

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 18 December 2025.

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

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Cook (Democratic Services Manager) and Ms P Der Man (Head of Law – Monitoring Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

34. Apologies for Absence
(Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mrs Dean, Mr Lehmann, Mr Logen, Mr Samme, Mr Thorp and Mr Stepto.

35. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest

36. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 November 2025 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 6 November 2025 be approved as a correct record.

37. Corporate Parenting Panel - Minutes for noting
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 21 October 2025 be noted.

38. Chairman's Announcements
(Item 5)

- 1) The Chairman reported that he had attended the KCC Infrastructure Team Christmas event and expressed his thanks to June Diplock for organising the occasion in support of the Corporate Parenting Christmas Campaign.
- 2) The Chairman acknowledged recent donations to the Chairman's Charities, the Young Lives Foundation and SATEDA, highlighting that £6,000 had been raised through reuse initiatives and the Staff Lottery. He thanked staff for their generosity and highlighted that the funds contributed to the Corporate Parenting Christmas Campaign and to SATEDA's Choice Liberty Programme, which supported girls aged 13–18 who were at risk of abusive relationships.
- 3) The Chairman reminded Members of the introduction of the new Members' Grant System, designed to streamline the grant process. He explained that training for the pilot scheme would be delivered in the new year.
- 4) The Chairman recorded his thanks to Paul Royel, Director of Human Resources and Organisation Development, on the occasion of his retirement following nearly 40 years of service. He also extended his thanks to John Betts, Interim Chief Finance Officer, for his support to Members, including his role as Section 151 Officer during a period of significant financial challenge.

39. County Council Questions
(Item 6)

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, 21 questions were submitted by the deadline and 19 questions were put to the Executive. 11 questions were asked and replies given. A record of all questions and answers is available [online](#) with the papers for this meeting.

40. Report by Leader of the Council
(Item 7)

1. The Leader confirmed that KCC had received information on the Fair Funding Review which provided long needed financial clarity. It was reported that there would be a £127.3 million funding increase for 2026/27, with further increases of 7% for 2027/28 and 6.8% for 2028/29 indicated. Whilst the increased funding was welcomed, it was acknowledged that demand for services, particularly Adult Social Care and Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND), continued to rise significantly. Additionally, the Leader explained that the funding settlement disproportionately disadvantaged rural areas in favour of urban councils.

2. The Leader expressed her commitment to continue to lobby the Government for long term sustainable funding that reflected the true cost of delivering services in Kent.
3. The Leader raised concerns about proposed inheritance tax changes affecting farmers, the Leader shared that she had written to the Chancellor requesting a policy reversal. Significant emotional and financial pressures facing farmers were highlighted, alongside concerns for long term food security. The Leader reaffirmed her commitment to continue advocating on behalf of the farming community.
4. The importance of the armed forces was emphasised in the context of growing global instability. The Leader shared her intention to lobby the Government to remove Diversity, Equity and Inclusion (DEI) targets from armed forces recruitment, with an emphasis on merit based selection.
5. The Leader explained that KCC Members would join a SEND working group, which aimed to redefine children with special educational needs, not as disabled but as differently abled. The Cabinet Member for Education and Skills was expected to play a key role in this working group, to set out policies to ensure that the system worked for those who needed it, whilst also being financially viable for local authorities.
6. Progress in Adult Social Care was highlighted, particularly through stronger management of the market between health and social care. The introduction of the Integrated Joint Brokerage Team, with the NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board, was highlighted as improving hospital discharge processes, standardisation and value for money.
7. The Council's Local Government Reorganisation submission was finalised with Option 1A (a single unitary for Kent and Medway) presented as the most cost effective and practical solution. Informational videos and posts on social media and in the local press had been shared, to inform residents as to why option 1A made sense.
8. The Leader explained that proposed changes to committee arrangements were welcomed as a means of reducing duplication, cutting bureaucracy and delivering annual savings of £75,000. Claims that the changes weaken scrutiny were rejected and the importance of transparency and accountability was reaffirmed.
9. The new in-house visitor economy and inward investment service, Brand Kent, was launched in partnership with Medway Council and planning had begun for future growth.
10. Kent was confirmed as one of the first four areas to launch the £34 million Connect to Work Programme, which aimed to support over 9000 people into employment.
11. The Leader highlighted the success of the first wave of Skills Bootcamps, which were funded by the Department for Education (DfE), with around 250 learners enrolled since July 2025.
12. The Leader chaired the Kent & Medway Employment Taskforce, which brought agencies from across the county together to support the delivery of the Get Kent

