.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities as there have been times when the lift is out of order for some time.
- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone

and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.

- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service. The service also offers an extensive range of digital resources.
- The Grace Hill building is located towards the bottom of a hill, approximately 0.3 miles from the high street and other local services which could be a challenge for some customers with disabilities.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.
- The Grace Hill building is located on a very busy road which could pose accessibility challenges that could disproportionately impact those with disabilities.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- FOLCA is towards the top of the high street so the journey from the current building to the proposed new location at FOLCA is uphill. This could be more difficult for someone with mobility issues if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities.
- For some customers accessing a new and different building can be daunting for example those with neuro diversities.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.

Mitigating actions for Disability

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Wood Avenue and Sandgate libraries can be highlighted as nearby alternatives with automatic door access. Wood Avenue also has extended opening hours.
- Promotion of digital resources and the Home Library Service, which is where a volunteer can deliver books direct to people's homes.
- Promotion of eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.
- Extra vigilance around which customers may be eligible for an Exempt card, meaning they wouldn't have to pay for reservations.
- A free reservation pickup service is available at the current temporary library provision at 5 Grace Hill, which could be made permanent.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- Ensure working lift is available and continued provision of accessible public toilets. The lifts present at 2 Grace Hill have suffered a number of breakdowns and while reported and fixed it is nearing end of its mechanical life so will need to be factored into any building restoration.
- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.

- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service and promotion of eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street. FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to the FOLCA building at Middelburg Place and Bouverie Place which are multi storey car parks with designated disabled spaces.
- Ensure clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.
- The Home Library Service and the alternative Folkestone and Hythe district libraries offer alternative ways to access the service for those customers unable to travel to a high street location. The service also offers free eBook/magazine/newspaper collections via our website. Further promotion could be carried out to raise awareness of these services.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to FOLCA.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- For those with neurodivergent conditions or anxiety when accessing new spaces we would provide a social story for a new location and a virtual tour to allow customers to familiarise themselves with the space before visiting. We would also arrange a virtual tour to be uploaded to our webpage.
- A new layout would be considered in line with ensuring accessibility, this could include quieter spaces, dimmable lighting (not available in Grace Hill). We would work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- If the service is split over two floors we would ensure a working lift is available and that the building is accessible for all including having accessible public toilets.
- Public/accessible toilets would be part of the service requirements. There may be opportunities to look at further enhancements including a Changing Place facility. We would raise this with Folkestone & Hythe District Council if the decision was taken to progress this proposal.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

21. Negative Impacts and mitigating actions for Sex

Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not applicable

22. Negative Impacts and mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Yes

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Limited specialist LGBTQIA+ book stock in the smaller district libraries so customers are unable to browse collections and would have to reserve and pay a reservation fee.

Options 2 and 4 – Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Services would be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference.

Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Need to review but likely that there would be a need to look at some form of stock collection or continue with the free reservation collection service.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

Are there negative impacts for Race

Yes

Negative impacts for Race

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Smaller district libraries have limited ethnic minority group book stock and books in different languages, meaning customers may have to make reservations.

Options 2 and 4 - Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Services would be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference.

Mitigating actions for Race

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Need to review if need to develop the stock collection available in the town centre as no book lending collections available or continue the free reservation collection service.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Options 2 and 4 - Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill

- In looking at the Creative Folkestone option or any building proposals to look to retain the library at 2 Grace Hill, KCC would ensure that in discussions with Creative Folkestone and/or another partner any building design resulted in a fully accessible library space, and that as much of the public library and registration service space was on the ground floor. It would also be an opportunity to refresh the library layout where possible. We would work to ensure any new design and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- For those unable to travel to the Grace Hill location or any nearby libraries we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.

Consultation proposal - Move to FOLCA

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street. FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (there may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to the FOLCA building at Middelburg Place and Bouverie Place which are multi storey car parks with designated disabled spaces.
- We would ensure that clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.
- The Home Library Service and the alternative Folkestone and Hythe district libraries offer alternative ways to access the service for those customers unable to travel to a high street location.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to FOLCA.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to FOLCA is 0.3 miles. FOLCA is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

24. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

No

Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Not applicable

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Not applicable

25. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Yes

Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- There is a limited provision of specialist LGBTQI+ book stock at the smaller district libraries meaning customer may have to make reservations and pay.

Consultation proposal and options 2 and 4 – Move to FOLCA/Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Services will be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference.

Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Review availability of specialist LGBTQI+ stock in the town centre but a free reservation collection service is available from temporary library provision.
- Promote our eBook/magazine/newspaper collections all available for free via our website.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

26. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Yes

Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- No town centre provision means that customers would need to travel to other libraries to access our physical services. This could be more of a problem for women who are pregnant or mothers who are on maternity leave, who may be unable to travel to another location.
- No Playground and Baby Rhyme Time sessions at a Folkestone town centre location which could result in customers having to travel further/additional cost or not being able to attend.
- The registration of births is not available from town centre location so customers needing to register a birth must travel to their closest alternative registration point in Wood Avenue Library or Hythe library.

Consultation proposal and options 2 and 4 – Move to FOLCA/Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Registration of births and Playground and Baby Rhyme Time sessions would be available in a town centre location again. Services would be designed with all needs in mind including book stock that covers the full range of customer preference and ensuring the provision of baby change facilities as at 2 Grace Hill.

Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Review of provision of children's stock.
- Customers can be directed to services and sessions at the nearest possible library in Wood Avenue, Cheriton, Sandgate or Hythe.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Yes

Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Notice of marriage/civil partnership cannot be given in a town centre library location. Customers would need to travel to Wood Avenue Library.

Consultation proposal and options 2 and 4 – Move to FOLCA/Folkestone Library remains at 2 Grace Hill - No negative impacts identified. Notice of marriage/civil partnerships would be delivered again from a town centre location.

Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Retention of Notice of marriage appointments at Wood Avenue Library.

Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

28. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

Yes

Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Without a town centre provision, customers would need to travel to other libraries to access our physical services. This could mean that Carers are unable to access physical library services because they are unable to travel further with the person they are caring for or they are unable to spare the additional travel time/cost.
- Book stock which provides help to Carers and also may support different disabilities may not be available at the smaller district libraries so customers may have to pay and reserve books.

Options 2 and 4 - Library service remains at Grace Hill

- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities and therefore their Carers.
- Grace Hill is located towards the bottom of a hill, approximately 0.3 miles from the high street and other local services which could be a challenge for some customers with disabilities and therefore their Carers.

Consultation proposal and option 5 - Move to FOLCA/other town centre location

- The library may be split over two floors depending on who is co-located within the building which could present a challenge to those with disabilities and therefore their Carers.
- FOLCA is towards the top of the high street so the journey from the current building to the proposed new location at FOLCA is uphill. This could be more difficult for someone with mobility issues and their Carers if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.

Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

Option 1 - Continue with temporary provision permanently

- Promotion of digital resources and Home Library Service.
- Review of hours across the district. Consider extended opening hours being made permanent in Wood Avenue and Hythe Libraries.
- Vigilance around which customers may be eligible for an Exempt card, meaning they wouldn't have to pay for reservations.
- Review and consider retention of free reservation service.

