



Summons to and
Agenda for the Annual
Meeting on
**Thursday, 21st May,
2026**
at **10.00 am**



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
SESSIONS HOUSE
MAIDSTONE

Wednesday, 13 May 2026

To: All Members of the County Council

The Annual Meeting of the County Council will be held in the Council Chamber, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ on Thursday, 21st May, 2026 at **10.00 am** to deal with the following business. **The meeting is scheduled to end by 4.30 pm.**

A G E N D A

1. Election of Chairman of the Council
2. Election of Vice-Chairman of the Council
3. Apologies for Absence
4. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
5. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 March 2026 **(Pages 1 - 16)**
6. Chairman's Announcements
7. Questions
8. Report by Leader of the Council
9. Strategic Statement - 6 Month Review **(Pages 17 - 68)**
10. Senior Management Update **(Pages 69 - 72)**
11. Proportionality Update **(Pages 73 - 76)**
12. Constitution Update
(To Follow)
13. Motions for Time Limited Debate
(To Follow)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Watts', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Benjamin Watts
Deputy Chief Executive
03000 416814

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, 19 March 2026.

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 Heaven, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Ms L Kemkaran, Ms I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Rich Lehmann, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Mr J Moreland, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr M Munday, 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 G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Mr M J Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, MBE, Dr G Sturley, Mr P Thomas, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, 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

1. The Chairman drew Members' attention to the pre-election guidance issued by Democratic Services and reminded Members that the Council was in a pre-election period. Members were advised to exercise appropriate caution during the meeting, particularly in relation to political discussion, to ensure that Council business was not used in a way that could be perceived as influencing the by-election. The Chairman confirmed that the meeting would be managed accordingly to ensure compliance with the guidance while enabling constructive debate.
2. In response to point of order concerning the consideration of Motion One during the pre-election period, the Chairman confirmed that relevant advice had been sought and that the motion would therefore proceed.

56. **Apologies for Absence** (Item 1)

The Democratic Services Manager reported apologies from Mr Stuart Jeffery, Mr Nick Wibberley and Mrs Trudy Dean.

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

(Item 2)

Comments relevant to this item were raised during the introduction.

Responding to a Member query regarding Declarations of Interests related to health matters, the Monitoring Officer advised that this should be managed outside of the meeting.

1. The Monitoring Officer advised Members that no further declaration of interest was necessary in respect of twin hatting, given that this information was already included in the Register of Interests.
2. In relation to item 13, the Chairman declared that a similar motion had been brought to Swale Borough Council, where he was a Member.
3. Mrs Palmer also declared in relation to Item 13, that she was a Member of Swale Borough Council, where a similar motion had been put forward.

58. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 February 2026 and, if in order, to be approved as a correct record

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Council meeting held on 12 February 2026 be approved as a correct record.

59. Corporate Parenting Panel - Minutes for noting

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 9 December 2025 be noted.

60. Chairman's Announcements

(Item 5)

1. With great sadness the Chairman informed Members of the death of Ms Becki Bruneau, Mr Grahame Weston and Mr Roger Latchford.
2. Ms Bruneau was a KCC Member for Tunbridge Wells South from 2021 until 2025.

3. Mr Weston was a KCC Member for Tonbridge East from 1997 until 2005.
4. Mr Latchford was a KCC Member for Birchington and villages 2013 until 2017 and leader of the UKIP group.
5. The Chairman advised that tributes to Mr Latchford would be taken at a future meeting as notification of his sad passing had only been received at short notice.
6. Tributes to Ms Bruneau were made by Mrs Hudson, Ms Kemkaran, Mr Ellis, Mrs Fothergill, Mr Hood and Mr Brady.
7. Tributes to Mr Weston were made by Ms Kemkaran, Mr Rayner, Mr Hook, Mr Thomas, Mr Hood and Mr Brady.
8. Mr Palmer proposed, and Mr Evans seconded, that the Council formally record the sense of loss it feels on the sad passing of Ms Becki Bruneau and Mr Grahame Weston and extends to their family and friends its heartfelt sympathy to them in their sad bereavement.

Agreed unanimously.

9. The Chairman held a one-minute silence in memory of Ms Becki Bruneau, Mr Grahame Weston and Mr Roger Latchford.
10. The Chairman wished to place on record his thanks for the work undertaken to deliver the Reserves and Cadets Day event on 24 February. He recognised the efforts of the team involved and gave particular thanks to Lieutenant Grey and Lieutenant Peter Con for their contribution in engaging local businesses and coordinating the arrangements for the event.

61. County Council Questions
(Item 6)

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, 17 questions were submitted by the deadline and 16 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.

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

At points during the timed speeches, time was taken considering associated procedural matters and advice was given to Council by the Monitoring Officer. Group Leaders highlighted at that this impacted on their speaking rights during the item.

1. The Leader of the Council introduced her update and began by expressing a hope that the meeting would proceed without disruption. It was emphasised that the Council Chamber was a place for the discussion of serious matters.
2. The Leader referred to the recent outbreak of Meningitis B in Canterbury, expressing sadness at the deaths of two young people. Condolences were offered on behalf of the Council to the families affected, together with good wishes to those receiving treatment.
3. The work carried out by Kent County Council in partnership with the UK Health Security Agency was highlighted, particularly in tracing and contacting those affected and establishing medical hubs. Appreciation was expressed to Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health, for his efforts.
4. Attention was drawn to the ongoing situation in the Gulf and the movement of British service personnel to a state of high readiness. The Leader expressed her good wishes for all service men and women.
5. An update was given on the Administration's focus on coastal towns and villages, including the creation of a cabinet portfolio for coastal regeneration. It was reported that Sir Michael Marmot was now contributing to work on health inequalities and that the East Kent coast had become the first designated Marmot Coastal Region.
6. The Leader described a recent event in Dover at which volunteers, charities, health professionals and counsellors gathered to reaffirm their commitment to supporting coastal communities.
7. The Budget, which was approved on 12 February, was reported as providing stability for the Council. It was highlighted that the Kent County Council element of Council Tax had been set at 3.99% and that the Budget reflected a new approach, encompassing system modernisation, improved efficiency and organisational reshaping.
8. The Leader explained that the Budget had been set against the backdrop of Local Government Reorganisation. The Council's proposed Option 1A for Kent and Medway was outlined, along with the reasons why this model was considered strategically appropriate.
9. Members were advised that Central Government had invited expressions of interest for Foundation Strategic Authorities. The Leader said that submitting an expression of interest during the ongoing consultation on reorganisation could risk confusion and conflict with the Council's existing business case. The Leader highlighted that the matter would be debated later in the meeting.
10. Turning to highways, the Leader reported strong performance in winter resilience measures and outlined the spring programme, which would include assessments of pothole repairs, surface dressing programmes, and increased drainage and verge maintenance.

11. It was confirmed that funding had been secured to repair and reopen Folkestone's Road of Remembrance after its closure due to a major landslip. Work was expected to commence early in the summer.
12. The Leader reported on a meeting held in January with adult social care providers to discuss rising costs. It was explained that adult social care represented nearly half of the Council's entire budget and highlighted the pressures arising from increasing service costs since 2021.
13. The Leader highlighted the need for a fairer long-term funding settlement for Kent from Central Government. Pressures within children's services were outlined, including support for former unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and the number of looked-after children placed in Kent by other authorities. Reference was also made to Ofsted's recent assessment of the Council's care leavers service and the reasons for the Council's challenge to the rating.
14. The Leader welcomed the Government's decision to write off 90% of historic special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) deficits and said this would assist long-term financial stability.
15. Progress across Children, Young People and Education services was reported, including the delivery of almost 4,000 new wraparound childcare places since September. The clearance of the Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) backlog was highlighted, with almost 80% of plans now completed within 20 weeks. There was improved timeliness of assessments, leaving only a small number of cases exceeding 20 weeks and there was a successful secondary transfer round, including improved outcomes for families on the Isle of Sheppey and efficiencies delivered through the Synergy review.
16. Work to support local businesses was outlined, including the Council's first Supplier Day held at the Detling Showground. The event was attended by more than 700 people and over 300 businesses and provided an opportunity to present the Council's Commercial Strategy for 2026–28 and future procurement opportunities.
17. The Leader reported that Kent Trading Standards had prevented more than three million illegal vapes from entering the country over the past five years. Partnership work with local retailers to prepare for upcoming regulations was outlined, along with the launch of Local Vape Action partnerships in Tunbridge Wells, Ashford and a forthcoming third area.
18. The Leader concluded by observing that the year had begun with a high level of activity.
19. Mr Hook, Leader of the Opposition, expressed his condolences to the families of the two young people who died as a result of the Meningitis B outbreak, including a student from a school in his division. He thanked KCC's Public Health staff, and encouraged Members to share key Public

Health information, including spreading awareness for meningitis symptoms such as high fever and a stiff neck.

20. Turning to care leavers and adult social care, Mr Hook stated that social care services benefited not only the individuals receiving it but also their families and wider communities. The importance of adult social care as a core Council service was also emphasised, along with recognition that many residents may require support in later life.
21. Reference was made to the event in Dover with Professor Michael Marmot, whose presentation highlighted significant health inequalities between coastal and inland areas and between more and less affluent communities. Mr Hook welcomed Kent's decision to adopt the Marmot principles and looked forward to contributing to future work in this area.
22. Mr Hook thanked colleagues from all political groups who attended the event marking the fourth anniversary of Russia's invasion of Ukraine, highlighting the powerful testimonies shared by Ukrainian residents. He also extended his good wishes to Mr Burwash ahead of his forthcoming trip to Ukraine.
23. Mr Hook welcomed the announcement of the Playground Festival, offering 153 early years events at the end of May, and stressed the importance of early childhood development. He also raised concerns about delays in assessments for young children with special educational needs.
24. Finally, Mr Hook recognised the beginning of Eid and extended good wishes to Kent's Muslim residents, expressing appreciation for Kent's diverse communities and the equal contributions made by people of all faiths.
25. Mr Thomas, Leader of the Restore Britain Kent Group, also gave his condolences and support in light of the Meningitis B outbreak, offering thoughts and prayers to affected families, thanking Public Health officers and partner organisations and welcoming the cross-party cooperation shown.
26. Mr Thomas then raised concern about a perceived adversarial approach from the Reform Administration. He explained that Members had not been given the opportunity to hear the wider context of the Leader's remarks and emphasised that the Chamber was a place for debate rather than pre-emptive announcements. He asked that motions be debated in the Chamber before being publicised, particularly during the pre-election period and reminded Members they were elected to serve the needs of Kent's residents.
27. Mr Thomas addressed concerns about the cost-of-living crisis, issues on highways and roads and Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) in which he expressed agreement with the Leader that it should not proceed at this time. He also commented on SEND deficits and the need for faster

progress on EHCP processes, offering to continue working with the Cabinet Member to improve this area.