and Medway Working Plan, which coordinated employment and met the needs of local employers.

13. The Pathways for All initiative was highlighted in response to the Government's Post 16 Education and Skills White Paper. A £20 million investment in specialist resource bases was confirmed, alongside improvements in attendance and achievements across key stages
14. Since April 2025, £35 million in loans had been approved for 26 local businesses through the Kent & Medway Business Fund. Furthermore, the No Use Empty Scheme was reported to have returned 128 empty homes to active use in the last quarter.
15. Significant progress on highways maintenance was reported, including the signing of a new long term highway contract with Ringway.
16. Finally, the Leader paid tribute to retiring senior officers Paul Royel, Director Human Resources and Organisation Development and John Betts, Interim Chief Finance Officer, for their long and valuable service to the Authority, and was pleased to confirm that Kent County Council's Chief Executive, Amanda Beer, had agreed to remain in post.
17. Mr Hook, Leader of the Opposition, offered his thoughts and prayers to all those affected by the recent shooting at a Hannukah celebration in Bondi Beach, Australia. He urged the Council to stand firmly with Kent's Jewish residents and all those that were facing bigotry and prejudice.
18. Mr Hook also expressed his gratitude to KCC workers, particularly highways staff for keeping roads safe during winter and social services staff for providing 24/7 support to vulnerable residents. He highlighted the rise in loneliness, domestic violence and depression at the wintertime and commended the Council's staff for providing a vital lifeline to those most in need.
19. This praise was also extended to staff working with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, acknowledging the importance of their work and the challenges they had faced during the year. These challenges included a protest at the Acacia Court Centre, driven by an unfounded social media campaign regarding the children cared for there.
20. Mr Hook expressed concern over the rise in misinformation and xenophobia, detailing the physical violence and vandalism displayed at a recent attack at Swale Borough Council's offices . He stressed that such behaviour could not be tolerated and constituted an attack on democracy and local government.
21. Regarding Fair Funding, Mr Hook acknowledged the additional funding from central Government but asserted that it did not constitute a detailed plan in the absence of a clear County Council budget. He requested clarification on whether reserves would be strengthened or depleted and how the Administration intended to address the overspend, which had increased by 66% since their election. He also referenced the significant rise in Adult Social Care costs and a comment made at a recent Policy and Resources (P&R) Cabinet Committee meeting regarding service provision. Mr Hook expressed that these factors and the absence of the budget, caused serious concerns surrounding the future of public services and the Administration's priorities.