Options 2 and 4 - Library service remains at Grace Hill

- Ensure working lift is available and continued provision of accessible public toilets. The lift at 2 Grace Hill has suffered a number of breakdowns and while reported and fixed it is nearing end of its mechanical life so will need to be factored into any building restoration.

Consultation proposal - Move to FOLCA

- FOLCA is a more central town centre location than 2 Grace Hill as it is on the high street.
- FOLCA in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station. There may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to the FOLCA building at Middelburg Place and Bouverie Place which are multi storey car parks with designated disabled spaces.

- If the service is split over two floors we would ensure a working lift is available and that the building is accessible for all.
- Ensure clear signage is in place as is the case for 2 Grace Hill and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan would be put in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales.

Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

Appendix 1

Demographic Profile: Folkestone and Hythe

Data primarily sourced from Office of National Statistics (ONS) data from KCC's [website¹](#).

Folkestone is a coastal town in East Kent with a population of 52,279 (2021 census) and sits within the Folkestone & Hythe District which has an overall population of 110,200, forecast to rise to 120,700 by 2027.

Age and Sex

4.5% of the population of Folkestone & Hythe fall within the 0-4 age group, 10.7% are aged 5-14 and 9.5% are aged 15-24. 49.7% of the population are aged 25-64, while 18.7% are aged 65-79, and 6.8% are 80 and older.

48.7% of the population are male, and 51.3% female.

Life expectancy in Folkestone & Hythe is 79.2 years for males and 83.2 for females.

Diversity

88% of the population are White British, and 12% are in ethnic minority groups which are broken down as follows:

Groups	Percentage
White minority groups	4.6%
Asian	3.9%
Black Caribbean or African	0.6%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1.9%
Other ethnic groups	1%
Total	12%

13.7% of young people aged 0-15 are in ethnic minority groups, as are 14.4% of adults aged 16-64 and 5.3% of older people. 2.3% of households have no adults with English as their main language, while 0.6% have no adults but at least one person aged 3 to 15 who has English as their main language.

48% of people stated their religion is Christian, 1.3% Hindu, 1% Muslim and 0.9% Buddhist. 42.1% stated that they have no religion.

Socio-economic groups and Deprivation

The Mosaic data for Folkestone and Hythe from 2022 is as follows:

Mosaic Group	Definition	Percentage of overall population
Group D – Rural Reality	Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities	13.6%
Group E – Senior Security	Elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement	13.2%
Group C – Country Living	Well off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life	9.5%
Group H – Aspiring Homemakers	Younger households settling down in housing priced within their means	9.4%
Group L – Vintage Value	Elderly people reliant on support to meet financial or practical needs	9.1%
Group O – Rental Hubs	Educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods	8.2%
Group B – Prestige Positions	Established families in large detached homes living upmarket lifestyles	6.6%
Group F – Suburban Stability	Mature suburban owners living in settled lives in mid-range housing	5.8%
Group G – Domestic Success	Thriving families who are busy bringing up children and following careers	5.6%
Group I – Family Basics	Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet	5.4%
Group J – Transient Renters	Single people privately renting low cost homes for the short term	4.7%
Group M – Modest Traditions	Mature homeowners of value homes enjoying stable lifestyles	3.7%
Group N – Urban Cohesion	Residents of settled urban communities with a strong sense of identity	3.2%
Group K – Municipal Challenge	Urban renters of social housing facing an array of challenges	1.8%
Group A – City Prosperity	High status city dwellers living in central locations and pursuing careers with high rewards	0.2%

Mosaic is a classification system designed by Experian to profile the characteristics of the UK population. Each household in the UK is classified as belonging to one of 15 groups and 66 types. These groups identify clusters of individuals and households that are as similar as possible to each other, and as different as possible to any other group. They describe the residents of a postcode in terms of their typical demographics, their behaviours, their lifestyle characteristics and their attitudes.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2019 reports that Folkestone comprises 67 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Four of which rank among the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. The wards within which these LSOAs sit are Folkestone Harbour, East Folkestone and Folkestone Central.

2 Grace Hill sits within the Harbour Ward and FOLCA is in Folkestone Central.

14.9% of 16 to 64 year olds in the district were recorded as claiming Universal Credit in November 2022, which is 1.6% higher than the average for Kent, and 0.8% higher than the national average. 63.8% of the claimants are not in employment. As of December 2022, Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone Central and East Folkestone wards have the highest rate of unemployment within the Folkestone & Hythe District².

East Folkestone sits within the top 10 wards in Kent with the highest number of children in absolute low-income families³.

Central and Folkestone Harbour ward data from 2021 Census

Ward	% Population Disabled Under the Equality Act
Folkestone Central	25.1%
Folkestone Harbour	22.5%

Ward	% Population Under 16
Folkestone Central	13.5%
Folkestone Harbour	21.5%

Ward	% Population from an Ethnic Minority background*
Folkestone Central	23.9%
Folkestone Harbour	14.5%

* including white ethnic minorities

Ward	% of Population from an Ethnic Minority Background**
Folkestone Central	11.8%
Folkestone Harbour	7.3%

² Kent Analytics: Ward Unemployment Bulletin - www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment#tab-5

³ Kent Analytics: Children in Poverty 2022 - www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/7956/Children-in-poverty.pdf

Folkestone Library Statistics

Issues (library items taken out e.g. book loans)

The table below shows issue rankings for Folkestone and Hythe district libraries in relation to the 99 Kent Libraries. The more library loan items taken out the higher the ranking, e.g. 1 equals the highest number of loans in the county, whereas 99 equals the lowest level of loans.

Library	Issue ranking for April to November 2022 ⁴
Hythe	21
Folkestone	25
Cheriton	40
New Romney	54
Lyminge	64
Wood Avenue	72
Sandgate	89
Lydd	94

Active Borrowers

The number of people borrowing items from Folkestone Library had been steadily increasing throughout the year, and from April to November 2022 increased by 18%. In November Folkestone Library had 2,911 active borrowers, while Hythe Library, although issuing more items, had 2,347 active borrowers.

1,402 customers borrowed items during the last full quarter of Folkestone Library being open, and these customers can be broken down into the following age categories:

Age band	No. of customers	Percentage
0-10	536	38.2%
11-19	126	9.0%
20-29	62	4.4%
30-39	141	10.1%
40-49	126	9.0%
50-59	88	6.3%
60 plus	314	22.4%
Age unknown	9	0.6%

Of these customers 45.9% identify as female, 25.9% as male, 0.14% as non-binary/3rd gender while 28.03% did not specify their gender identity.

17 customers (1.21%) indicated that they had a disability as follows:

Disability	No. of customers
Mental health	2
Physical impairment	5
Vision impairment	2
Learning impairment	8

⁴ This period was chosen as this was the last period during the financial year 22/23 when Folkestone Library was open.

Not all customers will provide information on disability when joining the library service, therefore it is likely that the true figure would be more.

