

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 25 September 2025.

PRESENT: Mr B Collins, Mrs B Fordham, Mr M Fraser Moat, Ms L Kemkaran, Mr P King, Miss D Morton, Mrs C Palmer, Mr P Webb, Mr D Wimble and Mr P Osborne

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Hammond (Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs C Head (Head of Finance Operations), Mr J Betts (Interim Corporate Director Finance), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Ms S Crouch (Public Health Consultant) and McKay (Acting Chief Accountant) and Mrs G Little (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

108. Apologies

(Item 1)

No apologies were received.

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

(Item 2)

No declarations of interest were received.

110. Minutes of the Meeting held on 22 July 2025

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 22 July 2025 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair

111. Cabinet Member Updates

(Item 4)

1. Miss Diane Morton, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Adult social care continued to face significant challenges, as confirmed by the Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (ADASS) Spring Survey 2025 and reflected in Kent's media response. Prevention services were increasingly under pressure, with spending at its lowest proportion of adult social care budgets in over a decade. Rising care costs, growing demand and complexity, and an inadequate funding formula compounded the issue. The Care Quality Commission also faced difficulties, impacting care providers in Kent. A commitment was made to continue supporting providers wherever possible.

- (b) On 18th August a visit was undertaken with Mark Mulville to Westview Integrated Care Centre, which integrated adult social care and health services on a single site. The visit highlighted the importance of joined-up care and included conversations with individuals in short-term care, which illustrated both the challenges and the value of the service.
- (c) On 3rd September Miss Morton chaired the Kent Substance Misuse Alliance meeting. This focussed on partnership work to address addiction and its impact on individuals and families. Both deputy Cabinet Members for Adult Social Care and Public Health attended.
- (d) On 4th September Miss Morton visited MediQuip, Kent's new community equipment provider, following the collapse of NRS Healthcare on 31 July. MediQuip had rapidly mobilised to take over this critical service and were currently delivering and collecting over 400 items daily, including hospital beds and walking aids, to support residents' safety and independence at home and reduce avoidable hospital admissions. While operational challenges were acknowledged, MediQuip demonstrated a strong commitment to improving efficiency and supporting vulnerable residents. They also emphasised their social value commitments and expressed interest in future collaboration to meet evolving community needs. Officers were formally thanked for their tireless efforts in ensuring the immediate continuity of this essential service.
- (e) The 10 September marked World Suicide Prevention Day and 12 days later on 22 September, Kent hosted the Baton of Hope Tour, the UK's largest suicide prevention initiative. The event served as a powerful and moving reminder that suicide remained one of the most urgent public health challenges facing the county. These events, alongside recent visits to voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector services, demonstrated the wide scope of adult social care and public health support, from integrated care and equipment provision to substance misuse and suicide prevention. Each service area was recognised as essential, facing distinct pressures, and underscoring the importance of both prevention and crisis response.
- (f) Miss Morton concluded that despite ongoing national funding challenges, Kent remained focused on building partnerships, protecting statutory services, and directing resources where they would have the greatest impact. The collaborative efforts seen, from MediQuip's rapid mobilisation to the Baton of Hope's advocacy, reflected the values of innovation, partnership, and resilience in challenging times.

2. Mr Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Parish funding was successfully secured for community wardens, with backfilling of posts underway. Advanced negotiations were also in progress with a commercial transport partner to fund additional wardens
- (b) Trading Standards officers actively addressed infrastructure issues in East Kent, where underground electrical cables were contributing to poor

telephone service performance. The asset owners agreed to make a significant investment in relocating the cables and improving service delivery. Officers also supported a national enforcement operation targeting a warehouse in London that was supplying unsafe and counterfeit goods, including to retailers in Kent. The operation resulted in the seizure of over 25 tonnes of goods. In a separate enforcement action, illegal vape products and controlled substances were discovered, leading to an arrest. Investigations into this matter remained ongoing.