22. Turning to the Armed Forces, Mr Hook argued that the greatest threat to the Forces came from comments praising Vladimir Putin rather than incorrect claims that promotions were based on diversity.
23. Finally, Mr Hook outlined the Liberal Democrat proposals to ensure a fair deal for farmers in Kent. This consisted of scrapping family farm tax, ensuring fair trade standards and investing in the farming budget. Mr Hook emphasised the importance of farming for both food production and the future of Kent's countryside.
24. Mr Hood, Leader of the Green Group, responded to the Leader's report by stating that whilst the Fair Funding Settlement could ease the impact of 14 years of municipal austerity, such measures were likely to return under a Reform- led government.
25. Mr Hood highlighted that Kent had the highest incidence of domestic violence in the Southeast and London and noted the Green Group's participation in 16 days of activism coordinated by the White Ribbon campaign to address this issue. He expressed concern that only 6% of domestic related crimes in Kent resulted in the perpetrator being summoned and charged and called for the Council to implement pragmatic measures to improve incident and conviction rates.
26. On extremism, Mr Hood stated that strengthening the Armed Forces would not be possible, whilst continuing to undermine minority groups. He also echoed previous sentiments surrounding the violence and intimidation displayed at Swale Borough Council. He criticised the Administration for their permissive attitude towards the misuse of flags and emblems and condemned the perpetrators for their attack on a proud and compassionate community.
27. Moving to agriculture, Mr Hood emphasised that a successor to 'Produced in Kent' should continue supporting farmers and highlighted potential issues regarding the impact of Labour grey belt and housing policies on countryside spaces. He cited risks of further land being sold for development and the war in Ukraine and called for a greater focus on the green belt and food security.
28. Mr Hood emphasised that the Administration should focus on building social housing, rather than luxury housing as it encouraged population growth from other UK regions.
29. Whilst referencing biblical passages, Mr Hood recognised the holiday period as a time for celebration for many faiths and reflected on the Christian teachings of forgiveness, compassion and community. Mr Hood asserted that these core themes could not be reconciled with a rise in intolerance and political othering. Finally, Mr Hood concluded by reflecting on the multi- cultural origin of Christmas traditions and shared a message of optimism and change in 2026, particularly for those that had been globally displaced.
30. Mr Rayner, Leader of the Conservative Group, responded to the Leader's report by emphasising the Administration's failure to meet the Council's obligations under the Safety Valve Agreement with the Department for Education (DfE). He highlighted that this had resulted in increased loans and commensurate liabilities, with an additional £65 million incurred this year. He anticipated a similar increase next year and for the total outstanding liabilities figure to reach £150 million by March 2028. He advised Members that these figures were not reflected in the balance sheet and stressed the financial impact should the DfE demand full or

partial repayment. Mr Rayner also cited recent criticism from the Chancellor of the Exchequer and Prime Minister on the financial competence of KCC. He argued this placed KCC in a more vulnerable position to government intervention, including potential call-ins of outstanding liabilities.

31. Finally, Mr Rayner outlined the timeline of austerity measures being implemented in the Adult Social Care sector and highlighted the relevant Cabinet Member's previous experience within Local Government.
32. Mr Thomas, Leader of the Independent Group, began by expressing concern on the Administration's focus on national rather than local policy. He asserted that the Fair Funding Review and multi-year settlement should create a foundation for effective strategy, financial planning and sound policy for the Administration that had failed to produce a timely budget based on contingencies. He called for an effective leadership that delivered sensible decisions to avoid having to implement costly, reactive measures.
33. Turning to the Administration's proposal to freeze allowances for private sector providers, Mr Thomas highlighted potential challenges for smaller local providers, operating on low rates compared to higher in-house rates. He suggested the Administration intended to target larger institutions or rogue providers but could risk driving local providers out of the market, increasing pressure on service delivery unless fair rates or joint working arrangements were considered. He also suggested the alternative of a county-based private provision would result in disruption and a further burden on KCC's budget.
34. Mr Thomas raised concerns on the lack of support for farmers regarding the Lidsing Garden Community and Heathlands Garden Settlement, as well as the impact of losing agricultural land to solar installations.
35. Mr Thomas praised the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills for her work on noise-cancelling headphones in schools and home to school transport.
36. Finally, Mr Thomas expressed disappointment that the Leader did not give the keynote speech at the launch of the 34th Kent Property Market Report. He stated that the speech given had failed to reference significant developments, including the demise of Visit Kent, Locate in Kent and shortly the Thames Estuary Growth Board as well as Eurotrains returning to Kent. He called for the Leader to utilise these public opportunities in future to demonstrate the aspirational work delivered by KCC.
37. Mr Brady, Leader of the Labour Group, stated that upon the Labour Government taking office, KCC had received an additional 8% in funding in the 2025-26 funding settlement. He added that a further increase of over 8% was announced for 2026-27 as part of a multi-year settlement, enabling longer-term planning, stability and progress. He also highlighted the delay in the Administration's budget and called for stronger leadership rather than increased setbacks and distraction.
38. Mr Brady continued by outlining further Labour initiatives to improve the lives of Kent residents, including reducing energy bills by £150 (£300 for the most vulnerable), freezing train fares and prescription charges, and guaranteeing a six-month work placement for 18–21-year-olds. He also highlighted commitments to protect the pension triple lock, raising national living wage and scrapping the two-child benefit limit.