Of the 335 customers who indicated their ethnicity, 83% were White British and 17% in ethnic minority groups which can be broken down as follows:

Ethnicity	No. of customers
Asian/Asian British – Chinese	2
Asian/Asian British – Indian	4
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	2
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	3
Asian/Asian British – Other	1
Black/Black British – African	3
Black/Black British – Caribbean	1
Black/Black British – Other	1
Mixed/Multiple – White and Asian	2
Mixed/Multiple – White and Black Caribbean	1
White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
White – Irish	1
White – Other	24
Other ethnic group	10

Visitors

Library	No. of visitors April to November 2022
Folkestone	50,675
Hythe	38,399
Wood Avenue*	22,209
Cheriton	21,397
Sandgate	6,982
New Romney	6,392
Lydd	3,092
Lyminge	3,007

*Wood Avenue Library visitors include customers using the Community Fridge

PC Usage

Use of the public computers (PCs) increased by 36% from April to November 2022 compared with the previous year, with over 6,000 hours of PC usage in total for the year up to December 2022.

Events and Activities

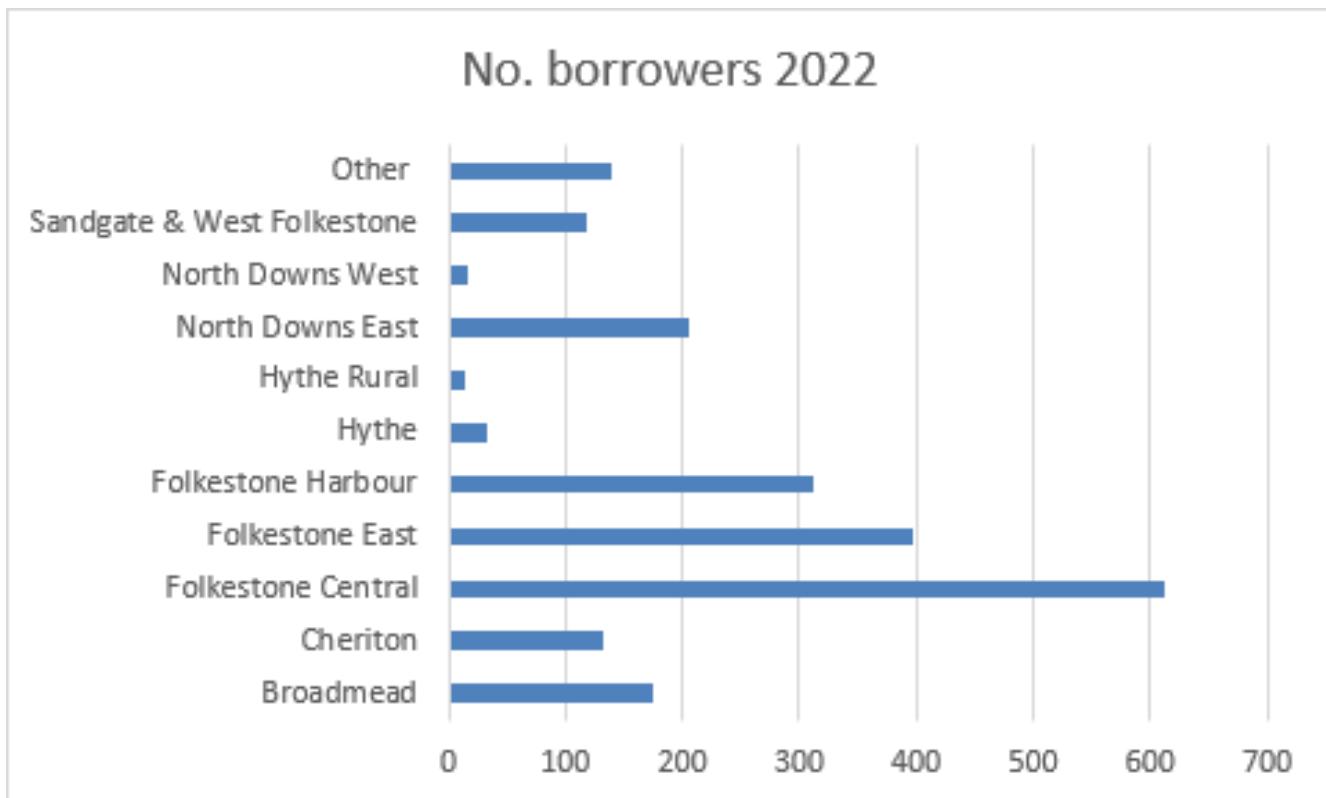
From April to November 2022, Folkestone Library held 141 community events and activities, with 1,464 attendees. These activities include the following:

- Rhyme Time for babies, toddlers and their parents and carers.
- Playground artist-led sessions for babies 0-18 months and their parents and carers.
- Books Beyond Words book group sessions for adults with learning disabilities.
- Meet and Practise English sessions for adults whose first language is not English.

- School Holiday activities in conjunction with the Summer Reading Challenge.
- The library also hosted a series of sessions for the Flux programme with partners Living Words, who were working with 18 to 25 year old LGBTQIA+ people addressing issues around self-harm, ill mental health, and suicide through the creative arts.

Appendix 2

Library borrowers in 2022 cross referenced with wards that are served by Folkestone Library at 2 Grace Hill:



NB - North Downs West would be served mostly by Lyminge Library, and Hythe by Hythe Library.
2 Grace Hill sits within the Harbour ward and FOLCA is in Folkestone Central ward.

The details of the above graph are detailed in the table below:

Ward	Number of Registered Borrowers at Folkestone Library
Folkestone Central	613
Folkestone East	396
Folkestone Harbour	313
North Downs East	205
Broadmead	174
Cheriton	132
Sandgate & West Folkestone	117
Hythe	34
North Downs West	17
Hythe Rural	13
Other (covers customers from other wards/districts who have registered at Folkestone; includes Romney Marsh, Dover, Dartford, Canterbury, Ashford, Maidstone, Thanet, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells),	139

GET Document Control

Revision History

Version	Date	Authors	Comment
V0.1	08/12/2025	Anna Hendy	First draft
V0.2	11/12/2025	Anna Hendy and Sarah Horton	Review and added appendix (Consultation report) Started Equality Action Plan
V0.3	15/12/2025	Anna Hendy	Review following comments from James Pearson and Donna Marie Dunn
V0.4	31/12/2025	Anna Hendy	Review following comments from Stephanie Holt-Castle
V0.5	02/01/2026	James Pearson, Anna Hendy and Sarah Horton	Review following comments from legal review and proofing for publication
V2 (this should be assigned to the version to be uploaded to the app)			

Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) Submission

Section A

EQIA Title

Folkestone Library

Responsible Officer

Anna Hendy - GT GC

Type of Activity

Service Change

Service Change

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

Project/Programme

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

No

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Growth, Environment and Transport

Responsible Service

Libraries, Registration & Archives

Responsible Head of Service

James Pearson

Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle

Aims and Objectives

Folkestone Library at 2 Grace Hill temporarily closed on 20 December 2022 because it became unsafe for customers and staff. Kent County Council's (KCC) financial situation remains very challenging and means that the Council does not have the budget to repair and reopen the building. The current estimated costs to repair the building is £2.9 million.