- (c) The Summer Reading Challenge, themed The Story of the Garden, was reported as a notable success. A total of 17,913 children participated, representing a 7% increase compared to the previous year. Of those, 7,504 children completed the challenge, and 2,518 joined the library specifically to take part. The initiative was recognised for its contribution to promoting literacy, supporting children's life chances, and enhancing school readiness.
- (d) Further temporary Town Centre Library provision was announced for Folkestone Library, located at 14 Sandgate Road. The new site was designed to serve as a vibrant, multi-purpose hub for residents, incorporating a library, adult education centre, and town centre registration service.
- (e) The Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA) service continued to perform strongly, with the latest customer satisfaction survey results showing 95% satisfaction for libraries, 96% for registration services, and 98% for archives.
- (f) An update on Active Kent and Medway went to the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet on 11 September 2025 which showcased how schools could serve as community hubs to promote healthier and more active lifestyles. The next round of Sport England small grant funding had been opened, offering free access and financial support to national-level athletes across the county. Members were encouraged to promote this opportunity within their communities, particularly among families and local sports clubs.
- (g) Senior Coroner Roger Hatch retired at the end of June, having provided over 20 years of dedicated service to Kent. Formal thanks were extended in recognition of his longstanding contribution, and best wishes were offered for his retirement. Mr Ian Potter was welcomed as the new Area Coroner for Kent and Medway, bringing valuable experience from his previous role as Assistant Coroner in London.
- (h) The Teacher in Your Pocket (TPO) initiative continued to deliver important safety information to elderly and vulnerable residents who were not yet online. New video content was launched covering electrical safety at home, doorstep crime prevention, scam awareness, and smoking cessation. The videos had been viewed over 300,000 times, reflecting strong engagement and the success of the initiative in promoting public safety and wellbeing.

3. Mr Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration, provided an update on the following:

- (a) It was reported that GoToPlaces, the parent company of Visit Kent, and Locate in Kent had both entered administration in recent weeks. Formal thanks were extended to both boards for their contributions and service. In response, Kent County Council convened two workshops with public and private sector partners to explore all available options for maintaining Kent's competitiveness in tourism and investment. KCC was leading efforts to establish short- and medium-term solutions to support the visitor economy and wider business community during the transitional period.
- (b) The Kent and Medway Connect to Work programme was launched, with an additional £4,000 in funding secured to support a further 113 individuals. To date, 185 people had joined the programme. Visits were conducted to training sites in Herne Bay, offering construction and beauty courses, and to ETS in Maidstone, delivering training for the rail sector. These were two of twelve providers participating in the Skills Bootcamp campaign, which had so far delivered 60 courses and enrolled 135 learners.
- (c) The Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) Board had approved 11 interest-free loans since April 2025, supporting key sectors including automotive, life sciences, and training. The KMBF also committed £6 million to support the No Use Empty (NUE) scheme, enabling similar regeneration projects such as the Tri-Dex development in Dover, which successfully delivered 23 units for Small Medium Enterprises (SMEs). Since its inception, the NUE initiative had brought 8,700 empty homes back into use. In recognition of its impact, the scheme received a Special Recognition Award in May.
- (d) The Kent Foundation, supported by Kent County Council, continued to provide training and mentoring to young entrepreneurs. During a recent visit to Gravesham, Mr King met a client of the Foundation. The visit was described as inspiring and demonstrated how the Foundation had helped unlock the client's potential.
- (e) The Get Kent Medway Working Plan was launched, focusing on improving employment outcomes for young people, unemployed women, individuals with health conditions, and those with criminal justice experience.
- (f) Kent County Council continued to work closely with the newly merged University of Kent and University of Greenwich, and was in the process of launching a Local Innovation Partnership as part of the county's wider economic framework.
- (g) On 23rd September, Mr King met with a delegation from France, Belgium, and the Netherlands as part of the application for the UNESCO Cross-Channel Global Geopark bid. The evening engagement was described as positive and constructive. On 26th September, Mr King was due to attend an event in Ebbsfleet with the Leader, alongside many KC colleagues and dignitaries, including the Rail Minister, Lord Hendy, to encourage international travel to stop in Kent again.