28. On KCC's recent Supplier Day event, Mr Thomas relayed feedback that adding a pillar for education and skills to the commercial strategy would be beneficial.
29. Finally, Mr Thomas remarked on behaviour in the Chamber and commented on upcoming press coverage of the meetings proceedings.
30. Mr Rayner, Leader of the Conservative Group, began by expressing sympathy on behalf of the Conservative Group, to the families and friends of the young people who died in the Meningitis B outbreak in East Kent and to those currently hospitalised.
31. Mr Rayner responded to the Leader's report by criticising the Administration for its inexperience in Local Government and lack of strategic thinking.
32. Mr Rayner stated that KCC had previously operated a Utilities Liaison Committee which met regularly with major utility providers to share early information and address infrastructure concerns. He stated this arrangement had been discontinued under the current Administration, reducing KCC's strategic oversight and adversely affecting residents. He referred to recent water outages and a notification from South East Water regarding limited supply capacity in their upcoming Local Plans. Mr Rayner concluded by arguing that this demonstrated a failure by KCC to act effectively as a strategic authority.
33. Mr Hood, Leader of the Green Group, spoke on behalf of his group and expressed condolences to the family and friends of the two young people who had died following the Meningitis B outbreak associated with the Chemistry nightclub. Mr Hood urged anyone who had attended the club on 5, 6 or 7 March to obtain the necessary antibiotics. He thanked all those involved in the response to the incident and emphasised that protecting residents from harm was of utmost importance to all Members.
34. Mr Hood raised concerns regarding the Administration's approach to wider matters within the Authority.
35. Mr Brady, Leader of the Labour Group, repeated key public health messaging in relation to the rapidly developing Meningitis B outbreak affecting Canterbury and wider Kent. He offered condolences to the families of those who had died or were hospitalised and thanked public health teams for their response. He continued by informing Members of the over 7,500 doses of preventative antibiotics that had been administered by the previous afternoon. Mr Brady highlighted the antibiotic collection points set up around Canterbury and Kent and the targeted vaccination programme in student university halls. Additionally, Mr Brady reiterated the symptoms residents should be aware of and stressed the importance of seeking urgent medical attention. He also reassured residents that UKHSA, NHS teams, Public Health, the University of Kent, Canterbury City Council and

partners were working to contain the outbreak and urged anyone potentially exposed to act quickly and remain vigilant. Finally, Mr Brady the need for clear, factual communication and encouraged local media to focus on these messages, stating that this should take priority at such a critical time.

36. The Leader of the Council expressed thanks to the Leaders of the Opposition Groups for their participation in daily briefings during the week on the meningitis situation in Canterbury, provided by Dr Anjan Ghosh. The Leader also welcomed the condolences expressed by other Group Leaders to the families of the deceased.
37. RESOLVED that the Leader's Report be noted.

63. Member Allowances Scheme
(Item 8)

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

“Council is asked to:

- a) Note this report;
- b) Note the report of the Member Remuneration Panel and thank the Panel Members for their work; and
- c) Agree the changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in Appendix 2, this scheme to be in place until 31 March 2030 including:
 - i. Increase for 2026/2027 to the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances of 3.8%
 - ii. Annual indexation mechanism to be the CPIH figure for October
 - iii. The annual scheme to be agreed with the annual budget for the year and coming into effect at the beginning of each financial year;
 - iv. The Co-opted Member Allowance remain the same in 2026/27 as 2025/26, but increase at the same rate as the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances in subsequent years.
 - v. The Independent Persons allowance be changed to a fixed per annum payment of £700.
 - vi. The Dependents' Carers' Allowance at the current level and compared annually with the Real Living Wage. Where the Real Living Wage is higher, then the Dependents' Carers' Allowance will be increased to the same level.
 - vii. That the Selection and Member Services Committee be asked to keep the arrangements under review and report to full Council (including a further report from the Member Remuneration Panel) where any future changes are recommended.”

2. Mr Heaver proposed and Mr Hood seconded the following amendment:

“Council is asked to:

- a) Note this report;
 - b) Note the report of the Member Remuneration Panel and thank the Panel Members for their work; and
 - c) Agree the changes to the Members’ Allowances Scheme as set out in Appendix 2, **but given the severe budgetary pressures on the Council** this scheme to be **in-place postponed** until 31 March 2030~~28~~ including:
 - i. Increase for 2026/2027 to the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances of 3.8%
 - ii. Annual indexation mechanism to be the CPIH figure for October
 - iii. The annual scheme to be agreed with the annual budget for the year and coming into effect at the beginning of each financial year;
 - iv. The Co-opted Member Allowance remain the same in 2026/27 as 2025/26, but increase at the same rate as the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances **in subsequent years from 31 March 2028.**
 - v. The Independent Persons allowance be changed to a fixed per annum payment of £700.
 - vi. The Dependents’ Carers’ Allowance at the current level and compared annually with the Real Living Wage. Where the Real Living Wage is higher, then the Dependents’ Carers’ Allowance will be increased to the same level.
 - vii. That the Selection and Member Services Committee be asked to keep the arrangements under review and report to full Council (including a further report from the Member Remuneration Panel) where any future changes are recommended.”
3. Following the debate, the Chairman put the amendment set out in paragraph 2 to the vote and the voting was as follows.

For (19)

Mr B Barrett, Mr B Black, Mr A Brady, Mr D Burns, Mr M Ellis, Mr S Heaver, Mr M A J Hood, Ms S Hudson, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J Moreland, Mr M Munday, Ms C Nolan, Mr T Prater, Miss A Randall, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr M Sole, Mr P Stepto and Mr P Thomas.

Against (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, Mrs B Fordham, Mrs G Foster, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr M Fraser Moat, Mr B Fryer, Mr M Harrison, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Ms L Kemkaran, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mr H Rayner, Mrs S

Roots, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Abstain (8)

Mr O Bradshaw, Mr M Brice, Mr R Ford, Mr A J Hook, Mr G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr R G Streatfield and Mr N Williams.

Motion lost.

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

For (45)

Mr J Baker, Mr M Brown, Mr C Burwash, 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, Mrs 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 Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mrs S Roots, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (26)

Mr B Barrett, Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr M Brice, Mr D Burns, Mr M Ellis, Mr R Ford, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr S Heaver, Mr M A J Hood, Mrs S Hudson, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr J Moreland, Mr M Munday, Mr T Prater, Miss A Randall, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Ms C Russell, Mr G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr M Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, and Mr P Thomas.

Abstain (5)

Mr A Brady, Mr A Cecil, Mr A J Hook, Ms C Nolan and Mr N Williams.

Motion Carried.

5. RESOLVED that Council:

- a) Note this report;
- b) Note the report of the Member Remuneration Panel and thank the Panel Members for their work; and
- c) Agree the changes to the Members' Allowances Scheme as set out in Appendix 2, this scheme to be in place until 31 March 2030 including:
 - i. Increase for 2026/2027 to the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances of 3.8%
 - ii. Annual indexation mechanism to be the CPIH figure for October

- iii. The annual scheme to be agreed with the annual budget for the year and coming into effect at the beginning of each financial year;
- iv. The Co-opted Member Allowance remain the same in 2026/27 as 2025/26, but increase at the same rate as the Basic Allowance and Special Responsibility Allowances in subsequent years.
- v. The Independent Persons allowance be changed to a fixed per annum payment of £700.
- vi. The Dependents' Carers' Allowance at the current level and compared annually with the Real Living Wage. Where the Real Living Wage is higher, then the Dependents' Carers' Allowance will be increased to the same level.
- vii. That the Selection and Member Services Committee be asked to keep the arrangements under review and report to full Council (including a further report from the Member Remuneration Panel) where any future changes are recommended.

64. Treasury Management - Mid-Year Update 2025/26
(Item 9)

1. Mr Collins proposed and Mr Chamberlain seconded that:

"The Council is asked to note the report."
2. Members praised the report and thanked Officers for the level of technical detail provided.
3. Following the debate, the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1 and it was agreed unanimously.
4. RESOLVED that County Council notes the report.

65. KCC's Position on Government's Foundation Strategic Authority Expression of Interest Invitation
(Item 10)

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

"Council is asked to:
 - 1) Note the Leader's decision not to submit, or support the submission of, an expression of interest for a Foundation Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway at this time.
 - 2) Note that KCC officers will continue to support joint working and planning across LGR and devolution with all Kent and Medway councils, notwithstanding the Leader's position on the EoI.

3) Note the Leader's call on the Secretary of State to bring forward the final LGR decision for Kent and Medway significantly ahead of the current mid-July 2026 timetable."

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 C Burwash, Mr A Cecil, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Mr B Collins, Mr J Defriend, Mr S Dixon, Ms S Emberson, Mr L Evans, Mr P Evans, Mr J Finch, Mrs 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 Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr R Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mrs S Roots, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (22)

Mr B Black, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brice, Mr D Burns, Mr M Ellis, Mr R Ford, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Miss I Kemp, Mr J Moreland, Mr M Munday, Ms C Nolan, Mr T Prater, Mr A Ricketts, Mr G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr M Sole, Mr R G Streatfeild, Mr P Thomas and Mr N Williams.

Abstain (8)

Mr B Barrett, Mr S Heaver, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A Kennedy, Miss A Randall, Mr H Rayner, Ms C Russell and Mr P Stepto.

Motion Carried.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

- 1) Note the Leader's decision not to submit, or support the submission of, an expression of interest for a Foundation Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway at this time.
- 2) Note that KCC officers will continue to support joint working and planning across LGR and devolution with all Kent and Medway councils, notwithstanding the Leader's position on the EoI.
- 3) Note the Leader's call on the Secretary of State to bring forward the final LGR decision for Kent and Medway significantly ahead of the current mid-July 2026 timetable.

66. Proportionality and Committee allocations
(Item 11)

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

“Council is asked to:

- (a) DETERMINE total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on certain bodies, as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (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 and it was agreed unanimously.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

- (a) DETERMINE total number of Committee places; the allocation of those places between the political groups; and the allocation of places on certain bodies, as detailed in Appendix 1;
- (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.

67. Pay Policy Statement
(Item 12)

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

“Council is asked to:

NOTE the report and APPROVE the publication of the attached Pay Policy Statement.”

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 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 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 J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Ms L Kemkaran, Miss I Kemp, Mr A Kennedy, Mr A Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Mr M Logen, 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, Miss A Randall, Mr H Rayner, Mr A Ricketts, Mrs S Roots, Ms C Russell, Mr G R Samme, Mr C Sefton, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Mr M Sole, Mr P Stepto, Mr R G Streatfeild, Dr G Sturley, Mr P Thomas, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (3)

Mr S Heaver, Mr M A J Hood and Mr N Williams.