Services have been put in place since the temporary closure of the Grace Hill building to minimise the impact of the closure on our customers. These have been kept in place while a long-term town centre location for Folkestone Library has been investigated. The temporary services we have put in place include:

- "Folkestone Library - Heritage and Digital Access" which opened in November 2023 at 5 Grace Hill (previously the Shepway Youth Centre). This is temporarily the location for the complete local studies collection, public PCs, Wi-fi, microfilm reader, photocopying and study space.
- A free reservation service provided at 5 Grace Hill. The service means that customers can order anything from the Kent library catalogue and have it delivered for free to the building for collection.
- The opening hours at the libraries closest to Folkestone town centre have been increased so that there is library provision available six days a week. Hythe Library has increased by 7.5 hours from 37 hours to 44.5 hours per week and Wood Avenue Library has increased by 15.5 hours from 23 hours to 38.5 hours per week. While Folkestone Library was also open on Sundays the temporary provision offers library opening across six days. Sunday usage

was lower compared to the weekdays so to maximise the offer we put the extra hours into the other libraries across Folkestone and Hythe during the week.

- Additional services have been provided at Wood Avenue Library including three additional public computers and increased loanable stock. We have also added this as a location to register a birth or death, in addition to Hythe library.

The temporary provision at 5 Grace Hill was subject to a separate EQIA.

As well as the temporary measures, the following existing library services are also available to help mitigate the impact of the temporary closure:

- E-library service - we have a large digital offer with thousands of free e-books, audiobooks, online newspapers and magazines and other online resources for all ages and interests.
- Library services direct - including the Home Library Service, where we can deliver library items to people if they cannot visit a library, and also our Mobile Library Service.
- Other libraries in the Folkestone and Hythe district - Hythe, Cheriton, Wood Avenue, Lyminge, Sandgate, Lydd, and New Romney.

In January 2025 KCC took a decision to further explore options for 2 Grace Hill as well as any other long-term locations for Folkestone Library. In recognition of the time it would take to confirm and then reopen any permanent location for Folkestone Library the council committed to finding a further town centre location where it could deliver a full (single site) temporary library service until such time as the permanent location was decided and ready.

A location was found on Folkestone High Street for this temporary library, which would also be the permanent home of the Adult Education service. The building is in a central location on the main high street – 14 Sandgate Road – next door to Waterstones Bookshop and opposite Card Factory as below:



This EQIA reviews the impact of the service moving to a further temporary town centre location at 14 Sandgate Road where the full library services will be delivered from this one location. Where adverse impacts are identified, it addresses how such impacts may be mitigated. This EQIA is intended to help ensure the Council complies with its duty to have due regard to the need to consider the following: (a) elimination of discrimination, harassment, victimisation and other conduct prohibited under the Equality Act 2010; (b) advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not; and (c) foster good relations between persons with who share a relevant protected characteristic and those who do not.

The building will be shared between Libraries, Registration and Archives, Community Learning and Skills and have staff office space for other KCC teams. When the library service moves into the new temporary location at 14 Sandgate Road the district libraries will return to their standard

opening hours (those in operation prior to the temporary closure of Grace Hill). Folkestone library heritage and Digital access will close as the service will move into 14 Sandgate Road.

Equality RISK: Low:

Section B – Evidence

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

Yes (Appendix 1)

Is it possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

No

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

A public consultation on Folkestone town centre library and registration service provision ran from 18 July to 11 September 2024. The consultation questionnaire included a question to capture feedback on the consultation stage EQIA and if there was anything else consultees felt we should consider relating to equality and diversity. 22% of consultees provided a response to this question. An analysis of responses can be found within the consultation report.

Feedback was captured via a consultation questionnaire which was available on consultation webpage (www.kent.gov.uk/folkestonelibrary). Hard copies of the consultation material, including the questionnaire were also available in all Folkestone and Hythe district libraries and on request. Easy Read and large print formats were also available. The consultation material and webpage included details of how people could contact KCC to ask a question, request hard copies or an alternative format. In addition, four in person drop-in sessions were held at Wood Avenue Library and 5 Grace Hill. A Word version of the questionnaire was provided on the webpage for people who did not wish to complete the online version.

The consultation was promoted in a mix of digital (for example, social media, emails, website) and non-digital methods (for example, posters, postcards, newspaper advert). Library staff were briefed to promote the consultation to service users and provide support as required. Library public computers could be used to access the consultation website and complete the online questionnaire.

Emails were sent to key stakeholders, including Folkestone & Hythe District Council, the town and parish councils, community groups, local charity organisations, library groups and partners encouraging their participation in the consultation and support promoting it to their residents, members or the people they work with. Local schools were contacted twice, at the beginning and towards the end of the consultation. The consultation period coincided with the annual library school age children's Summer Reading Challenge which is a busy time of year seeing many families visiting libraries.

The consultation results showed that many people felt strongly that the community needed a full library services available in the town centre.

A customer engagement is being completed from 8th December 2025 to 10th January 2026 to ask Folkestone library customers which days out of Wednesday and Sunday they would prefer the new temporary library at 14 Sandgate Road to be open. The library's new High Street location and co-location with the Adult Education centre means it's part of the town centre so we want to make sure our opening days reflect when people are most likely to visit in this setting. The results of the vote will then inform the decision we take on opening days at the new temporary library at 14 Sandgate Road.

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Residents of Folkestone and key local stakeholders. In detail:

- Library customers
- Wider Folkestone and Hythe residents
- Folkestone district library staff
- Folkestone and Hythe KCC members
- Folkestone & Hythe District Council
- Key interest/campaign group or key customer contacts
- Local MP
- Creative Folkestone
- Folkestone Town Council, Sandgate Parish Council and Hythe Town Council
- Cheriton Nepalese Group
- Library related groups, such as Books Groups, Baby Rhyme, Books Beyond Words etc.
- Folkestone Community Fridge (currently partners at Wood Avenue Library)
- Living Words (displaced due to Folkestone temp closure)
- Local schools and colleges
- Department for Culture, Media and Sport

Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?

Yes. There has been a full EQIA (version 2) for the Future of Folkestone Library Key decision. A consultation stage EQIA (version 1) formed part of the public consultation. We have also completed an EQIA on the current temporary provision at 5 Grace Hill.

Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?

Yes. Since the temporary closure of the library local people and community groups have been providing feedback through a variety of means and so we recognise the strength and depth of local feeling regarding the need for a full library provision in the town centre. This is detailed in the responses from the public consultation.

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff/volunteers

Staff/volunteers

Residents/communities/citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

Re-opening a town centre library provision at 14 Sandgate Road will provide a number of positive impacts.

- This will provide the complete town centre service—including book collections and event space—in one accessible building. The full Adult Fiction and Non-fiction selections will return from nearby branches.
- It will return a full children's library to Folkestone town centre providing books, information as well as events and activities such as Baby Bounce and Rhyme Sessions and craft events which have only been available at nearby branch libraries since the temporary closure at 2 Grace Hill.
- A move to a building co-located with other public and community services offers opportunities to better serve the public within one location. This brings more services to

people in one convenient place but also has the potential to increase the take-up of library and other services for those who don't currently use them.