39. Turning to farming, Mr Brady identified how the sector had been adversely affected by Brexit. He outlined the Government investments and initiatives to address the issue such as land management schemes, technology support and pledges to purchase more British produce.
40. Finally, Mr Brady questioned the Administration's approach, stating it would lead to austerity and significant cuts, without a clear plan or budget for improving services and meeting demand.
41. Mr Barrett, Leader of the Independent Reformers, reflected on the concept of correlation, referencing the link between financial decisions and their impact on Kent residents and services.
42. In reference to the budget, Mr Barrett explained that residents primarily cared about the quality of services because they paid council tax. He expressed concern that the scale of the financial problem was larger than currently understood. It was outlined that the budget gap stood at £20 million in May when the Administration was elected, this rose to £60 million by August, approximately £75 million by November and was projected to potentially reach £100 million by the start of the new year. Whilst the Fair Funding Review was expected to provide some financial relief, it was emphasised that this would not fully address the problem. Mr Barrett warned the forthcoming budget cuts would have severe impacts on residents.
43. In conclusion, Mr Barrett called for bi-partisan co-operation to minimise the impact of budget cuts on Kent residents. It was stressed that accountability would fall on all Councillors, not solely the Executive. The importance of cooperation for the benefit of Kent residents rather than bi-partisan conflict was strongly emphasised. Mr Barrett concluded that failure to work together on the budget would result in negative consequences for all parties involved.
44. The Leader responded to comments made by the Group Leaders. She explained that the Reform Administration had reduced the Council's long term debt by £67 million. This contrasted with the debt of over £700 million that had been accumulated during the nearly three decades of Conservative control.
45. The Leader thanked Members for paying tribute to the victims of the attack at Bondi Beach, explaining that the attack was part of a wider global problem involving Islamist extremism.
46. The Leader expressed appreciation for the tribute paid to key workers, including those working over the Christmas period in essential services. It was said the council staff would also be on duty during the festive period to ensure continuity of services.
47. The Leader welcomed comments on unaccompanied asylum seeking children (UASC), she explained that there were known issues with the robustness of age verification checks. Concern was expressed that current checks allowed some adults to be placed within children services. Pressure would be applied to the Home Office to strengthen these procedures. The Leader emphasised the need to prioritise safeguarding children already in care.
48. The Leader shared her agreement with other Group Leaders of support for farmers.

49. The Leader cited examples of Liberal Democrat run councils with high levels of debt and financial intervention. She explained that Kent County Council was in a stronger and safer financial position by comparison.
50. The Leader highlighted significant budget failure from the Labour Government, explaining that the Government's budget had been delayed until the last possible date and that its details had been leaked in advance. The Leader referred to recent press coverage that suggested that dissatisfaction within the Labour party was linked to recent membership changes, highlighting reported growth in Reform UK membership and comparatively lower membership figures for the Labour Party. The Leader also suggested that under the Labour Government, job losses had increased with 88,000 jobs reportedly lost over the previous three months.
51. The Leader concluded her response by expressing confidence in the Administration and sharing her belief that the Council was in a strong position under its current leadership.
52. RESOLVED that the Leader's Report be noted.