Abstain (2)

Mr R Ford and Mr B Barrett

Motion Carried.

3. RESOLVED that Council:

NOTE the report and APPROVE the publication of the attached Pay Policy Statement.

68. Motions for Time Limited Debate
(Item 13)

At the commencement of the item the Leader of the Opposition raised a Point of Order arguing the position that the Motion for Time Limited Debate was not compatible with the pre-election guidance. All Members of the Liberal Democrat, Conservative, Green and Restore Britain Kent groups departed the Chamber prior to the motion being put.

1. Mr Wimble proposed and Mr Eustace seconded the motion that:

“Kent County Council declares an Illegal Migration Emergency in Kent. The County is the frontier for the influx of illegal migrants via small boats into the UK.

Kent residents and taxpayers are dealing with the consequences of illegal migration in terms of

- Cost (financial)
- Culture
- Community Cohesion
- Crime

Therefore, the Council calls on the Leader of the Council to:

- a) Demand the Government stops the arrival of migrants by small boats immediately

- b) Seek to ensure that the Government provides full funding to cover the costs to the County Council and partner public agencies in dealing with the consequences of illegal migration, and
- c) Press for Kent's emergency services, resilience structures and emergency planning to be appropriately supported and funded to deal with this crisis."

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 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, Mrs 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 Kibble, Mr P King, Mrs M Lawes, Mr M Logen, Mr T Mallon, Mr R Mayall, Mr T Mole, Miss D Morton, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr P Osborne, Mrs C Palmer, Mr M Paul, Mrs B Porter, Mrs S Roots, Mr T L Shonk, Mr D Sian, Dr G Sturley, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Truder, Mr R Waters, Mr P Webb, Mrs P Williams and Mr D Wimble.

Against (0)

Abstain (0)

Motion carried.

3. RESOLVED that:

Kent County Council declares an Illegal Migration Emergency in Kent. The County is the frontier for the influx of illegal migrants via small boats into the UK.

Kent residents and taxpayers are dealing with the consequences of illegal migration in terms of

- Cost (financial)
- Culture
- Community Cohesion
- Crime

Therefore, the Council calls on the Leader of the Council to:

- a) Demand the Government stops the arrival of migrants by small boats immediately
- b) Seek to ensure that the Government provides full funding to cover the costs to the County Council and partner public

agencies in dealing with the consequences of illegal migration,
and

- c) Press for Kent's emergency services, resilience structures and emergency planning to be appropriately supported and funded to deal with this crisis
4. The Chairman confirmed the outstanding motions had been withdrawn and the item was therefore concluded.

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader

To: **County Council – 21 May 2026**

Subject: Strategic Statement: 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028'. Six-month Review

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

Reforming Kent 2025-2028, the Council's new Strategic Statement, was adopted at County Council in November 2025. The Strategic Statement states the priorities for Kent County Council and the County. Following the first six months, a review of the document has been completed to assess progress and to ensure it remains appropriate for the needs of Kent. Some additions and revisions have been made to the document as a result (see Appendix 1), which is presented to County Council as a revised and designed version before publication on Kent.gov

This paper provides an overview of some of the highlights of the work to date against the Strategic Statement.

Recommendations: County Council is asked to:

- (1) **APPROVE** the revisions to the Council's strategic statement, 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028'; and
- (2) **NOTE** the progress made

1 Background

- 1.1 The draft of '*Reforming Kent, 2025-2028*' was presented to County Council in November 2025, where it was adopted. At this time, it was made clear that given the uncertainty and unprecedented time of change, the Strategic Statement must be a 'living document', and that the administration would update it as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and useful for residents, partners and staff. The revisions and additions made to the Strategic Statement as indicated in Appendix 1 uphold this commitment.
- 1.2 Also, this report provides an overview of some of the progress made against the aims of the Strategic Statement. A copy of the recent series of infographics issued by the County Council on the performance of the Council is featured as Appendix 2. That performance covers the financial year rather than solely the six month period from November 2025, however it clearly shows the direction of travel of the authority under the current administration and highlights some of the breadth of the work and successes.

2 ‘Reforming Kent, 2025-2028’ - Progress on Delivering its Aims.

- 2.1 The Strategic Statement was not intended to be a comprehensive catalogue of all the Council’s work, but a statement on the authority’s ambitions, priorities and key actions required. It sets the direction of travel for Kent County Council and provides the overall context within which the authority will drive forward its work for the residents of Kent.
- 2.2 The Strategic Statement highlights four aims that are the areas of greatest challenge and opportunity; and each of these is supported by a number of objectives and priorities. The following provides a high level overview of some of the progress made under each of these aims, which is taken from progress reporting over 2025-26. Although some of the statistics relate to the full financial year rather than just the 6 month period under review, they demonstrate the ambition, priorities and direction of the administration.

Putting Kent Residents First

- 2.3 We continued to stand up for Kent’s residents on a range of issues, including making representations to Government on new nuclear provision at Dungeness, the prospect of reopening the international rail services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet, and developing proposals to secure a foreign registered HGV environmental levy for use by KCC's Highways service. We submitted bids to the Government Structures Fund for vital investment in key routes in the county such as the A226 Galley Hill Road, pressing for more than £40m to help reconnect communities and restore this important route following the cliff collapse in April 2023, which cut a major link between Gravesend and Dartford. We submitted a separate bid for around £63m for the A299 to address safety-critical issues, including tunnel refurbishments, bridge repairs and carriageway reconstruction.
- 2.4 We rescinded the County Council’s Climate Emergency Declaration, ensuring that future KCC spend would not be determined by Net Zero targets; and we declared an Illegal Migration Emergency to allow scope for the authority to press central government and others to take appropriate action to relieve the financial and public safety strain on Kent and its residents.
- 2.5 We developed an option (1A) for local government reorganisation, establishing potential savings for Kent’s taxpayers of up to £450 million over 10 years.

Reforming Kent County Council

- 2.6 We continued the delivery of the services that matter to residents, whilst ensuring we achieved value for taxpayers’ money.
- 2.7 We handled 671,353 tonnes of waste across the county, diverting 99.6% of household waste away from landfill, meaning almost all rubbish was reused,

recycled or used to generate energy. Between September 2025 and February 2026, over 3,200 extra tonnes of food waste were recycled, which is a 22% increase on the previous period, reducing waste disposal costs by over £380k. We spent £67 million on road repairs and maintenance across the county.

- 2.8 Stabilising the County Council's budget was a top priority over the period, to ensure that we could deliver best value for the residents of the County. We achieved savings totalling £100 million and set a Council Tax rate lower than most County, Metropolitan and Unitary councils in England; removed £39.5 million from future spending plans, and reduced the Council's overall debt by £122 million, repaying £90 million of this debt early to ease long term financial pressures. Some £54 million of savings or contract improvements were negotiated in 2025/26. We set a balanced budget for 2026/27 with no additional planned borrowings, an increase in net reserves, and increased capacity to spend in adult social care, children's services, and growth environment and transport.
- 2.9 Kent's first Commercial Strategy was published, setting out how the Council buys goods and services and works with local businesses. An additional £55 million in council contracts were awarded to Kent-based companies, helping keep more public spending in the local economy. We worked directly with 500 Kent supplier companies, helping them understand and access Council opportunities, and reached 1,400 businesses through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub, providing advice and guidance.

Supporting Residents that need help

- 2.10 KCC provided care and support to 23,174 adults either in the community or a care home. Some 39,933 blue badges were issued, bringing the total in Kent to 94,317. Four hundred and forty three long-term empty homes were brought back into use through the No Use Empty scheme, increasing the number of homes available to live in.
- 2.11 In our Early Years services, 98% of Kent's early years settings were rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Our Kent Family Hubs, supporting children and families across the County, reached 13,653 families and delivered 31,101 interventions and sessions. Almost 4,000 new wraparound childcare places were delivered from September 2025. At least 96% of secondary pupils and 98% of primary pupils were offered a place at one of their preferred schools. In total, 48,100 children and young people accessed SEND services. A total of 66,000 health and wellbeing reviews for babies and young children were delivered to families and 594 foster households worked with the Council to care for children.

Building Better Communities

- 2.12 The authority continued to support and deliver a range of services to enhance quality of life and build community spirit and engagement.
- 2.13 Public satisfaction levels were high with 95% of library users, 96% of registration users and 96% of household waste recycling centre users reporting being satisfied with their services.
- 2.14 Supporting people on their journey into employment remained a priority with 891 people taking part in the Connect to Work programme, receiving help to move them closer to employment.
- 2.15 We launched the Kent Marmot Coastal Region, which will make a real difference to Kent coastal residents.
- 2.16 Our Kent country parks welcomed 1.26 million visitors, offering accessible green spaces. Kent's libraries had 3.2 million visits, providing learning, reading and community spaces for residents. There were 123,541 uses of Kent's archive collections and documents; whilst 240,898 people attended library and archives events and activities.
- 2.17 Our highways services maintained 5,500 miles of roads and 4,000 miles of footways; one of the largest local authority networks in the country; filled around 50,000 potholes, using the Council's agreed inspection and repair processes, and resurfaced 353,356 square metres of road, improving the condition of heavily used routes.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Cabinet will continue to monitor progress against the Strategic Statement's aims and objectives, including through the process of Quarterly Performance Reporting. Some of the issues and challenges facing the County Council and Kent are systemic, some concern government policy and some are beyond the scope and remit of the authority. Certainly, to address them comprehensively requires more than three years. However, the Strategic Statement continues to be relevant as a directional statement and guide for Kent County Council and the County as a whole.

4. Recommendations

County Council is asked to:

- (1) **APPROVE** the revisions to the Council's strategic statement, 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028'; and
 - (2) **NOTE** the progress made
-

5. Appendices:

Appendix 1 *Reforming Kent, 2025-2028 (2026 Update)*

Appendix 2 County Council Performance Infographics

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Reforming Kent 2025-2028

Kent County Council's Strategic Statement



Foreword

On 1st May 2025, Reform UK won 57 out of 81 seats which gave us overall control of Kent County Council (KCC).

My fellow members and I campaigned on a promise that we would come in with fresh eyes and fire in our bellies and be unapologetic in our mission to put the people of Kent right at the heart of every decision that we make.

We are here to represent you and to make decisions that benefit you. We are here to be advocates for those in need, young and old, and to make sure that those in the middle, on whose shoulders the financial burden increasingly rests, know that we spend their money as carefully as we spend our own.

KCC's main challenge is how to do more, with less. We are facing big challenges.