- It may bring more customers to the service in the new high street location where the services delivered in the library will be more visible through large windows facing onto the high street
- The service will be able to advertise the services available to members of the community passing by on the high street visiting other essential services such as the post office and bank.
- 14 Sandgate Road is accessible from the high street and there are nearby public transport services and parking options.
- 14 Sandgate Road's closest car parks with disabled bays are at Shellons Street (2 disabled bays and run by FHDC offering free parking with a blue badge for 3 hours) which is 0.1 miles/4 minute walk away or NCP Bouverie Place (26 disabled bays) which is 0.2 miles/3 minute walk away. In comparison the closest car parks with disabled bays to 2 Grace Hill are at Shellons Street which 0.1 miles/3 minute walk or Payers Park (4 disabled bays and run by FHDC offering free parking with a blue badge for 3 hours) which is 0.1 miles/2 minute walk away.
- 14 Sandgate Road is located in the Folkestone Central ward next to the Folkestone Harbour ward which is an area of high deprivation. 14 Sandgate Road is close to parts of the community who could particularly benefit from accessing library services although there are areas of need across Folkestone.
- A high street location could be more accessible for those with mobility impairments due to the proximity to other shops and services that people will want to access. The high street is also accessible from public transport and parking options.
- The library at 14 Sandgate Road will be all on one level providing an accessible space for all.

Library usage data (Appendix 2) from before 2 Grace Hill temporarily closed, showed that the largest proportion of library users travelled from Folkestone East and Folkestone Central wards which would make the library closer for them at 14 Sandgate Road. While concern has been raised that a high street location would make the library less accessible for those from the Folkestone Harbour ward it is felt that any high street location would be positive overall given that other services, retail and leisure facilities are also in the town and the distances involved are reasonable. There are car parks and bus stops nearby so can be accessed as well as any other town centre location.

The return of a full town centre library and registration service at 14 Sandgate Road would provide the following benefits:

Age/Children/Pregnancy and Maternity

- Early years activities, such as Rhyme Time and Summer Reading Challenge can return to Folkestone town centre providing greater accessibility.
- Birth and death registration appointments would resume in Folkestone town centre.
- Customers would be able to access a full library and registration service/full public computers/activities in the town centre again.
- All of these activities would be available to attend in a town centre location.
- The library service will be delivered from one floor with no steps creating an accessible space for all.

Disability/Carers

- Books Beyond Words reading group (reading group for people with learning disabilities) could resume at a town centre location and this option would be discussed with the group.

- Specialist book stock to support those with disabilities would be available again at a town centre library location.
- The library service will be delivered from one floor with no steps creating an accessible space for all.

Gender Identity/Sexual Orientation

- Specialist LGBTQIA+ book stock would be available again at town centre library location.

Race

- Dual language and specialist book stock to support those whose first language is not English would be available again at town centre library location.
- Potential for meet and practice English groups to be setup in a town centre location once more.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for Age?

Yes

Details of negative impacts for Age

- The journey from 2 Grace Hill and the current temporary library at 5 Grace Hill to 14 Sandgate Road is uphill. This could be more difficult for some older customers, some carers who might wish to visit with their cared for family member/client, or those with babies if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- The co-location may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.
- The ward in which 14 Sandgate Road is located has a lower proportion of individuals aged under 16 (18%) than the ward in which Grace Hill is located (24%). A move to 14 Sandgate Road could adversely affect young people, for whom access to library services may be particularly important, who live closer to the Grace Hill building.
- Opening hours may not be convenient for everyone.

Mitigating Actions for Age

- 14 Sandgate Road is a more central town centre location than Grace Hill as it is on the high street. 14 Sandgate Road in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There is a car park located very close to 14 Sandgate Road.
- Ensure clear signage is in place for the temporary library location at 14 Sandgate Road and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan is in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales. This includes a customer engagement asking library users which days out of Wednesday and Sunday they would like the service to be open and signage on the 14 Sandgate Road building advertising that the Library and Adult Education services are 'coming soon'.
- For those customers unable to travel to a high street location we can offer the Home Library Service as an alternative way to access the service.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone Library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to 14 Sandgate Road.

- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to Grace Hill. The distance from Grace Hill to 14 Sandgate Road is 0.2 miles. 14 Sandgate Road is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- The library will all be on the ground floor so will provide accessible service to all including having accessible public toilets.
- The layout of the library has been considered to include quieter spaces. We would work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- The opening hours will be the same number of opening hours as was in place at the Grace Hill Library. We are engaging with customers about whether the library is open on a Wednesday or Sunday. The service does offer a range of opening hours and times to cater for all age ranges including Saturday opening hours if people cannot visit during the week, after school time for example.

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

20. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Disability

Are there negative impacts for Disability?

Yes

Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

- The journey from 2 Grace Hill and the current temporary library at 5 Grace Hill to 14 Sandgate Road is uphill. This could be more difficult for customers with reduced mobility if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- For some customers accessing a new and different building can be daunting for example those with neuro diversities.
- Co-location options may present a busier library space and therefore potential challenges for some in visiting a noisier and busier space.
- The ward in which 14 Sandgate Road is located has a lower proportion of individuals with a highly limiting disability (9%) than the ward in which Grace Hill is located (12%). A move to 14 Sandgate Road could adversely affect those disabled people in the latter ward.

Mitigating actions for Disability

- 14 Sandgate Road is a more central town centre location than Grace Hill as it is on the high street. 14 Sandgate Road in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. 14 Sandgate Road's closest car parks with disabled bays are at Shellons Street (2 disabled bays and run by FHDC offering free parking with a blue badge for 3 hours) which is 0.1 miles/4 minute walk away or NCP Bouverie Place (26 disabled bays) which is 0.2 miles/3 minute walk away.
- Ensure clear signage is in place at 14 Sandgate Road and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan is in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales. This includes a customer engagement asking library users which days they would like the service to be open and signage on the 14 Sandgate Road building advertising that the Library and Adult Education services are 'coming soon'
- The Home Library Service, online library services and the alternative Folkestone and Hythe district libraries offer alternative ways to access the service for those customers unable to

travel to a high street location. The service offers free eBook/magazine/newspaper collections via our website. Further promotion could be carried out to raise awareness of these services. A Home Library Service promotional campaign is currently underway.

- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to 14 Sandgate Road.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to 14 Sandgate Road is 0.2 miles. 14 Sandgate Road is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- For those with neurodivergent conditions or anxiety when accessing new spaces we would provide a social story for a new location. The social story is a social learning tool supporting individuals with neurodivergence to clarify and explain social situations aiming to reduce anxiety in unfamiliar locations and promote understanding of social situations and expectations. We would also investigate the option of a virtual tour of the building to further allow customers to familiarise themselves with the space before visiting.
- The layout of the building has been considered to ensure accessibility, including quieter spaces. We will work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- The library will all be on the ground floor so will provide accessible service to all including having accessible public toilets.
- The opening hours will be the same number of opening hours as was in place at the Grace Hill Library. We are engaging with customers about whether the library is open on a Wednesday or Sunday. The service does offer a range of opening hours and times to cater for all including Saturday opening hours if people cannot visit during the week for example.