4. Mr David Wimble, Cabinet Member for Environment, provided an update on the following:

- (a) The Reuse Network had been launched across Kent, beginning with the opening of the Household Waste Recycling Centre reuse shop in New Romney on 30 July. In its first month, the shop diverted over 2.9 tonnes of reusable items and raised more than £2,500 for local charities, receiving a highly positive response from residents. A second reuse shop opened at Allington on 19 September, and early feedback indicated strong performance and community engagement. To support increased recycling through education, FCC Environment, which operated 14 of Kent's 19 recycling centres, launched a mobile education trailer which would be touring the county. The initiative aimed to engage residents in reuse and recycling practices.
- (b) The Resource Management and Circular Economy team collaborated with the Community Safety team to introduce knife amnesty bins at recycling centres. This initiative was designed to enhance public safety and encourage long-term behavioural change.
- (c) The Heritage Conservation team supported successful community archaeology events at both Shorne Woods and Trosley Country Park. At Shorne Woods, 65 volunteers took part in excavations investigating the remains of the historic narrow-gauge railway. Whilst at Trosley, more than 300 people participated in a two-day dig at the site of a former military camp, where three World War II-era buildings were uncovered.
- (d) Following a challenging year, Kent's Plan Bee team had reported promising signs of pollinator recovery across council-managed parks and nature reserves. This summer, several rare bee species were recorded at sites where they hadn't been seen in years, including Pegwell Bay, Dry Hill Nature Reserve near Sevenoaks, and both Teston Bridge and Trosley Country Parks.
- (e) Explore Kent continued to champion outdoor activity through new walking and cycling guides. The newly launched King Charles III England Coastal Path highlighted the beauty of Kent's coastline and public rights of way network. To inspire younger audiences, the Explore Kent Junior Walking and Cycling Challenge rewarded children with certificates for completing set distances on foot or by bike. New active travel maps had also been introduced for the Darent Valley, alongside a scenic walking route beginning at the Vineyard pub in Lamberhurst and passing through the historic grounds of Scotney Castle.
- (f) Mr Webb provided an update on the transformation of Kingshill Solar Park from a brownfield site into a renewable energy and biodiversity hub. The site has achieved a 10% biodiversity net gain through preserving natural vegetation, installing wildlife features, and creating reptile receptor areas. The latest round of Solar Together Kent and Medway, launched in spring 2025, delivered over 3,560 rooftop solar PV installations—most with battery storage, totalling 16 megawatts of renewable energy. An additional

260 retrofit battery systems and more than 250 home EV chargers were also installed. Together, these measures were expected to avoid around 3,640 tonnes of Carbon-dioxide emissions in their first year, supporting Kent's carbon reduction goals.

- (g) Over the summer, newly planted trees came under stress due to hot, dry conditions. Site managers responded with exceptional watering efforts, and many trees began to show signs of recovery. Preparations were underway for winter planting, with two projects, *Trees Outside Woodlands* and *Elm Heritage Kent*, being considered for funding by the Tree Council.
- (h) KCC also collaborated with the Butterfly Conservation to plant elm trees along the Royal Military Canal at West Hythe, supported by the Folkestone & Hythe Green Grant Scheme. In addition, KCC took part in the Straits Committee *Knowledge Exchange Initiative*, working with partners from Flanders and Zeeland on the conservation of indigenous heritage trees.
- (i) The Grand Green Sustainability Training Programme successfully supported 44 businesses in embedding sustainability into their operations, helping to reduce carbon emissions and improve resource efficiency.
- (j) A motion to rescind the climate emergency was passed at Full Council on 18 September 2025. Mr Wimble commented on its significance, noting that it would influence how KCC delivers services and could support a more pragmatic and effective approach to addressing climate change across Kent.

5. Mrs Beverly Fordham, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Over the summer period, the Education team undertook extensive preparations for the new school term. The Home to School Transport team worked diligently to ensure a smooth start for families, particularly those with children requiring special educational needs (SEN) transport.

A total of over 3,300 new SEN transport applications were received and processed, exceeding volumes from previous years. As a result, more eligible pupils were supported with transport arrangements from the beginning of term.