As a population we are getting older. Couples are not having as many babies as they used to. The social fabric of our towns and villages has been altered by years of uncontrolled immigration and overspill from London, pressuring Kent to build more and more houses. Crime is high, and trust is at an all-time low.

More children are being diagnosed with special educational needs and crime typically goes unsolved.

There is an increased perception that the welfare system is too generous and is open to abuse with people divided into 'workers or shirkers'.

It's no wonder we are all feeling the pressure and that KCC is in debt.

But we are determined to turn it around.

As Leader, I'm putting efficiency first and have tasked a new cabinet team with special responsibility for local government efficiency with the job of carrying out a full examination of all council procedures, procurement and employment.

As for looking after our vulnerable people and in the continued absence of a joined-up plan from government, we will take a preventative approach, investing in services that reduce dependency that help people stay healthy and independent for longer. Our Adult Social Care team will embrace AI and digital tools to deliver smarter, more responsive support.

Our young people in care (which, due to our legal obligations, must include unaccompanied asylum-seeking children, whose costs are fully met by the Home Office), will be gradually moved out of privately run care homes into homes owned and run by KCC. This removes KCC's dependence on an increasingly expensive private sector and allows us to spend less money to look after these children to our own high standards.

We will make it a priority to give families and communities their education as locally as possible.

KCC is here to help, not to take over residents' lives.



We will work with our partners to provide as high a standard of education provision as possible for our children, building upon the strengths and abilities of young people.

We will also work with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to ban smartphones in Kent's schools, allowing children to concentrate on their lessons, develop meaningful, face-to-face friendships and remain free of the pressures of online life for the majority of each day.

We will ensure early years provision is there to help parents fulfil their important duties and responsibilities to the best of their abilities. This is the surest way of helping babies grow into happy, healthy children who stand the best chance of going on to be well-adjusted adults who contribute to society.

There will be new emphasis on personal responsibility and helping people to make sound choices that lead to better life outcomes. We do not believe that adults should be infantilised or treated as potential victims. KCC is here to help, not to take over residents' lives.

You will notice a change of messaging in our public health, education and social care literature to reflect our new, empowering approach.

If someone is in receipt of taxpayers' money for whatever reason, they will be made aware of that fact and encouraged to use that money wisely and frugally.

As Leader I will continue to push back against central government if I feel that the policies do not align with my own vision of what's best for Kent.

I want to remove unnecessary bureaucracy and **form filling** associated with diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) and find more meaningful ways for the council to meet its Public Sector Equality duties.

On the environment we will replace the Net Zero 2030 target with an energy efficiency plan focused on financial returns and investigate opportunities to create additional revenue streams. We will rescind the council's climate emergency declaration, which is stifling debate.

We will lobby government to promote Dungeness as the right site for a small nuclear reactor and we'll work with water companies to clean up our seas and rivers, develop a long-term water resources plan for Kent and ensure that drainage works to prevent flooding.

Our coastal communities, ignored for so long, will benefit from a targeted Kent and Medway Business Fund for startups, high-growth, or fast-growing businesses and we'll tackle inequalities that are especially pronounced in our seaside towns that can damage hard working families' access to secure employment.

Our roads are used by all of us every single day, so to improve road quality we'll remove obstacles and inefficiencies across Kent's highways and work directly with local contractors and suppliers stripping away wasteful overheads and duplication to increase productivity.

My vision for Kent is that of a happy, thriving and tolerant society built on merit rather than enforced diversity targets. One unified county, proud of its history and optimistic for its future. A place where the residents feel safer, healthier and wealthier knowing that their political representatives try to get the best value for every pound spent.

I picture a green and pleasant 'Garden of England' where farmers feel valued in ensuring our food security, where they are recognised as custodians of the countryside protecting our land from excessively large solar farms and housing developments.

A county that makes the most of its unique position as the gateway into our nation and also out to the rest of the world.

In short, because Kent boasts historical buildings, picturesque towns and villages, bustling shopping centres, rolling green hills, burgeoning vineyards, excellent restaurants and pubs, miles of stunning coastline plus fast access to London, it's easily one of the best counties in the UK in which to live, work and visit.



**Linden Kemkaran, Leader
Kent County Council**

Introduction

This strategy sets out our vision for Kent from 2025-2028.

This document is not intended as an exhaustive list of everything the council does but is focused on establishing a reformed council, the ambitions we want to meet and the objectives and priorities we will deliver.

It is shorter in timeframe due to the government's proposals for local government reorganisation and the creation of new council structures in Kent and Medway in 2028.

However, this shortened timeframe does not weaken or limit our ambition for Kent or for Kent County Council. Until the government confirms its decision on local government reorganisation, and makes the necessary legislative changes, KCC must continue to serve the residents of Kent.

Some of the challenges facing KCC and Kent are systemic. To address them inherently requires more than three years, hard decisions to be made by the government at the national level, and the collective effort of all local partners in Kent. We must be realistic as to what can be achieved with less than one full council term as the political leadership of KCC.

But we can serve the residents of Kent by putting in place the foundations for a reformed council and reformed services today, even if that reform is then taken forward by new council structures in Kent and Medway.

Given this uncertainty and unprecedented time of change, Reforming Kent must be a live document, and as an administration we will update our strategy as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and useful for our residents, our partners and our staff.



Our vision

Kent is a place where the residents **feel safer, healthier and wealthier** and know that their political representatives try to get the **best value for every pound spent.**

Our commitments

to our residents are that we will:



Keep council tax as low as possible but will maintain core service provision.



Have a ruthless focus on value for money and cost efficiency.



Ask the difficult questions and challenge long held assumptions within the council.



Expect those who we support to respect the services and monies provided to them.



Not accept the status quo where it fails our residents whether as service users or taxpayers.



Reward staff and providers who work hard and achieve on merit rather than tick boxes.

Our aims



Putting Kent residents **first**



Supporting residents that need help



Reforming Kent County Council



Building better **communities**

Our objectives

Putting Kent residents first



Objectives

- Make sure the people of Kent are heard, from local town halls right through to parliament.
- Work with the government to find long-term solutions to the challenges at the border.
- Seek fair funding from government which properly recognises Kent's unique needs.
- Stand up for the interests of all Kent residents in local government reorganisation.
- Support local businesses to attract investment and create job opportunities for people in Kent.
- Protect our countryside and give strong support to Kent's farmers, rural pursuits and communities.

Reforming Kent County Council



Objectives

- Deliver improvements to the visible services that matter most to the majority of Kent residents.
- Reduce the KCC debt burden, releasing more monies back into front line services.
- Make every penny count, using a common sense approach and DOLGE to find efficiency savings and income generation opportunities.
- Use Kent's buying power to support local jobs and keep investment in the county.
- Ensure the council focusses on delivering better outcomes that make a difference, not just managing process.
- Scrap unattainable Net Zero 2030 and focus environment policy on direct benefits to Kent residents.

Supporting residents that need help



Objectives

- Embed a greater focus on prevention and early intervention and empowering people to take personal responsibility.
- Ensure every child has the chance to grow up safe and secure, free from online harm.
- To deliver good care for our most vulnerable because they deserve to be treated with dignity.
- Work with care providers and the NHS to ensure that the care system is more sustainable and joined-up.
- Recognise and support the dedication of our county's unpaid carers.
- Improve processes and outcomes for our SEND services while tackling the unsustainable growth in demand.

Building better communities



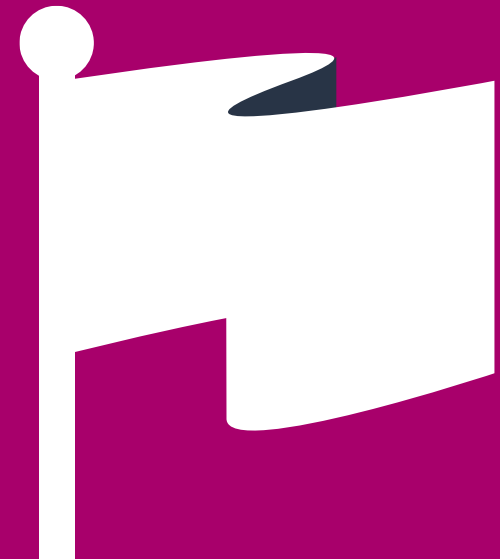
Objectives

- Support Kent Police to keep our communities safe.
- Tackle inequality blighting many of our coastal communities.
- Listen to communities and stand firm against excessively large housing and solar farm developments.
- Improve the quality of roads and work to reduce delays from roadworks.
- Ensure that the infrastructure needs of the county to support economic growth and quality of life are fully in place.
- Protect our Kent environment with practical, affordable and visible improvements.

Aim 1

Putting Kent residents first

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Objective 1

Make sure the people of Kent are heard, from local town halls right through to parliament

Page 33

The victory for Reform UK in the local elections was driven by a growing sense of exasperation. A state which failed to listen to the legitimate concerns and needs of its citizens with the taxpayer receiving a diminishing quality of services. Successive governments of all political persuasions have taken Kent for granted for too long. KCC is only one part of the public sector that needs reform, but Reform UK Kent will do all we can by bringing the people's voice to the fore in the decisions made in town halls, county hall, and in parliament.

Our priorities will be to:

- Continue to work with partners at the local, regional, and national level to resist the inappropriate placement of large-scale asylum provision in unsuitable areas in Kent – particularly where public services are already under significant pressure – and push for reform of the asylum system to remove these concerns from our local communities.
- Lobby government to ensure that Kent does not continue to be unfairly burdened by illegal migrants and unaccompanied asylum-seeking children and that dispersal is fairly distributed across the country.
- Push back on excessively high levels of new housing proposed and inappropriate solar farm development planned for Kent, which is threatening the character of many local communities.



Objective 2

Work with the government to find long-term solutions to the challenges at the border

Page 34

It is the clear responsibility of the government to manage the border at the Kent short straits. The repeated failure of the government to stop the small boat crossings directly impacts Kent's residents and security but also undermines our county's reputation nationally and internationally. Operation Brock, the use of the M20 to hold HGVs when there is disruption at the border, impinges on many Kent residents' quality of life, but it also harms our county's economy and economic competitiveness. We will hold the government to account to deliver its obligations to the residents of Kent to better manage the border; in doing so, we also pledge to do whatever KCC can as both a highways and social care authority, to support their efforts.

Our priorities will be to:

- Ensure the Home Office manages the Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) dispersal scheme in a timely and effective manner, so as not to place an unsafe burden on KCC Children's Services, impacting our capacity to support Kent children.
- Work with the Department for Transport, and our partners in Kent to find a long-term solution to Operation Brock, which does not impact on Kent residents or businesses day-to-day.
- Ensure that the introduction of EES, the EU Entry-Exit Visa Scheme, operates in such a way that does not add a significant additional burden to the Kent road network, and does not require semi-permanent emergency arrangements to be put in place.