41. Armed Forces Covenant - Annual Report *(Item 8)*

Canon Peter Bruinvelds CC, Covenant Lead and Civilian- Military Liaison Advisor, was in attendance for this item.

1. The report was introduced by Canon Peter Bruinvelds CC, who provided a briefing on Kent County Council's work to support Kent's Armed Forces community and summarised key achievements during 2025. This included a short PowerPoint presentation, the slides of which can be found [HERE](#).
2. Ms Kemkaran proposed and Mr Streatfeild seconded the motion that:

"County Council is asked to:

- NOTE all that is being done to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent and to ENDORSE priorities going forward including promoting Kent County Council's status as the lead MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award Holder.
 - Continue to support the Armed Forces Covenant across the county and to ENDORSE the Council's commitment to this work by engaging locally in Covenant efforts and Military related events."
3. Members expressed their support and appreciation for the work undertaken to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent.
 4. The Chairman put the motion in paragraph 2 and it was agreed unanimously.
 5. RESOLVED that County Council:

- Notes all that is being done to deliver the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent and endorses priorities going forward including promoting Kent County Council's status as the lead MoD Employers Recognition Gold Award Holder.
- Continues to support the Armed Forces Covenant across the county and endorses the Council's commitment to this work by engaging locally in Covenant efforts and Military related events.

42. Committees Review *(Item 9)*

1. Mr Chamberlain proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that:

"The County Council is asked to:

- a. Approve the proposed amendments to the Ordinary Committee arrangements:
 - Planning Application Committee to add the functions of the Regulation Committee into its terms of reference and take on the latter's sub-committees and Panels in line with this change.
 - Selection and Member Services Committee to add the functions of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee into its terms of reference.
 - Delete the Regulation Committee and Electoral and Boundary Review Committee from the list of Committees.
 - Delete the Member Development Sub- Committee.
 - b. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to implement the above changes subject to appropriate Member training and transition arrangements.
 - c. Request that the Monitoring Officer, at the point of implementation, make the required changes to the Constitution and current Committee Terms of Reference to reflect the transfer of functions and the deletion of obsolete Committees.
 - d. Request that the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, undertake a review of the updated Ordinary Committees' Terms of Reference to improve and develop their arrangements on a longer term basis, with the outcome of the review to be considered by Selection and Member Services in due course.
2. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (47)

Mr J Baker, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Ms B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Ms L Kemkaran, Mr A Kennedy, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Ms M Lawes, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Ms D Morton,

Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Ms B Porter, Ms S Roots, Mr T Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (25)

Mr B Barrett, Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mr M Ellis, Mr R Ford, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr S Heaver, Mr M Hood, Mr A Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Miss I Kemp, Mr J Moreland, Ms C Nolan, Mr T Prater, Ms A Randall, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr C Sefton, Mr M Sole, Mr R Streatfeild, Mr P Thomas and Mr N Williams.

Abstain (0)

Motion Carried.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

a. Approves the proposed amendments to the Ordinary Committee arrangements:

- Planning Application Committee to add the functions of the Regulation Committee into its terms of reference and take on the latter's sub-committees and Panels in line with this change.
- Selection and Member Services Committee to add the functions of the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee into its terms of reference.
- Delete the Regulation Committee and Electoral and Boundary Review Committee from the list of Committees.
- Delete the Member Development Sub- Committee.

b. Delegates authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, to implement the above changes subject to appropriate Member training and transition arrangements.

c. Requests that the Monitoring Officer, at the point of implementation, make the required changes to the Constitution and current Committee Terms of Reference to reflect the transfer of functions and the deletion of obsolete Committees.

d. Requests that the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Monitoring Officer, undertake a review of the updated Ordinary Committees' Terms of Reference to improve and develop their arrangements on a longer term basis, with the outcome of the review to be considered by Selection and Member Services in due course.