Transport was successfully planned for 114 schools. New planning tools were introduced to improve operational efficiency, resulting in reduced route distances, better utilisation of vehicle capacity, and a decrease in the number of vehicles required.

An external review of transport arrangements reported that 89% of parents were satisfied or very satisfied with their child's transport provision.

It was reported that, building on improvements made in the previous year, a further £2.5 million in savings was expected, in addition to the £4.7 million underspend already achieved. This outcome was highlighted as a strong example of how innovation and collaborative working could deliver

smarter solutions that benefited both families and the wider Kent community.

- (b) Mrs Fordham noted that she had proposed a draft apprenticeship strategy, which included the creation of a county-wide apprenticeship hub aimed at connecting small businesses, young people, and training providers. The initiative was designed to identify skills gaps and unlock new work-based opportunities. In collaboration with Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration, and other KCC teams and partners, a strong commitment was made to progress the initiative. The next step agreed was the establishment of an Apprenticeship and Employment Task Force subgroup to take the work forward. Thanks were extended to Mr King for his support in driving the initiative.
- (c) Funding had been agreed for a Writing for Wellbeing workshop in Dartford, delivered in partnership with Hope and Prescription CIC, a community interest company specialising in creative and therapeutic programmes to support mental health and emotional wellbeing among young people. The workshops were designed to run as afterschool sessions for teenagers, providing a safe and creative space to foster self-expression, resilience, and emotional wellbeing, while also supporting preparation for the workplace. It was noted that there was an intention to extend this initiative to other districts.
- (d) Mrs Fordham had visited the Amber Project, a provision which supported homeless young people. The project was commended for creating a safe and nurturing environment where young people could begin to rebuild their lives. The visit provided valuable insight into the supportive pathways offered, which aimed to deliver sustainable and positive outcomes. It was noted that such initiatives played a vital role in equipping young people with the tools and confidence needed to move forward. A return visit was anticipated to further understand the implementation of these pathways.
- (e) A visit was also undertaken by Mrs Fordham to Folkestone Academy, part of the Turner Trust, to explore the school's inclusive curriculum and innovative use of facilities. The school was noted for its integration of spaces such as a skateboard park and a forthcoming cycle park, both designed to support student wellbeing and engagement. Folkestone Academy was recognised for its low levels of exclusion and its inclusive, respectful atmosphere. The school maintained high expectations while providing tailored support to ensure all students, including those with additional needs, could thrive. The visit highlighted the school's commitment to inclusive practices and their impact on positive student outcomes both within and beyond the classroom. Further engagement was anticipated to continue learning from the school's approach and to explore opportunities for support.

5.1 Mr Collins (Deputy Leader of the Council) congratulated Mrs Fordham on the £2.5 million saving and recognised the significant accomplishment in light of the longstanding challenges around home-to-school transport. Thanks was extended to the wider team. The Leader echoed Mr Collin's remarks and expressed her appreciation.

6. Mrs Christine Palmer, Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Mrs Pamler acknowledged the challenges within the portfolio but highlighted the dedication, expertise, and support of the team in delivering an outstanding service with children at its heart. Thanks were extended to the team for their continued efforts.
- (b) An update was provided on the Families First initiative, a government-led programme which received a share of £550 million in national funding, with Kent County Council allocated approximately £6 million over two years. The initiative aimed to place families at the centre of early intervention and support services tailored to individual needs, supporting children aged 0–18 and up to 25 for those with SEND through a multidisciplinary approach.
- (c) With regard to the plans to bring children's homes back in-house, Mrs Palmer confirmed that the first property purchase had been completed, with three additional homes in progress. These homes would accommodate two to three children with complex needs, offering tailored, small-scale care. The initiative aimed to improve outcomes and reduce high external placement costs, with potential for future expansion if successful.
- (d) On 9 July, Mrs palmer attended the Virtual School Award Ceremony, which celebrated the achievements of young people supported through pupil premium funding from the Department for Education (DfE). The event highlighted the challenges faced by many pupils and the value of targeted support. The Virtual School, led by Director Tony Duran, had adopted a pupil-centred and inclusive approach, whereby students actively shaped their learning experience. This engagement had helped evolve the programme to better meet individual needs.
- (e) A letter was sent to the Home Secretary regarding delays in processing asylum claims for unaccompanied asylum-seeking children turning 18, with a further letter issued concerning prolonged status decisions for care leavers. These delays were identified as barriers to young people seeking employment and independence.
- (f) The Council had successfully secured Department for Education match funding capital grants to develop provision for children with complex mental health needs and challenging behaviour. The funding, awarded on a 50:50 basis, would support targeted investment in specialist services.
- (g) On 19 July, Mrs Palmer attended the Kent County Council Youth Council, where young people presented plans to lobby on key issues, including travel. The event demonstrated strong collaboration and engagement among participants. In addition, Project Athena was highlighted as a forthcoming initiative with up to £2 million of Department for Education funding expected to support targeted youth programmes.