Objective 3

Seek fair funding from government which properly recognises Kent's unique needs

Page 35

The pressure on KCC services from being the strategic council for the UK's gateway to Europe is a significant, additional, and unique burden on Kent council taxpayers, which we believe is not fairly recognised or compensated for by the government. Whether it is foreign HGVs on our roads or the impact of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children on our children's social services, the cost to Kent is both direct in what it costs the council, and indirect given the wider strain it places on our budgets and services. That needs to be acknowledged and better reflected in the support the government provides to KCC.

Our priorities will be to:

- Respond to the government proposals to change grant distribution to local government – ensuring more money is provided to address Kent's needs.
- Lobby at national level for a revised, needs-based funding formula for children's social care that recognises the burden from other local authorities placing so many of their looked after children into Kent.
- Call on government to support a fairer, more sustainable funding model for road maintenance, one that allows for planning and prevention rather than just emergency fixes.
- Make the case to government for Kent to receive its fair share of funding currently being taken by the government from the Dartford Crossing and from the HGV Road User Levy collected from foreign HGV's coming through the Kent ports.



Objective 4

Stand up for the interests of all Kent residents in local government reorganisation (LGR)

The government's policy of undertaking a wholesale local government reorganisation – merging the district councils and county council to form new single-tier unitary councils – is a huge and costly distraction to the real business of running local councils and delivering high quality services. We are sceptical that LGR in Kent will yield the anticipated savings and benefits expected by government. Indeed, to the contrary, we expect it will harm service quality whilst placing huge additional increases in Kent residents' council tax to fund it.

Our priorities will be to:

- Continue to push government to ensure that residents interests are at the heart of LGR and that the resident voice is embedded in our proposals through local networks.
- Engage with all Kent and Medway councils transparently and respectfully throughout the LGR process, even where we disagree on LGR proposals, so all partners act in the best interests of Kent and Medway residents.
- Ensure that continuity of service provision and service quality is not put at risk by any LGR proposals, either through the development of LGR proposals, or through the implementation of any changes imposed on Kent by the government.



Objective 5

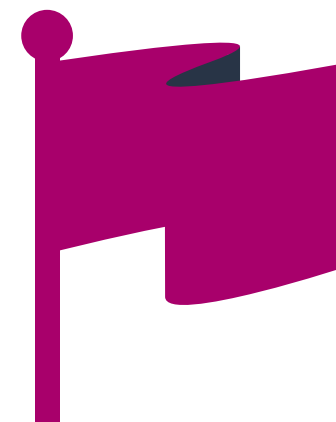
Support local businesses to attract investment and create job opportunities for people in Kent

Page 37

The public sector cannot be sustainable without a thriving and growing private sector economy to fund it at national or local level. The failure to deliver economic growth drives higher demand for public services, which in turn become more reliant on an ever-smaller and ever more strained private sector economy to fund them. Every area in the country needs to support economic growth to break this downward spiral in our economy and our public services. In Kent, this means supporting local businesses, the vast majority of which are small to medium-sized enterprises to create the jobs, attract investment and upskill our workforce to drive economic growth.

Our priorities will be to:

- Back major infrastructure projects – which bring new skilled jobs into Kent – such as the Port of Dover 2050 initiative to drive investment into the county and utilise Kent’s unique geographical position.
- Deliver the Get Kent and Medway Working Plan to reduce the 21% of the Kent working age population who are economically inactive, and through the Connect to Work programme, help up to 2900 residents who are facing barriers to employment receive personalised coaching and support to find work.
- Continue to support the development and implementation of the Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan, linking the provision of skills training to the emerging needs of Kent businesses to close the skills gap holding back growth.
- Lobby the government to mandate the reuse of the high-speed international train stations at Ebbsfleet International and Ashford International so as to maximise the economic and travel benefits and end the scandal of this critical infrastructure lying dormant and unused.



Objective 6

Protect our countryside and give strong support to Kent's farmers and rural pursuits and communities

Page 38

Kent is an historic rural county and has a large population with densely populated towns. This is drawn from not only our county's unique character, but also our national and international reputation as the Garden of England, and is critical to the continued success of our tourism industry. It is imperative that we protect our rural heritage, rural businesses and rural communities and support them to thrive. Kent must not only exist to serve the needs and overspill from a growing London population.

Our priorities will be to:

- Resist government plans to cover agricultural land in solar farms, as this will lead to long-term harm to our rural economy and tourism industry.
- Work with district and borough councils to resist inappropriate developments on the edges of rural towns and villages.
- Support and encourage more rural public transport options to ensure rural communities remain viable places to live, work and visit.
- Work with Kent Police to ensure that rural crime hotspots are patrolled and that zero tolerance to low level crime is returned.



Aim 2

Reforming Kent County Council

Page 39



Objective 1

Deliver improvements to the visible services that matter most to the majority of Kent residents

Given the demand pressures on social care, an ever increasing proportion of the KCC budget has been spent on an ever smaller number of high-need individuals in both adults and children's social care. Whilst KCC is legally obliged to meet the needs of the vulnerable, it cannot be right that this comes at the expense of services to the majority of Kent residents who fund KCC through their council tax. If KCC's role and spend is to be valued by the majority of its residents, they must see and feel more benefit from it.

Our priorities will be to:

- Through the budget setting process, ensuring a fairer proportion of new monies are invested in visible community services, which have been underfunded due to government's inability to find long-term solutions for social care.
- Ensure that KCC only takes on the responsibilities that residents expect it to and which are in the best interests of Kent. The delivery of government programmes, even when directly funded, places additional pressures on the KCC management and support services, whilst distracting KCC from its core purpose.
- Improve performance management arrangements for all KCC services by reviewing current key performance indicators and targets, and develop a range of productivity measures for each KCC service, so we can target improving productivity and drive value for money.



Objective 2

Reduce the KCC debt burden, releasing more monies back into front line services

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KCC's debt burden is significant at over £700 million. This debt has been accrued over many decades by the decisions of previous political administrations. Whilst it is possible for KCC to service this debt, in doing so, it takes away vital monies from day-to-day frontline services to the tune of almost £80 million a year. That is money that Kent residents need invested back into their frontline services. We do not accept that there is a need to increase the debt burden in order to facilitate and support the KCC capital budget. A better balance must be achieved.

Our priorities will be to:

- Continue to drive down KCC's overall debt burden, through a focus on debt management, asset sales and strict control of new capital expenditure.
- Ring fence any released debt servicing monies to visible community and infrastructure services through the KCC budget process.
- Maximise the use of external funding to support the capital programme, additional new KCC borrowing will be the absolute exception.



Objective 3

Make every penny count, using a common-sense approach and Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) to find efficiency savings and income generation opportunities

Many public sector organisations lose focus and expand beyond their core purpose through the layering of new activities from local politicians and governments. Nothing is ever stopped or closed; only new, often unfunded, burdens are added. Because public sector budgets are guaranteed by taxation, the public sector also doesn't have the inherent drive found in the private sector to ruthlessly manage costs. The guaranteed funding of the public sector through

taxation makes it inherently different to the private sector, where organisations must manage costs and take decisive action to control them. Through our DOLGE we will systematically look at every penny of KCC spend, taking learning and best practice from the private sector to drive us to better control of costs, wherever possible. No saving is too small for an organisation facing the financial pressures KCC is facing, and we will rigorously look at each KCC department to determine if the cost base is justified by the service outcomes.

Our priorities will be to:

- Systematically undertake a review of all KCC contracts and assess whether they are delivering value for money and are fit for purpose, and reopening contract negotiations where they are not we are in a position to do so.
- Review contract management arrangements in all services across the council, ensuring that there is sufficient focus and rigour on managing contracts once they've been agreed, and taking remedial action where providers are not delivering to the standards expected.
- Use technology, AI and automation to ensure services are innovative and strip out excessive cost and time.
- Look for new income generation opportunities from KCC services and continue to achieve the best value from the 100% wholly owned KCC trading company, Commercial Services Group, which operates independently and commercially within the market.
- Produce a strategy for DOLGE as it moves into its second phase, to include key principles and actions to achieve efficiencies across the authority.



Objective 4

Use Kent's buying power to support local jobs and keep investment in the county

Page 43

KCC is a huge purchaser of goods and services, with an annual procured spend of £1.47 billion. This presents an opportunity to support jobs and businesses in the Kent economy. The recently introduced changes in procurement law will allow us to broaden our supplier base with Kent businesses, keeping more of KCC's money in the local Kent economy. The voluntary and community sector plays an important role as both a service provider and a core pillar of Kent's wider civic society and we will look to strengthen our engagement and partnership with the sector. Where the market is unable to meet KCC service requirements at an affordable price, we will look at the available in-house options for ensuring service delivery.

Our priorities will be to:

- Encourage more Kent based businesses to bid for KCC contracts, with an associated increase in KCC spend staying within Kent.
- Maximise the opportunities within the Procurement Act to minimise barriers to entry for small and medium sized enterprises (SMEs) in bidding for KCC goods and services and use social value to drive additional benefits for local Kent communities.
- Explore opportunities to work with partners and the voluntary and community sector to improve the lives of residents and design services that meet their needs.



Objective 5

Ensure the council focusses on delivering better outcomes that make a difference, not just managing process

Page 44

One of the greatest frustrations of residents is that when they want better and more responsive delivery from their public services, politicians at national and local level just offer up changed processes rather than real change. But even more frustratingly, we know these frustrations are felt as equally by our staff, who come to work to make a difference to the residents and communities they serve, not be wrapped up in unnecessary box ticking that simply gets in the way of them doing their job. We will continue to invest in our staff development, ensuring they are fully supported in delivering vital services in often challenging environments, and removing barriers to real change. We will continue to meet our commitments under the Public Sector Equality duty

but want to do so in a more meaningful way that has wider public, partner and staff support.

Our priorities will be to:

- Ensure that we have the right people in the right roles to deliver against our ambitions and meet the future challenges – ensuring there is meritocracy, fairness and equality in recruitment.
- Review governance arrangements to ensure they are as streamlined as possible, reducing bureaucracy to free up staff to focus on service delivery.
- Continually review staff numbers, structures and salaries to ensure every role has a real impact for the residents of Kent, and through the People Strategy continue to invest in staff training and professionalism.
- Devise a new set of corporate equality objectives when the current objectives expire, and ensure our policies which support the Public Sector Equality duty are fit for purpose.