43. Proportionality and appointments to committees and other bodies *(Item 10)*

1. Ms Kemkaran proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that:

"The County Council is asked to:

- a. Determine the total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on

certain bodies (as per the appropriate appendix subject to Council decision on the Committees Review item);

- b. Delegate authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Group leaders and the Monitoring Officer, to adjust and confirm the allocation of committee places as necessary in order to conform to overall proportionality requirements; and to confirm external Joint Committee appointments where required”

2. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (65)

Mr J Baker, Mr B Barrett, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Mr M Ellis, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Mr R Ford, Ms B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mr A Hook, Ms L Kemkaran, Mr A Kennedy, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Ms M Lawes, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr T Mole, Mr J Moreland, Ms D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Ms C Nolan, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Ms B Porter, Mr T Prater, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Ms S Roots, Ms C Russell, Mr C Sefton, Mr T Shonk, Mr D Sian, Mr M Sole, Mr R Streatfeild, Dr G Sturley, Mr P Thomas, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mr N Williams, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (4)

Mr B Black, Mrs M Fothergill, Mrs S Hudson and Ms A Randall.

Abstain (3)

Mr M Hood, Mr S Heaver and Miss I Kemp.

Motion Carried.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

- a. Determines the total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on certain bodies (as per Appendix 1 to the report).
- b. Delegates authority to the Democratic Services Manager, in consultation with the Group leaders and the Monitoring Officer, to adjust and confirm the allocation of committee places as necessary in order to conform to overall proportionality requirements; and to confirm external Joint Committee appointments where required.

44. Political Assistants *(Item 11)*

1. Ms Kemkaran proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that:

“County Council is asked to:

- a. Approve the establishment of Political Assistant posts for qualifying Political Groups in accordance with section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;

- b. Delegate authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary consequential amendments to the Constitution;
- c. Authorise the Chief Executive to appoint Political Assistants in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance and for her to develop and agree a local protocol in relation to Political Assistants, incorporating a job description and salary for the role, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant; and
- d. Authorise the Corporate Director for Finance to identify the options for funding the roles for 2025/26 and to agree the most appropriate funding source, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant.”

2. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (45)

Mr J Baker, Mr M Brown, Mr D Burns, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Ms B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Ms L Kemkaran, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Ms M Lawes,, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr T Mole, Ms D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Ms B Porter, Ms S Roots, Mr T Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mr N Wibberley, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (26)

Mr B Barrett, Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mr M Ellis, Mr R Ford, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr S Heaver, Mr M Hood, Mr A Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J Moreland, Ms C Nolan, Mr T Prater, Ms A Randall, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr C Sefton, Mr M Sole, Mr R Streatfeild, Mr P Thomas and Mr N Williams.

Abstain (1)

Mr C Burwash.

Motion Carried.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

- a. Approves the establishment of Political Assistant posts for qualifying Political Groups in accordance with section 9 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989;
- b. Delegates authority to the Monitoring Officer to make the necessary consequential amendments to the Constitution;
- c. Authorises the Chief Executive to appoint Political Assistants in accordance with the relevant legislation and guidance and for her to develop and agree a local protocol in relation to Political Assistants, incorporating a job description and salary for the role, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant; and
- d. Authorises the Corporate Director for Finance to identify the options for funding the roles for 2025/26 and to agree the most appropriate funding source, in consultation with the Leaders of the Political Groups who qualify for appointment of a Political Assistant.

45. Corporate Parenting - Annual Report
(Item 12)

Ms Caroline Smith, Assistant Director Corporate Parenting, and Ms Jo Carpenter, Participation and Engagement Manager, were in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Caroline Smith introduced the item, highlighting the work carried out by key corporate parenting services over the past year. It was confirmed that the Corporate Parenting Christmas Appeal had successfully reached its £25,000 fundraising target.
2. Ms Williams proposed, and Mrs Palmer seconded the motion that:

“County Council is asked to:

1. Note the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025.
2. Note the responsibilities as Corporate Parents, to be a champion for our children and care experienced adults.”
3. Members shared their thanks to the fostering team and foster carers for their hard work and dedication.
4. The Chairman put the motion in paragraph 2 and it was agreed unanimously.
5. RESOLVED that Council:
 1. Notes the Corporate Parenting Annual Report 2025.
 2. Notes the responsibilities as Corporate Parents, to be a champion for our children and care experienced adults.