- (h) Correspondence was due to be sent to the Home Secretary and the Parliamentary Under Secretary of State, Minister for Children and Families, Josh MacAlister, to highlight the achievements of the Children's Services team and commend the exceptional work being undertaken. The communication would also raise concerns regarding delays in status determinations and the proposed consideration of a cap on the number of independent fostering agencies operating in Kent. All Heads of Service within the portfolio had been met, and thanks were extended to officers within Integrated Children's Services for their ongoing guidance and support.
- (i) On 26 August, Mrs Palmer and Deputy Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, Mrs Pamela Williams, met with Dan Bride (Assistant Director, Adolescent and Open Access, West) for a briefing on youth justice. The meeting included an overview of the restorative justice system, which involved activities such as litter picking and graffiti removal. Concerns were raised about the effectiveness of the current approach. Subsequent discussions were held with external agencies and the KCC Cabinet Member for Environment to explore opportunities for more community-based projects that could deliver a more positive impact.
- (j) On 27 August, Mrs Palmer visited the Young Lives Foundation and commented on the breadth of support provided to young people who faced challenges such as bereavement, family difficulties, loneliness, depression, and advocacy needs. The dedication of volunteers was commended, with particular note that some former beneficiaries had since volunteered themselves.
- (k) On 8 September, Mrs Palmer met with Alice Gleaves (Assistant Director SEN Statutory Services) to discuss the challenges faced by armed forces families in relation to Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs). It was noted that when a child was mid-way through the EHCP process and a new posting occurred, the process often had to restart in the new location. Work was underway to determine whether this issue stemmed from legislation or its interpretation, with the aim of identifying a solution to prevent such disruptions in future.
- (l) On 11 September, a visit was undertaken to Fairlawns, a short break care facility in Ashford. Mrs Palmer commended the warm, welcoming environment and dedicated staff. The centre was recognised for its vital support to children with complex needs, including medical conditions. It was noted that short break services played a preventative role, enabling families to continue caring for children at home and helping to avoid the need for looked after arrangements, which would have significant budget implications.
- (m) On 20 September, Mrs Palmer attended the KCC Youth Council at Sessions House and commented on how impressed she was by the knowledge, diversity, and commitment of the young participants. During the mental health group session, Mrs Palmer noted the group's vision for the future, including the development of a training package comprising a booklet, PowerPoint, and video to raise awareness of symptoms, safe

spaces and safe people, support strategies, and the importance of early intervention. Following a lunch break that included a political debate, Mrs Palmer joined the Youth Justice Group, where there was strong enthusiasm and forward planning around future initiatives.

- (n) On 21 September, both Mrs Palmer and Mrs Williams attended the Virtual School Awards for under 16s at Kingswood Activity Centre in Ashford. Both had the honour of presenting awards and spoke with foster parents, carers, and children. The event highlighted the positive impact of support services, including a notable example of a previously non-attending pupil who had since fully engaged in education and was on track to pass their GCSEs. Mrs Palmer reflected on the value of foster families, particularly in supporting children with complex needs, and described the experience as humbling.
- (o) Initial discussions had also been undertaken regarding the development of a strategy to strengthen online safety through safeguarding measures. The aim was to create a programme to support parents in navigating online risks for their children, in response to rising concerns around grooming, abuse, and bullying.