Responsible Officer for Disability

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

21. Negative Impacts and mitigating actions for Sex**Are there negative impacts for Sex**

No

Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not applicable

Mitigating actions for Sex

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for Sex

Not applicable

22. Negative Impacts and mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

NO

Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race**Are there negative impacts for Race**

Yes

Negative impacts for Race

- The ward in which 14 Sandgate Road is located has a lower proportion of individuals of a non-white ethnic background (8%) than the ward in which Grace Hill is located (12%). A move to 14 Sandgate Road could adversely affect those people of a non-white ethnic background, for whom access to library services may be particularly important, in the latter ward.

Mitigating actions for Race

- 14 Sandgate Road is a more central town centre location than Grace Hill as it is on the high street. 14 Sandgate Road in comparison to Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (there may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. 14 Sandgate Road's closest car parks with disabled bays are at Shellons Street (2 disabled bays and run by FHDC offering free parking with a blue badge for 3 hours) which is 0.1 miles/4 minute walk away or NCP Bouverie Place (26 disabled bays) which is 0.2 miles/3 minute walk away.
- We will ensure that clear signage is in place and raise awareness of the new location at 14 Sandgate Road. A communications plan is in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales. This includes a customer engagement asking library users which days they would like the service to be open and signage on the 14 Sandgate Road building advertising that the Library and Adult Education services are 'coming soon'
- The Home Library Service and the alternative Folkestone and Hythe district libraries offer alternative ways to access the service for those customers unable to travel to a high street location.
- The data on the home addresses of Folkestone Library customers from 2022 (prior to the temporary closure) was reviewed (Appendix 2) to cross reference with the wards served by Folkestone Library. The data shows that the highest proportion of Folkestone library users live in the Folkestone Central ward which is closer to 14 Sandgate Road.
- For the customers travelling from Folkestone Harbour and Folkestone East wards there is already an uphill journey to get to 2 Grace Hill. The distance from 2 Grace Hill to 14 Sandgate Road is 0.2 miles. 14 Sandgate Road is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities.
- The opening hours will be the same number of opening hours as was in place at the Grace Hill Library. We are engaging with customers about whether the library is open on a Wednesday or Sunday. The service does offer a range of opening hours and times to cater for all, including Saturday opening hours if people cannot visit during the week for example.

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

24. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief

No

Negative impacts for Religion and belief

Not applicable

Mitigating actions for Religion and belief

Not applicable

Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Not applicable

25. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation

Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation

No
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not applicable
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not applicable
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not applicable
26. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Yes
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The journey from 2 Grace Hill and the current temporary library at 5 Grace Hill to 14 Sandgate Road is uphill. This could be more difficult for pregnant customers or those with babies if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill. Opening hours may not be convenient for everyone.
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 14 Sandgate Road is a more central town centre location than Grace Hill as it is on the high street. 14 Sandgate Road in comparison to 2 Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. There are car parks located very close to 14 Sandgate Road at Shellons Street and Bouverie Place. 14 Sandgate Road is located near many other local services on the high street, such as the Post Office, banks, supermarkets and shops meaning that customers would be able to combine a visit to the library with other activities. The number of opening hours at 14 Sandgate Road will remain the same as opening hours at the Grace Hill Library but we are engaging with customers about whether the library is open on a Wednesday or Sunday. The service does offer a range of opening hours and times including Saturday opening hours if people cannot visit during the week.
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Yes
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice of marriage appointments will not be delivered from the new temporary library at 14 Sandgate Road.
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Notice of marriage appointments will continue to be delivered at Wood Avenue Library.
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn
28. Negative impacts and mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

Yes

Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities

- 14 Sandgate Road is on the high street so the journey from the current building to 14 Sandgate Road is uphill. This could be more difficult for someone with mobility issues and their Carers if they live closer to the current location on Grace Hill.
- Opening hours may not be convenient for everyone.

Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities

- 14 Sandgate Road is a more central town centre location than Grace Hill as it is on the high street.
- 14 Sandgate Road in comparison to Grace Hill is closer to the bus station (There may be future changes to the provision which lead to more bus stops in the town centre) and equal distance to the train station. 14 Sandgate Road's closest car parks with disabled bays are at Shellons Street (2 disabled bays and run by FHDC offering free parking with a blue badge for 3 hours) which is 0.1 miles/4 minute walk away or NCP Bouverie Place (26 disabled bays) which is 0.2 miles/3 minute walk away.
- The layout of the building has been considered to ensure accessibility, including quieter spaces. We will work to ensure any new building and layout has accessibility for all as a key requirement of the design process.
- The library will all be on the ground floor so will provide accessible service to all including having accessible public toilets.
- Ensure clear signage is in place and raise awareness of the new location. A communications plan is in place to raise awareness of the new location, promote the services available and inform people of timescales. This includes a customer engagement asking library users which days they would like the service to be open and signage on the 14 Sandgate Road building advertising that the Library and Adult Education services are 'coming soon'.
- The opening hours will be the same number of opening hours as was in place at the Grace Hill Library. We are engaging with customers about whether the library is open on a Wednesday or Sunday. The service does offer a range of opening hours and times to cater for all age ranges including Saturday opening hours if people cannot visit during the week, after school time for example.

Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities

Anna Hendy and Donna-Marie Dunn

Appendix 1

Demographic Profile: Folkestone and Hythe

Data primarily sourced from Office of National Statistics (ONS) data from KCC's [website¹](#).

Folkestone is a coastal town in East Kent with a population of 52,279 (2021 census), and sits within the Folkestone & Hythe District which has an overall population of 110,200, forecast to rise to 120,700 by 2027.

Age and Sex

4.5% of the population of Folkestone & Hythe fall within the 0-4 age group, 10.7% are aged 5-14 and 9.5% are aged 15-24. 49.7% of the population are aged 25-64, while 18.7% are aged 65-79, and 6.8% are 80 and older.

48.7% of the population are male, and 51.3% female.

Life expectancy in Folkestone & Hythe is 79.2 years for males and 83.2 for females.

Diversity

88% of the population are White British, and 12% are in ethnic minority groups which are broken down as follows:

Groups	Percentage
White minority groups	4.6%
Asian	3.9%
Black Caribbean or African	0.6%
Mixed or multiple ethnic groups	1.9%
Other ethnic groups	1%
Total	12%

13.7% of young people aged 0-15 are in ethnic minority groups, as are 14.4% of adults aged 16-64 and 5.3% of older people. 2.3% of households have no adults with English as their main language, while 0.6% have no adults but at least one person aged 3 to 15 who has English as their main language.

48% of people stated their religion is Christian, 1.3% Hindu, 1% Muslim and 0.9% Buddhist. 42.1% stated that they have no religion.