46. Pension Pooling Arrangements
(Item 13)

1. Mrs Emberson proposed, and Mr Collins seconded the motion that:

“County Council is asked, as recommended by the Pension Fund Committee, to:

1. Agree that Kent County Council, as Administering Authority for the LGPS Kent Pension Fund, enter into the Pension Pooling arrangements with Border to Coast Pensions Partnership.
2. Agree to join the Border to Coast Joint Committee.
3. Approve the appointment of the Chair of the Pension Fund Committee as the Kent Council Representative on the Joint Committee.
4. Delegate authority to the Pension Fund Committee to manage required updates or amendments to the ACCESS Inter-authority Agreement as required to support the transition to Border to Coast.
5. Delegate authority to the Pension Fund Committee to manage future appointments to the Joint Committee.
6. Delegate authority to the s151 Officer to take required actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement this decision.

2. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (70)

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

Against (0)

Abstain (2)

Mr S Heaver and Mr M Hood.

Motion Carried.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

1. Agrees that Kent County Council, as Administering Authority for the LGPS Kent Pension Fund, enter into the Pension Pooling arrangements with Border to Coast Pensions Partnership.
2. Agrees to join the Border to Coast Joint Committee.
3. Approves the appointment of the Chair of the Pension Fund Committee as the Kent Council Representative on the Joint Committee.
4. Delegates authority to the Pension Fund Committee to manage required updates or amendments to the ACCESS Inter-authority Agreement as required to support the transition to Border to Coast.
5. Delegates authority to the Pension Fund Committee to manage future appointments to the Joint Committee.
6. Delegates authority to the s151 Officer to take required actions, including but not limited to entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement this decision.

47. Marine and Coastal Act - Delegations update
(Item 14)

1. Mr Webb proposed and Mrs Lawes seconded the motion that:

“County Council is asked to:

- a. Agree to update the Appendix to the Constitution delegating the Council’s functions set out in Schedule 20, sections 2, 3, 6(5), 8(1)(b), and 9(2) of the

Marine and Coastal Act 2009 to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport; and

- b. Ask the Monitoring Officer to update the Appendix to the Constitution accordingly.”
2. The Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1.
3. RESOLVED that Council:
 - a. Agrees to update the Appendix to the Constitution delegating the Council’s functions set out in Schedule 20, sections 2, 3, 6(5), 8(1)(b), and 9(2) of the Marine and Coastal Act 2009 to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport; and
 - b. Asks the Monitoring Officer to update the Appendix to the Constitution accordingly.

48. Appointment of Standards Independent Persons
(Item 15)

1. Ms Foster proposed, and Mr Waters seconded the motion that:

“County Council is asked to:

- a. Thank Mr George for his work as Independent Person; and
 - b. Appoint Michael Turner to a four-year term as Independent Person for Standards for Kent County Council, subject to satisfactory completion of the relevant background checks overseen by the Monitoring Officer.
2. The Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1.
 3. RESOLVED that Council:
 - a. Thanks Mr George for his work as Independent Person; and
 - b. Appoints Michael Turner to a four-year term as Independent Person for Standards for Kent County Council, subject to satisfactory completion of the relevant background checks overseen by the Monitoring Officer.

49. Motion for Time Limited Debate
(Item 16)

1. Mr Brice proposed and Mr Streatfeild seconded the following updated motion to the motion that was published as part of the agenda. The updated motion was agreed in advance by the proposer and the seconder alongside the Administration and other relevant Political Groups. This was circulated to Members prior to the debate.