7. **Mr Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, provided an update on the following:**

- (a) Mr Osbourne provided an update on a number of road network issues impacting the county:
 - At **Bluebell Hill**, disruption had been caused by ongoing works essential for future improvements. Officers had been asked to review the traffic management arrangements to reduce the impact on residents and businesses, and this review was underway.
 - **Beardsford Road** had experienced congestion due to emergency gas works.
 - On the **A299 Thanet Way**, ground movement had led to the implementation of a reduced speed limit. Investigations were ongoing to identify a long-term solution.
 - In **Swanscombe, Galley Hill Road** remained closed following a chalk spine collapse. Two options were being explored, a new bridge or a reinforced embankment, and funding was being sought from the Government's Structures Fund.
- (b) Over the summer, Operation Broc had been deployed to manage HGV traffic to Europe, with over 1,000 vehicles held on peak days. It was noted that the operation should be used only when absolutely necessary.
- (c) The EU Entry-Exit System was scheduled to commence on 12 October 2025. British travellers would be required to register biometric data at

Eurotunnel and Dover. Teams were working closely with relevant authorities to prepare for the change.

- (d) Operational demand had been extremely high, with record numbers of inquiries received across services including street lighting and drainage. Thanks were extended to all teams for their continued hard work.
- (e) Final tenders for the new Highways Term Maintenance contract had been received. The successful bidder was expected to be announced in October, with the contract commencing in May 2026.
- (f) The Kent Roads Reform Programme continued to progress strongly. A total of £15 million had been invested in resurfacing nearly 800,000 square metres of road. A notable example was the A274 between Maidstone and Headcorn, where full resurfacing and maintenance were being delivered in a single phase to improve efficiency.
- (g) A new pothole reporting tool had been launched. It featured improved usability, mapping, and photo upload capabilities, and had helped to accelerate response times. Additional services were planned.
- (h) The High Speed Road Programme had been successful, with 99% of works completed on time across 110km (68 miles) of strategic roads.
- (i) Thanks were also extended to the public transport team for ensuring Kent Travel Saver cards were issued to students in time for the new school year.
- (j) Finally, support had been provided for several road safety events, including bike safety at Cheriton and campaigns on drink driving and seat belt use. Further events were planned, including Freshers Fairs and the Air Ambulance Family Fund Day.

8. Mr Matthew Fraser Moat, Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency, provided an update on the following:

- (a) A new commercial strategy was due to be progressed through the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee. This aimed to address a culture of spend within KCC and remove politically driven targets from contracts and activities that could reduce competition and increase costs. The only politically based decision retained was a “Kent First” policy. To support this, a mandatory training module titled Spending Kents Money had been launched for all staff involved in procurement and commissioning.
- (b) Full Council agreed to rescind the 2019 Climate Emergency Declaration at its meeting on 18th September 2025. While this decision carried political implications, it enabled the removal of net zero targets from KCC contracts, broadening supplier eligibility and reducing costs.
- (c) Recognising the strategic importance of third-party contracts, the Contract Review Group had been reinstated to allow for more detailed scrutiny of key service contracts. Directorate-level reviews were also underway to identify immediate savings.

- (d) A full list of policy-based, non-statutory activities had been compiled. These activities, while politically sensitive, were being assessed for potential savings.
- (e) Discussions with other local authorities had highlighted the effective use of AI in reducing costs. The DoLGE team was exploring AI applications within KCC.
- (f) It was noted that a significant proportion of KCC's activities were statutory. The DoLGE team was working to gain a clearer understanding of what constituted true statutory responsibilities across directorates. This would help identify services currently delivered above statutory standards, enabling more informed decisions on potential efficiencies. In addition to savings and efficiency, the DoLGE team was also exploring revenue opportunities. Work was underway with the Commercial Services Group to identify activities where dividend returns to KCC could be increased.