¹ www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/area-profiles-and-figures-about-Kent/area-profiles

Socio-economic groups and Deprivation

The Mosaic data for Folkestone and Hythe from 2022 is as follows:

Mosaic Group	Definition	Percentage of overall population
Group D – Rural Reality	Householders living in inexpensive homes in village communities	13.6%
Group E – Senior Security	Elderly people with assets who are enjoying a comfortable retirement	13.2%
Group C – Country Living	Well off owners in rural locations enjoying the benefits of country life	9.5%
Group H – Aspiring Homemakers	Younger households settling down in housing priced within their means	9.4%
Group L – Vintage Value	Elderly people reliant on support to meet financial or practical needs	9.1%
Group O – Rental Hubs	Educated young people privately renting in urban neighbourhoods	8.2%
Group B – Prestige Positions	Established families in large detached homes living upmarket lifestyles	6.6%
Group F – Suburban Stability	Mature suburban owners living in settled lives in mid-range housing	5.8%
Group G – Domestic Success	Thriving families who are busy bringing up children and following careers	5.6%
Group I – Family Basics	Families with limited resources who have to budget to make ends meet	5.4%
Group J – Transient Renters	Single people privately renting low cost homes for the short term	4.7%
Group M – Modest Traditions	Mature homeowners of value homes enjoying stable lifestyles	3.7%
Group N – Urban Cohesion	Residents of settled urban communities with a strong sense of identity	3.2%
Group K – Municipal Challenge	Urban renters of social housing facing an array of challenges	1.8%
Group A – City Prosperity	High status city dwellers living in central locations and pursuing careers with high rewards	0.2%

Mosaic is a classification system designed by Experian to profile the characteristics of the UK population. Each household in the UK is classified as belonging to one of 15 groups and 66 types. These groups identify clusters of individuals and households that are as similar as possible to each other, and as different as possible to any other group. They describe the residents of a postcode in terms of their typical demographics, their behaviours, their lifestyle characteristics and their attitudes.

The Index of Multiple Deprivation (IMD) for 2019 reports that Folkestone comprises 67 Lower Super Output Areas (LSOAs). Four of which rank among the top 10% most deprived areas in the country. The wards within which these LSOAs sit are Folkestone Harbour, East Folkestone and Folkestone Central.

2 Grace Hill sits within the Harbour Ward and FOLCA is in Folkestone Central.

14.9% of 16-64 year olds in the district were recorded as claiming Universal Credit in November 2022, which is 1.6% higher than the average for Kent, and 0.8% higher than the national average. 63.8% of the claimants are not in employment. As of December 2022, Folkestone Harbour, Folkestone Central and East Folkestone wards have the highest rate of unemployment within the Folkestone & Hythe District².

East Folkestone sits within the top 10 wards in Kent with the highest number of children in absolute low-income families³.

² Kent Analytics: Ward Unemployment Bulletin -www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/information-and-data/facts-and-figures-about-Kent/economy-and-employment#tab-5

³ Kent Analytics: Children in Poverty 2022 - www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0009/7956/Children-in-poverty.pdf

Folkestone Library Statistics

Issues (library items taken out e.g. book loans)

The table below shows issue rankings for Folkestone and Hythe district libraries in relation to the 99 Kent Libraries. The more library loan items taken out the higher the ranking, e.g. 1 equals the highest number of loans in the county, whereas 99 equals the lowest level of loans.

Library	Issue ranking for April to November 2022 ⁴
Hythe	21
Folkestone	25
Cheriton	40
New Romney	54
Lyminge	64
Wood Avenue	72
Sandgate	89
Lydd	94

Active Borrowers

The number of people borrowing items from Folkestone Library had been steadily increasing throughout the year, and from April to November 2022 increased by 18%. In November Folkestone Library had 2,911 active borrowers, while Hythe Library, although issuing more items, had 2,347 active borrowers.

1,402 customers borrowed items during the last full quarter of Folkestone Library being open, and these customers can be broken down into the following age categories:

Age band	No. of customers	Percentage
0-10	536	38.2%
11-19	126	9.0%
20-29	62	4.4%
30-39	141	10.1%
40-49	126	9.0%
50-59	88	6.3%
60 plus	314	22.4%
Age unknown	9	0.6%

Of these customers 45.9% identify as female, 25.9% as male, 0.14% as non-binary/3rd gender while 28.03% did not specify their gender identity.

17 customers (1.21%) indicated that they had a disability as follows:

Disability	No. of customers
Mental health	2
Physical impairment	5
Vision impairment	2

⁴ This period was chosen as this was the last period during the financial year 22/23 when Folkestone Library was open.

Not all customers will provide information on disability when joining the library service, therefore it is likely that the true figure would be more.

Of the 335 customers who indicated their ethnicity, 83% were White British and 17% in ethnic minority groups which can be broken down as follows:

Ethnicity	No. of customers
Asian/Asian British – Chinese	2
Asian/Asian British – Indian	4
Asian/Asian British – Bangladeshi	2
Asian/Asian British – Pakistani	3
Asian/Asian British – Other	1
Black/Black British – African	3
Black/Black British – Caribbean	1
Black/Black British – Other	1
Mixed/Multiple – White and Asian	2
Mixed/Multiple – White and Black Caribbean	1
White – Gypsy or Irish Traveller	2
White – Irish	1
White – Other	24
Other Ethnic group	10

Visitors

Library	No. of visitors April to November 2022
Folkestone	50,675
Hythe	38,399
Wood Avenue*	22,209
Cheriton	21,397
Sandgate	6,982
New Romney	6,392
Lydd	3,092
Lyminge	3,007

*Wood Avenue Library visitors include customers using the Community Fridge

PC Usage

Use of the public computers (PCs) increased by 36% from April to November 2022 compared with the previous year, with over 6,000 hours of PC usage in total for the year up to December 2022.