“The Council expresses:

1. Its formal thanks to KCC Staff who have worked to help local people during this major incident.

2. Its deep concern about the approach of South East Water and its failures to deliver a vital service to Kent residents.
3. Support for any formal investigations or inquiries into South East Water failures in the last few years.

The Council calls for:

4. The establishment of a Short- Focussed Inquiry by the Scrutiny Committee. This inquiry should seek:
 - To identify what lessons were learned but not enacted between 2022 and 2025.
 - What can be learned from the recent water outage in Tunbridge Wells (and elsewhere in Kent within recent years), including steps required to prevent recurrence of similar incidents and measures to build greater resilience particularly for care homes, schools and other KCC services.
 - How KCC can best contribute to effective support and relief efforts in the event of similar incidents in the future.
5. The Council Endorses the Leader's call on the Government to:
 - a) Establishes a dedicated compensation/ recovery fund to provide meaningful and urgent financial relief to affected businesses and residents. Others have called for a "covid style support" officer and urgent action is required to support the liquidity of businesses and the financial wellbeing of our residents who have subsidised this failure. As part of this, South East Water should immediately address the cashflow issues for businesses.
 - b) Ensure that any costs incurred by public service partners are reimbursed in full by South East Water.
 - c) Ensure that the necessary capital expenditure is prioritised by South East Water to ensure that there is a permanent resolution to this issue and to shore up the fragility of water supply in Tunbridge Wells.
 - d) Work with Ofwat and the Drinking Water Inspectorate to ensure a swift, full and transparent investigation into the causes of the failure and the adequacy of South East Water's response.
 - e) Consider legislative or regulatory reforms to ensure greater accountability and resilience in the water sector, particularly in light of repeated failures by South East Water in recent years.
6. The Council requests that;
 - The Chief Executive arranges for appropriate officer to draw the minister's attention to the Council's resolution."

2. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (71)

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

Against (0)

Abstain (0)

Motion carried.

RESOLVED that Council expresses:

1. Its formal thanks to KCC Staff who have worked to help local people during this major incident.
2. Its deep concern about the approach of South East Water and its failures to deliver a vital service to Kent residents.
3. Support for any formal investigations or inquiries into South East Water failures in the last few years.

The Council calls for:

4. The establishment of a Short- Focussed Inquiry by the Scrutiny Committee. This inquiry should seek:
 - To identify what lessons were learned but not enacted between 2022 and 2025.
 - What can be learned from the recent water outage in Tunbridge Wells (and elsewhere in Kent within recent years), including steps required to prevent recurrence of similar incidents and measures to build greater resilience particularly for care homes, schools and other KCC services.
 - How KCC can best contribute to effective support and relief efforts in the event of similar incidents in the future.

5. The Council Endorses the Leader's call on the Government to:
 - a) Establish a dedicated compensation/ recovery fund to provide meaningful and urgent financial relief to affected businesses and residents. Others have called for a "covid style support" officer and urgent action is required to support the liquidity of businesses and the financial wellbeing of our residents who have subsidised this failure. As part of this, South East Water should immediately address the cashflow issues for businesses.
 - b) Ensure that any costs incurred by public service partners are reimbursed in full by South East Water.
 - c) Ensure that the necessary capital expenditure is prioritised by South East Water to ensure that there is a permanent resolution to this issue and to shore up the fragility of water supply in Tunbridge Wells.
 - d) Work with Ofwat and the Drinking Water Inspectorate to ensure a swift, full and transparent investigation into the causes of the failure and the adequacy of South East Water's response.
 - e) Consider legislative or regulatory reforms to ensure greater accountability and resilience in the water sector, particularly in light of repeated failures by South East Water in recent years.
6. The Council requests that:
 - The Chief Executive arranges for appropriate officer to draw the minister's attention to the Council's resolution.