9. Mr Brian Collins, Deputy Leader, provided an update on the following:

- (a) Mr Collins highlighted the administration's achievements over the past five months and thanked Cabinet colleagues for their efforts. Particular recognition was given to the £2.5 million identified in home-to-school transport savings.

The Cabinet Member noted that long-term borrowing had reduced from £732 million at election time to £714 million, following the repayment of £17.9 million in loans. No new borrowing had occurred under the current administration, with projections of further loan repayments indicating a year-end debt of around £650 million.

Mr Collins announced that the Council had repaid a £50 million loan 40 years early, originally taken out on a 50-year term. A representative cheque was presented to mark the occasion. The repayment, negotiated by the Treasury team, delivered a further £5.5 million saving. The financial impact included:

- Annual interest savings of £670,000
- Daily savings of approximately £1,820
- Total projected interest savings of £19.5 million

The Cabinet Member stated that this demonstrated the administration's commitment to sound financial management and delivering on promises made to Kent residents.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member for their updates.

112. 25/00077 - Revenue and Capital Budget Monitoring Report - Quarter 1 2025-26
(Item 5)

John Betts (Interim Corporate Director Finance), Cath Head (Head of Finance Operations) and Joe McKay (Acting Chief Accountant) were in attendance for this item

1. Mr Collins (Deputy Leader of Kent County Council) introduced the report that provided details of the Council's financial position as at Quarter 1 of 2025/26. A forecast outturn variance of £27.9 million overspend was reported, representing 1.8% of the overall budget. The most significant pressure was within Adult Social Care and Health, due to unachievable savings due to be met in-year and wider service-related challenges. A small overspend was also forecast in Children, Young People and Education, primarily linked to high-cost packages for looked-after children with disabilities. Minor overspends were noted in Growth, Environment and Transport, and the Chief Executive's Department, offset by underspends elsewhere. Of the £121.5 million savings target, £102.6 million (84%) was expected to be delivered in-year. The Schools Delegated Budgets position reflected ongoing demand for special educational needs support, funded through the Dedicated Schools Grant. An announcement from Government was expected later in the year. The capital forecast showed a £1.2 million underspend, comprising a £31.9 million real variance and a £33.1 million rephasing variance.
2. RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to:
 - (a) NOTE the revenue and capital forecast outturn position for 2025-26 as detailed in the report, and accompanying appendices
 - (b) AGREE the revenue and capital budget adjustments detailed in the report
 - (c) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Finance to take required actions as necessary to implement all decisions arising from the report
 - (d) DELEGATE authority, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, for the management of the Extended Producer Responsibility Grant (held in reserves) to the Corporate Director of Finance in 2025-26 – subject to relevant government guidance or requirements

113. Quarterly Performance Report, Quarter 1 2025-2026 *(Item 6)*

Matthew Wagner (Chief Analyst Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance) was in attendance for this item

1. Mr Wagner outlined the report for Quarter 1 (Q1, 2025/26) which covered the period January to March, prior to the May county elections. Of the 39 KPIs reported, 17 were rated Green (two more than the previous Quarter) 16 were rated Amber (three fewer than the previous Quarter) and 6 were rated Red (one more than the previous Quarter). With regard to Direction of Travel, 8 indicators showed a positive trend, 27 were stable or with no clear trend, and 4 showed a negative trend. Mr Wagner addressed the 6 KPIs that were rated RED.

2. Mr Wagner proceeded to report on the positive performance trends for Quarter 1 and noted that 17 KPIs were rated green, 8 of which showed a clear improvement over the past six quarters. A notable achievement was within the SEND service, where the percentage of Education, Health and Care Plans issued within the 20-week timescale met the target for the first time since reporting began. This represented the highest performance against this measure since December 2017.
3. It was noted that once the Strategic Statement was finalised, the KPIs within the quarterly performance report and Cabinet Committee dashboards would be reviewed to ensure alignment with priorities for the 2026/27 financial year. This work would be undertaken in collaboration with relevant Cabinet Members and key officers.
4. RESOLVED that Cabinet agree to note the Quarter 1 Performance Report and the actions being taken to address areas where performance is not as targeted.