Objective 6

Scrap unattainable Net Zero 2030 targets and focus environment policy on direct benefits to Kent residents

The rush to declare a climate emergency and the introduction of Net Zero targets in councils, without any thought as to the practicality or financial burden they placed on hard pressed council taxpayers, was a mistake. Instead of taking a pragmatic approach needed by residents and businesses to cope with increasing costs of energy in heating their homes or running their businesses, it overly focused on carbon emissions targets which have little meaningful value to the daily lives of Kent residents. We want to refocus our approach to the environment with a stronger focus on adapting to changes in our weather, stronger environmental stewardship, visible improvements and a focus on the resident.

Our priorities will be to:

- Rescind the County Councils Climate Emergency Declaration of 2019, which is scaring young people, adversely impacting on small businesses and stifling debate.
- Bring forward a new Energy and Low Emissions Strategy that focusses on delivering long-term practical solutions for affordable energy and support to Kent residents.
- Ensure there is an effective waste management and recycling service that is value for money and improves rates of recycling through a simpler and efficient process.
- Move our focus to helping businesses and residents adapt to our ever- changing climate by conserving water and other natural resources.



Aim 3

Supporting residents that need help

Page 46



Objective 1

Embed a greater focus on prevention and early intervention and empowering people to take personal responsibility

Page 47

The increasing withdrawal of universal preventative and early-intervention services, whilst understandable given budget pressures, has begun to bite public services as demand soars and needs grow. These needs may have been met better and more affordably had an early intervention approach been in place. It is also right for people to take personal responsibility for their own lives and preventative services can support people to make choices that improve their health but also empower them, reducing dependency on the state in the longer term. The short term approach has been a false economy and does not deliver best value for the taxpayer in the longer term.

Our priorities will be to:

- Give families access to the right support, intervening early to ensure wherever possible families can stay together and reducing the number of children that go into care.
- Where it is financially viable, we will invest in prevention. We will also campaign for this area to receive direct funding, especially for prevention in social care.
- Put in place practical measures that improve people's lives, intervening early to support people to help themselves and make sensible life choices without a nanny state attitude.



Objective 2

Ensure every child has the chance to grow up safe and secure, free from online harm

Page 48

Ensuring our children grow up in a safe and secure environment is an ever-increasing challenge, whether they are cared for by their parents, their wider family or the local authority. Increasingly pervasive influences from the internet, social media and peer pressure means many of our children are exposed to risks and dangers that were inconceivable just a couple of decades ago. This impacts on their mental health and drives demand for health services and disability benefits, ruining their life chances and burdening the taxpayer with excessive and unnecessary costs. Protecting childhood is critical to making sure the next generation can live a happy and fulfilling life and ensuring a safe and stable society in the decades to come.

Our priorities will be to:

- Reinststate parenting hubs to support families and help them stay together.
- Encourage parents to feed children a health nutritious diet, give them plenty of fresh air and exercise and reduce screen time to an absolute minimum.
- Work with the Police and Crime Commissioner (PCC) to support a ban on smartphones in Kent's schools, allowing children to concentrate on their lessons and protect them from online pressures.
- Support schools, families and children by prioritising early intervention, and reintegration.
- Work with schools to lobby government to redraft the curriculum to encourage rigorous teaching in the core skills of reading, writing and maths and drive out ideological social trends.



Objective 3

To deliver good care for our most vulnerable because they deserve to be treated with dignity

Page 49

Social care services have been failed by successive governments with the absence of a coherent and sustainably funded plan to meet the vast challenges faced. Complexity of need has increased alongside the demographic pressures of an ageing population and adult social care services in particular, continue to place increasing pressure on the Council's budget. The system has simply not been modernised to catch up with the growing demand or to deliver the type of support people want. With the right support people can live independently for longer, keeping people out of residential care and in their own homes. This not only offers greater quality of life but costs far less to the taxpayer. The use of technology

is woefully underutilised both in terms of supporting people's independence and streamlining assessment processes. Outdated and costly care is not delivering the support people deserve and must be reformed, fit for the 21st century.

Our priorities will be to:

- Look at options to use AI and tech to create efficient assessment processes, that speed up getting the right support to people as quickly and as effectively as possible.
- Bring some children's homes' capacity back in house, where it makes financial sense, to ensure we are not paying inflated prices set by some providers.
- Work with our local workforce, providers and the voluntary, community, and social enterprise sector (VCSE) to ensure good care and the right support is available at a local level.



Objective 4

Work with care providers and the NHS to ensure that the care system is more sustainable and joined up

The demand pressures that KCC services are facing are also faced by our partners in the NHS. We want to work with our NHS partners to ensure a more joined approach to meeting the needs of our local residents. Our residents quality of life should not be compromised by the failures of successive national governments to develop a sustainable care system, which works seamlessly with the health system. We will work closely with our NHS partners to develop a local care system that is built around collaboration and partnership, not duplication and inefficiency and ensure that the resident's needs are at the heart of this.

Our priorities will be to:

- Improve our engagement and relationship with care providers, so that both commissioners and providers can work together to ensure care markets are more sustainable.
- Work with our partners in the NHS to develop a stronger joint commissioning programme across a range of services where we have shared clients or are commissioning from the same providers.
- Work collaboratively with District Councils and KCC partners to strengthen the way Disabled Facilities Grants are coordinated, ensure the process is as accessible, fair and responsive as possible, and that residents experience a more joined up and supportive service.
- Hold the government to account to ensure any recommendations from the Casey Review are funded, sensible, and subject to consultation, including any proposal for a National Care Service.



Objective 5

Recognise and support the dedication of our county's unpaid carers

The family is the backbone of a compassionate and caring society. Nowhere is that more evident than in the love, dedication, and support that family carers provide on an unpaid basis, often sacrificing the quality of their own life to meet the needs of their loved ones. This informal care reduces the care burden on the council exponentially, and the role of adults and young carers should be recognised, supported and celebrated, given their selfless contribution.

Our priorities will be to:

- Refresh the KCC carers strategy, and seek to join up our support for carers across health and housing services.
- Better engage with carers support groups around the support and recognition carers can be provided.
- Ensure that the life chances of young carers are not inhibited by their caring responsibilities – and they continue to enjoy the benefits of childhood.
- Work with district and borough councils to support planning applications where extended families wish to care for older relatives at home, and lobby ministers to explore tax breaks for adult carers who do this.



Objective 6

Improve processes and outcomes for our SEND services while tackling the unsustainable growth in demand

We will continue to improve our SEND service, ensuring that those families and young people who are eligible for SEND support receive it in a timely, efficient, and professional manner. At the same time we must also reduce the demands placed on the SEND budget given the existential pressure it places on the wider KCC budget, including – increasingly – the adult social care budget, as children with SEND need transition to adulthood. This demand is driven by a national crisis in SEND demand, which must be urgently addressed by the government, given the systemic challenges it is placing not just on children’s services budgets, but on those of the NHS, schools and home to school transport as well.

Our priorities will be to:

- Strengthen SEND provision by shaping and providing our services with partners.
- Improve the timeliness of undertaking EHCPs and communicating progress transparently and effectively with families waiting for decisions, utilising tools such as AI to improve efficiency and effectiveness.
- Uphold statutory responsibilities to provide SEND provision and education.
- Continually review the home to school transport delivery systems to ensure best value for taxpayer money. Enlarge the provision of personal transport budgets so that parents can take responsibility for getting their child to and from school.
- Help parents to properly understand and fulfil their obligations and responsibilities towards their own children before turning to KCC for assistance.



Aim 4

Building better communities

Page 53



Objective 1

Support Kent Police to keep our communities safe

The first responsibility of the state is to keep its citizens safe, yet an increasing sense of lawlessness is blighting many of our local communities. Often it is the cumulative impact of lower-level crimes, such as anti-social behaviour and shoplifting, which often goes unaddressed and unpunished, which harms the day-to-day quality of life in our local communities. At the same time, our overstretched police officers are being asked to do more, with less, whilst under an unreasonable level of scrutiny which disempowers them from doing their job and seeks to erode public trust in our police. KCC will re-invigorate its strategic partnership with Kent Police.

Our priorities will be to:

- Re-invigorate its strategic partnership with Kent Police, recognising that the KCC and Kent Police working together are a powerful force for good in our county.
- Refresh the Kent Community Safety Plan so there is a stronger focus on anti-social behaviour and work with local crime and disorder reduction units to design local interventions that have local community support.
- Lobby the government for more funding for Kent Police to cover the additional burdens placed on Kent Police from policing the border, the current funding of which is insufficient from government.
- Working with our partners and the VCSE sector, focus on tackling domestic abuse and violence against woman and girls, which is prevalent in too many of our communities.
- Support the role of our Community Wardens within our local communities but ensure this is refocussed on the areas that matter most to our residents, with a renewed focus on community safety and tackling anti-social behaviour.



Objective 2

Tackle inequality blighting many of our coastal communities

Differences between areas of Kent contribute to the county's unique and special character. However, differences born of increasing inequality and social deprivation, especially between some of Kent's coastal communities and the rest of the county, have grown to unacceptable levels. In too many coastal communities employment, health and housing outcomes are considerably poorer. This cycle of decline is then compounded through inappropriate placements of vulnerable people i.e. children in care, former prisoners, asylum seekers from other areas into those local communities, increasing community numbers and placing additional burden on local public services. We have to end this cycle of decline in our poorest coastal communities.

Our priorities will be to:

- Enable local business to flourish, supporting economic growth and jobs – increasing the number of Kent and Medway Business Fund loans and targeting our coastal communities.
- Support the work of KCC Public Health to focus on 'Marmot' model intervention work in our coastal communities.
- Reinstate parenting hubs to support families and help them stay together.
- Work with our partners to implement the Kent and Medway Suicide and Self-Harm Prevention Strategy, focussing on early intervention, and practical support for those at risk.
- Put pressure on Kent Police to prioritise patrols in seaside areas to prevent anti-social behaviour and support our coastal tourism sector.



Objective 3

Listen to communities and stand firm against excessively large housing and solar farm developments

When local residents complain about new housing or solar farm developments in their areas, it isn't out of inherent NIMBYism, it is because they know the impact such developments will have on their local community. Kent has taken a huge amount of new housing in recent years, driven by government algorithms and targets, with no reference to local circumstances or character. Too much new housing is of poor design and without the necessary infrastructure to support a decent quality of life, and often filled by London borough overspill rather than local Kent residents. Whilst recognising that people need homes, there is no point in building new homes that destroy existing local communities.

Our priorities will be to:

- Ensure developers install vital infrastructure to support communities and community identity, rather than just bland dormitory estates.
- Work with local planning authorities to examine how more housing can be reserved for people with ties to the area.
- Work with our partners to influence local housing policies to appropriately prioritise our veterans' housing needs.
- Produce policy on solar farms to consider the economic benefit for the community and the county; the impacts on the countryside, environment, biodiversity, farmland, public amenity and safety. The policy will oppose the siting of inappropriate, excessively large and intrusive solar farm developments in the county.
- Press central government to produce policy on solar farms that is appropriate for Kent.