Events and Activities

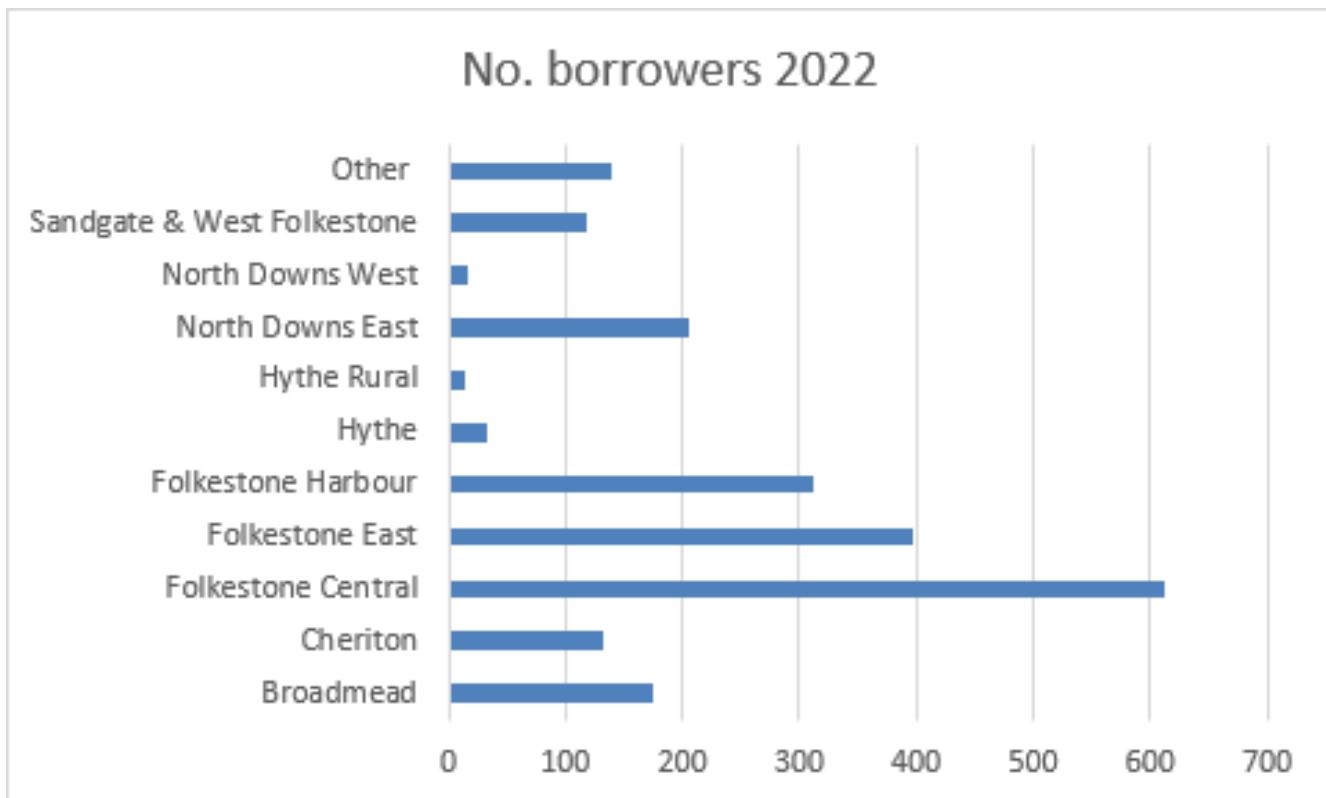
From April to November 2022, Folkestone Library held 141 community events and activities, with 1,464 attendees. These activities include the following:

- Rhyme Time for babies, toddlers and their parents and carers.

- Playground artist-led sessions for babies 0-18 months and their parents and carers.
- Books Beyond Words book group sessions for adults with learning disabilities.
- Meet and Practise English sessions for adults whose first language is not English.
- School Holiday activities in conjunction with the Summer Reading Challenge.
- The Library also hosted a series of sessions for the Flux programme with partners Living Words, who were working with 18-25 year old LGBTQIA+ people addressing issues around self-harm, ill mental health and suicide through the creative arts.

Appendix 2

Library borrowers in 2022 cross referenced with wards that are served by Folkestone Library at 2 Grace Hill:



NB - North Downs West would be served mostly by Lyminge Library, and Hythe by Hythe Library.
2 Grace Hill sits within the Harbour ward and FOLCA is in Folkestone Central ward.

The details of the above graph are detailed in the table below:

Ward	Number of Registered Borrowers at Folkestone Library
Folkestone Central	613
Folkestone East	396
Folkestone Harbour	313
North Downs East	205
Broadmead	174
Cheriton	132
Sandgate & West Folkestone	117
Hythe	34
North Downs West	17
Hythe Rural	13
Other (covers customers from other wards/districts who have registered at Folkestone; includes Romney Marsh, Dover, Dartford, Canterbury, Ashford, Maidstone, Thanet, Tonbridge, Tunbridge Wells),	139

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Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – Proposed Draft Agenda and Work Programme (Updated January 2026)

Item	Cabinet Committee to receive item
Final Draft Budget	Annual (Jan & Nov)
Corporate Risk Register-Strategic	Annual (March)
Winter Service Policy	Annual (March and Sept 2026)
Environment Agency - Presentation	Bi-Annual (March and Sept 2026) Review
Southern Water - Presentation	Bi-Annual (Nov and July) Review
Climate Adaptation Plan	Annual (TBC 1 st Quarter 2026)
Kent and Medway Business Fund Monitoring	Bi-annual Reporting (TBC 1 st Quarter 2026)

- NB: Provisional Placements Prior to Agenda Setting

RT= Report/Briefing/Paper (Non-Regular Occurring) KD=Key Decision

10th March 2026 (Agenda is Subject to Change Provisional Position Only)

Item	Additional Comments
<i>Introduction/verbal announcement</i>	<i>At each meeting</i>
<i>Apologies and Substitutes</i>	<i>At each meeting</i>
<i>Declarations of Interest</i>	<i>At each meeting</i>
<i>Minutes of the meeting held xxx</i>	<i>At each meeting</i>
<i>Verbal Updates</i>	<i>At each meeting</i>
<i>Combined Performance Dashboard</i>	<i>At each meeting</i>
RT-Corporate Risk Register (Both)	Annual
RT-Met Office Climate Forecasts	TBC
RT-Strategic Risk Register	TBC
RT-Climate Adaption Plan	TBC
RT-Environment Agency	March 2026 (Moved from January)
RT-EV Charging	TBC
RT-Lower Thames Crossing	TBC
KD-Kent Joint Municipal Waste Strategy	March 2026
KD-Adoption of Plan Sea	March 2026
KD-Kent Heritage Conservation Strategy	March 2026
KD-25-year Water Resources Plan	March 2026

Work Programme	At each meeting
Future Options (Provisional Position Only Dates are Subject to Change)	
Item	Additional Comments
RT-Southern Water: Progression Update 6 monthly (New)	<i>Spring /Summer 2026</i>
RT-Kent & Medway Business Fund Monitoring	<i>TBC</i>
RT-KMEF- Ambition 4 Economic Opportunities	<i>TBC</i>
RT-KMEF-Ambition 5	<i>Spring /Summer 2026</i>
KD-Kent Travel Saver	<i>TBC</i>
KD-DfT Bus Grant	<i>TBC</i>
KD-HAMP (Highway Asset Management Plan)	<i>1st Quarter 2026</i>
KD-BSIP Bus Funding Infrastructure	<i>TBC</i>
KD-Charging for Non-Statutory SUDS for Minor Applications	<i>TBC</i>
KD-Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF)	<i>1st Quarter 2026</i>
KD-Driving Continuous Recycling improvements	<i>TBC</i>
KD-Southern Water Joint working	<i>TBC</i>
KD-Kent Design Guide	<i>1st Quarter 2026</i>
KD-Hardelot	<i>1st Quarter 2026</i>
KD-Mineral Sites Plan and Local Development Scheme	<i>Spring/Summer 2026</i>
KD-GRT Pitch Allocation Policy	<i>Spring/Summer 2026</i>
KD-Library Building Network Review	<i>TBC</i>
KD-LGR-Approach to County Wide Services	<i>Spring/Summer 2026</i>
KD-Otterpool Garden Town	<i>1st Quarter 2026</i>