Objective 4

Improve the quality of roads and work to reduce delays from roadworks

Page 57

Nowhere is the decline in the civic realm more obvious than in the decline of our road infrastructure over recent years. Too many Kent residents' daily lives are blighted by potholes and endless roadworks, whilst the delay and unpredictability in travel times has a direct economic impact on many Kent businesses. We will reform Kent's roads by filling more potholes, resurfacing roads and exploring every new and innovative technology that is available to improve the quality of our road assets across Kent. We will also lobby the government to reform the operation of the highways permit scheme to remove the ability of the utility companies to self-declare road works as emergencies, which inhibits the ability of KCC as the Highways Authority to coordinate and manage works in a way that minimises the impact on residents and businesses.

Our priorities will be to:

- Incrementally expand investment in our roads through delivering a huge maintenance programme across Kent's roads, and lobby government for greater funding to close the gap in maintenance funding.
- Empower our local highways staff who know their local roads to take the necessary action to improve the quality of roads that most impact local residents and communities.
- Lobby government for reform of the highways permit scheme to stop utility companies excessive use of the 'emergency works' provisions to avoid seeking permits from KCC as the highways authority to dig up the road.



Objective 5

Ensure that the infrastructure needs of the county to support economic growth and quality of life are fully in place

The scale of the growth Kent has faced over recent years has been unprecedented, which has placed significant pressure on the county's social and physical infrastructure. The failure to deliver 'infrastructure first' has not only materially harmed the quality of life, placing pressure on GPs, school and roads, but it has an economic impact on businesses who need certainty in terms of staff availability, travel times and energy infrastructure to plan and invest for growth. We must break this cycle of insufficient infrastructure being delivered only after the pressure has become acute.

Our priorities will be to:

- Building on the Kent and Medway Infrastructure Framework, ensure the new Spatial Development Strategy fully captures Kent's strategic infrastructure needs and delivers a requirement into the planning system to deliver infrastructure first.
- Establish a Future Energy Forum which brings together all relevant parties to identify Kent's future energy requirements and lobby the government to take the action now to ensure those future energy needs are met, whilst ensuring that Kent's energy needs are included in regional and national plans.
- We will use our role as the local transport authority and the agreed Local Transport Plan for Kent to encourage planning authorities to fully consider transport needs when considering new developments and refreshing local plans.
- Call on the government to use the National Infrastructure Commission to undertake an independent assessment of the future infrastructure requirements on Kent given its importance as the gateway to Europe and outline funding routes for this nationally critical infrastructure.



Objective 6

Protect our Kent environment with practical, affordable and visible improvements

Kent is a county of contrasts. From historic cities and market towns, to beautiful villages and countryside, our environment is often the key reason so many people want to live, work and visit our county. However, the traditional Kent landscape is increasingly under threat. Our traditional high streets risk becoming areas where people don't want to spend their time or money. Our roadside verges are increasingly covered in litter and debris, which leaves the impression that no agency is taking responsibility or delivering basic services. Our beaches and coastline have been under threat from sewage discharges. Whilst KCC may not always be the responsible body for these issues, our strategic role in Kent calls on us to convene, work with and hold to account all partners to improve our environment.

Our priorities will be to:

- Tackle the blight of litter and debris left in Kent's roadside verges. Irrespective of which agency is responsible, we need a joint action across all agencies.
- Lobby the government and regulator to take stronger action to stop waste discharge into the sea, which harms our coastline and visitor economy.
- Work with partners to tackle criminal fly tipping and other environmental crime, which blights rural communities and is often linked to organised crime.
- Continue to champion the 'No Use Empty' scheme where appropriate and beneficial to local communities, concentrating effort on our deprived coastal towns to support economic recovery and growth.



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Get to know Kent County Council

Managing taxpayers' money in 2025/26

Page 61



Managed a
£1.5 billion
budget

Reduced debt by
£122 million
repaying **£90 million** of this debt
early and the rest as planned



Reduced the amount of interest KCC
has to pay by around **£3,400** every day

Set Council Tax at
3.99%



lower than
89%
of county and
single tier councils



Forecast to deliver
£100 million
of savings

Removed
£39.5 million
of potential future spending



Negotiated
£54 million
of savings or contract
improvements in 2025-26

Set balanced budget for 2026/27 including:

Net increase in money set aside
for unexpected costs (called
reserves)

Investing more money for
council services



Managing taxpayers' money means setting Council Tax responsibly, keeping costs under control, and making sure funding is focused on the services residents rely on most. In 2025/26, KCC took the following steps to manage its finances:

- **Council Tax** – Set an increase lower than most County, Metropolitan and Unitary councils.
- **Savings** – Forecasting £100 million in savings in 2025/26 as part of the planned budget (final figure confirmed in financial outturn report in June 2026)

- **Future spending** – Removed £39.5 million from future spending plans
- **Contracts** – Negotiated £54 million of savings or contract improvements in 2025-26
- **Total debt** – Reduced the Council's overall debt by £122 million, repaying £90 million of this debt early and the rest as planned, which eases long-term financial pressures

- **Cost of debt** – Reducing council debt delivers a net saving of around £3,400 every day – that's interest saved, minus a small amount of investment income no longer earned.
- **Budget position for 2026/27** – Set a balanced budget with no new borrowing, kept money aside to help protect services in future years (called 'reserves'), and will be investing more money in council services - Adult Social Care, Children's Services, Environment, Highways and Transport.

Get to know Kent County Council

Council decision and actions taken in 2025/26

Page 62

Local government reorganisation option 1A developed,



with estimated potential savings of **£450 million** over 10 years

Reforming Kent 3-year strategy for the county published



Climate Emergency Declaration removed along with Net Zero targets

Illegal Migration Emergency declared



Made Government representations in support of nuclear power in Dungeness



and reopening international rail services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet

Developed proposals for an environmental levy for foreign-registered lorries



Some of the decisions and actions taken by the Council in 2025/26 include:

- Developed an option (1A) for local government reorganisation, estimating potential savings of up to £450 million over 10 years
- Published the 'Reforming Kent' plan, setting out the Council's priorities and approach
- Removed the Climate Emergency Declaration, including the associated targets of Net Zero by 2030
- Declared an 'Illegal Migration Emergency' in Kent to highlight local cost, capacity and safety pressures
- Made representations to Government in support of new nuclear provision at Dungeness and the reopening of international rail services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet
- Developed proposals to secure a foreign-registered HGV environmental levy, for use by KCC's Highways service

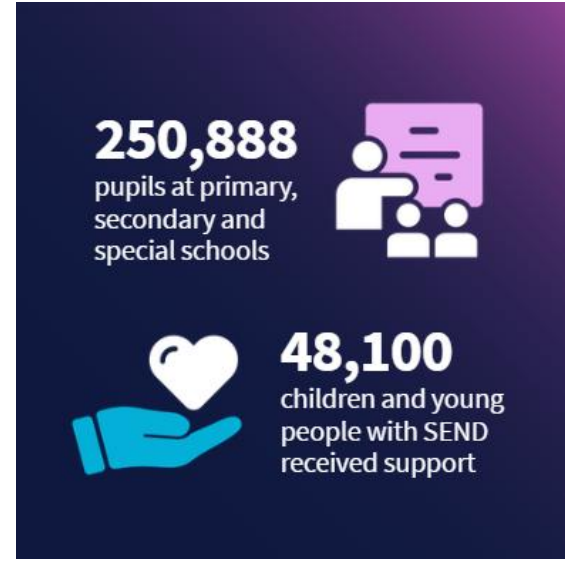
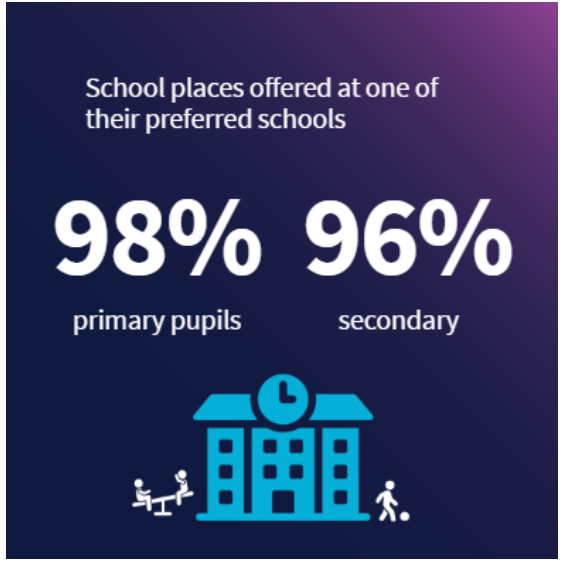
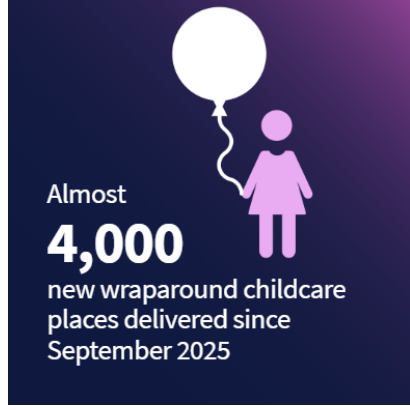
Get to know Kent County Council

Delivering services for babies, children and families in 2025/26

Page 63

Services delivered for babies, children and young people in 2025/26:

- **Early years** – 98% of Kent’s early years settings were rated *Good or Outstanding* by Ofsted.
- **Kent Family Hub**, supporting children and families across the county – reached 13,653 families and delivered 31,101 interventions and sessions.
- **Childcare places** – almost 4,000 new wraparound childcare places were delivered from September 2025



- **Schools** – 250,888 pupils were educated in Kent’s primary, secondary and special schools
- **School places** – 96% of secondary pupils and 98% of primary pupils were offered a place at one of their preferred schools
- **Special educational needs and disabilities (SEND)** – 48,100 children and young people accessed SEND services

- **Health visiting** – 66,000 health and wellbeing reviews for babies and young children were delivered to families
- **Fostering** – 594 foster households worked with the Council to care for children

Get to know Kent County Council

Services for adults and communities in 2025/26

Page 64



23,174 adults
received care and support

39,933
Blue Badges issued



Total in Kent: **94,317**

510,698
contacts handled by
KCC's contact centre



891 people
took part in Connect to Work

443
empty homes
brought back into use



3.2 million visits
to Kent's 99 libraries

123,541
uses of archive collections
and documents

240,898
people attended library
and archives events



7,422
ceremonies delivered



1.26 million
visits to Kent country parks

Adult and community-focused services delivered in 2025/26:

- **Adult social care** – 23,174 adults who received care and support, either in the community or a care home
- **Blue Badges** – 39,933 badges were issued, bringing the total in Kent to 94,317
- **Contact Centre** – 510,698 contacts received by the Council's main customer contact service

- **Employment** – 891 people took part in the Connect to Work programme to move closer to employment
- **Housing** – 443 long-term empty homes were brought back into use through the No Use Empty scheme
- **Libraries and archives** – Kent's libraries welcomed 3.2 million visits, and there were 123,541 uses of Kent's

archive collections and documents, while 240,898 people attended library and archives events and activities

- **Registration services** – 7,422 marriages, civil partnerships and citizenship ceremonies delivered
- **Country parks** – Welcomed 1.26 million visits, offering accessible green spaces for residents and visitors

Get to know Kent County Council

Keeping Kent moving in 2025/26

Page 65



In 2025/26, Kent County Council:

- Spent £67 million on road repairs and maintenance across the county
- Maintained 5,500 miles of roads and 4,000 miles of footways, one of the largest local authority networks in the country
- Filled around 50,000 potholes, using the Council's agreed inspection and repair processes

- Resurfaced 353,356 square metres of road, improving the condition of heavily used routes
- Treated 793,000 square metres of road to extend their working life, helping prevent future deterioration

- Cleaned 112,258 drainage gullies and completed 11 large drainage schemes to help reduce surface water issues
- Repaired or carried out minor works on 467 gullies, improving drainage and road safety

Get to know Kent County Council

Managing waste and recycling across Kent
in 2025/26

Page 66

In 2025/26 the council delivered the following as part of its waste and recycling responsibilities.

- Handled 671,353 tonnes of waste across the county
- Diverted 99.6% of household waste away from landfill, meaning almost all rubbish was reused, recycled or used to generate energy
- Diverted 99.6% of household waste away from landfill, meaning almost all rubbish was reused, recycled or used to generate energy



671,353

tonnes of waste
handled in the 12 months
to February 2026

- Food waste recycling – Between September 2025 and February 2026 over 3,200 extra tonnes of food waste were recycled, which is a 22% increase. Reducing waste disposal costs by over £380k.

Household waste refers to everyday rubbish and recycling collected from homes by your local district council or at Household Waste Recycling Centres.

99.6%

of household waste
diverted from landfill



Between September 2025
and February 2026



over 3,200
extra tonnes of food
waste were recycled
which is a **22%** increase



Reducing waste
disposal costs by
over £380k

Get to know Kent County Council

Helping business grow in 2025/26

Page 67

Local businesses play an important role in Kent's economy. As part of the **Get to know Kent County Council** series, this post looks back at what Kent County Council delivered in **2025/26** to help businesses grow, win work and access advice.

In 2025/26, Kent County Council:

- Published Kent's first Commercial Strategy, setting out how the Council buys goods and services and works with local businesses
- Awarded £55 million in council contracts to Kent-based companies, helping keep more public spending in the local economy
- Worked directly with 500 Kent supplier companies, helping them understand and access council opportunities
- Reached 1,400 businesses through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub, providing advice and guidance.

Based on information published on the Council's website and in council documents.

Kent's first
Commercial Strategy
published



£55 million
more in council contracts
awarded to Kent companies



1,400
businesses accessed the
Kent & Medway Growth Hub

500
Kent supplier companies
working with the Council



Get to know Kent County Council

Feedback from residents in 2025/26

Page 68

Listening to residents and understanding how council services are experienced is an important part of improving how they are delivered. While satisfaction levels can vary by service and individual experience, these figures reflect results from feedback and surveys for services where regular satisfaction monitoring is carried out.

- **Contact Centre** – 97% of callers rated the advisor they spoke to as good



97%
of callers rate Contact Centre
advisors as good

95%
satisfied with
library services



96%
satisfied
with Kent Archives

96%
satisfied with registration services



- **Libraries** – 95% of library users were satisfied
- **Archives** – 96% satisfied with the service received
- **Registration services** – 96% satisfied, based on feedback from April to December 2025
- **Household Waste Recycling Centres** – 96% satisfied
- **Live Well Kent** – Over 99% of clients said they would recommend the service to family, friends or someone in a similar situation (April–December 2025)



96%
satisfied with Household Waste
Recycling Centres

More than
99%
would recommend
Live Well Kent
(Apr–Dec)



By: Linden Kemkaran – Leader and Chair of Personnel Committee
Amanda Beer – Chief Executive

To: County Council

Date: 21 May 2026

Subject: Senior Management Update

Summary:

This paper outlines proposed modifications to the Council's senior management structure concerning the reporting arrangements for the Director of Public Health. The Personnel Committee has granted its approval to these changes, and the paper now seeks formal authorisation from the County Council to implement the revised reporting line.

1. Background

- 1.1 This paper is brought to County Council to seek approval for a change in the reporting line of the Director of Public Health, following the Personnel Committee's approval and recommendation to Council on 11 May 2026.
- 1.2 Section 24.7 of the Constitution stipulates that "*The overall structure of the organisation down to third tier level is approved by the County Council on the advice of the Chief Executive and the Leader.*" As the Personnel Committee, chaired by the Leader, is responsible for considering and recommending to County Council any changes affecting Senior Managers, this paper was first considered by Personnel Committee to enable review and scrutiny of the proposed top tier structural change, and is now presented to County Council for determination.
- 1.3 The current top tier structure has been in place since the reintroduction of the Chief Executive post in May 2022, with only a small number of alterations since then.

2. Change in report line of Director of Public Health

- 2.1 The Authority faces significant challenges and opportunities. The new Administration is committed to transforming KCC, requiring strong focus from

the Chief Executive. Alongside this, priorities include improving services, delivering DOLGE efficiencies, expanding technology and AI, and developing a clear prevention agenda.

- 2.2 Externally, KCC must manage ongoing financial pressures, rising demand and costs, and the impact of partner organisations, alongside the major challenge of Local Government Reorganisation. A stable and experienced senior management team is essential to lead through this period and support delivery of the Administration's objectives.
- 2.3 KCC must become leaner and make better use of its scale. A strong corporate core should support a 'One Council' approach, enabling services to focus on quality, practice, and outcomes for residents. The role of Public Health is a key component in this endeavour.
- 2.4 It is proposed that the report line for the Director of Public Health moves from the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to the Chief Executive with immediate effect for the following reasons:
 - The recent change in the Cabinet Portfolio brings Public Health together with Environment and Coastal Regeneration. Previously, responsibility for Public Health was within the same portfolio as Adult Social Care. It is advantageous for the management reporting structure to reflect this change and recognise the fact that Public Health has to work effectively and closely with all parts of the Council. A Corporate report line makes this responsibility and opportunity clearer. It also reflects the organisational importance of Public Health to the agenda for the County.
 - Public Health is one of the more complex areas in relation to the disaggregation of KCC services should local government reorganisation proceed, and the government decision is to move to more than one unitary authority. This change of report line would continue the move agreed by County Council in September last year to ensure that all the key functions involved in working to the Chief Executive on the design and implementation of LGR (Policy, including HR policy, Finance, Legal and Infrastructure Assets) sit on the same management team.
- 2.5 The Director of Public Health (DPH) and the Corporate Director ASCH both support this move. The DPH will continue to be a regular attendee at all three service Directorate Management Teams, so there is no danger of the close working relationships that the DPH has built up with key senior staff across the organisation being weakened. The DPH also remains an important and valued member of the Corporate Management Team.
- 2.6 The move of the report line of the DPH to the Chief Executive is strongly recommended for the reasons outlined above. There will be no change to the postholder's terms and conditions. No formal consultation is required as the change involves only a change in one person's report line – the rest of the Division will remain unaltered.

- 2.7 The proposal is unanimously recommended to the County Council by the Personnel Committee and there are no financial implications in relation to this change to the top tier structure.

3 Recommendations

County Council is asked to **APPROVE** the change in the reporting line of the Director of Public Health from the Corporate Director Adult Social Care and Health to the Chief Executive, with immediate effect.

Background Documents

N/A

Responsible Director

Amanda Beer
Chief Executive

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By: Joel Cook – Democratic Services Manager
 To: County Council – 21 May 2026
 Subject: Proportionality and Appointments to committees and other bodies
 Classification: Unrestricted

Recommendation:

The County Council is asked to:

- (a) **APPROVE** the amendment to the allocation of committee and sub-committee places between the political groups;
- (b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Democratic Services Manager, to resolve relevant appointments with the affected Political Groups.

For Decision

Composition of the County Council

1. Following the April 2026 Cliftonville By-election and the subsequent update to Political Group membership, the political make-up of the Council has changed. The updated details are set out in the below table.

Political Group	Number of seats	Proportion of seats (%)
Reform UK	47	58.02
Liberal Democrat	12	14.81
Restore Britain Kent	7	8.64
Conservative	6	7.41
Green	6	7.41
Labour	2	2.47
Non-Group aligned	1	1.23
Total	81	100%

Note – Figures rounded for presentational purposes

Committee Appointments

2. The Council must, from time to time, determine the number of Members to serve on each committee and the allocation of committee places between the political groups.
3. The Local Government and Housing Act 1989 requires committee places to be allocated between the political groups in accordance with the following principles:
 - (a) the group with the majority of seats on the Council must have a majority of seats on each committee.
 - (b) subject to (a) above, the number of seats on the total of all committees allocated to any political group must be proportional to the number of seats which that group holds on the Council;
 - (c) subject to (a) and (b) above, the number of seats on each committee allocated to any political group must be proportional to the number of seats which that group holds on the Council.
 - (d) Only political groups have an entitlement to seats on committees. A 'political group' is defined as two or more Members who inform the Monitoring Officer that they wish to be regarded as a political group.
4. The Council must seek to achieve proportionality as far as is practicable, balancing the requirements set out in paragraph 3. Council most recently determined the Proportionality and Committee seat allocations at the 19 March 2026 meeting.
5. The implication of the recent Political Group numbers following the by-election is that the Conservative and Green Groups once again have an equal number of Members. In accordance with proportionality principles and in the context of the approved total number of Committee seats, the adjustment proposed is to re-apply split entitlements across a small number of Committees and sub-Committees to ensure equal seat numbers shared between the relevant Groups.
6. The overview is set out below; the first table sets out the full list of main Committees, where there is a requirement that, as far as is practicable, the overall number of seats is balanced along with the numbers on each individual committee. The changes are highlighted in **bold**. The second table sets out only those sub-committees where the committee seat numbers necessitate a change to ensure parity between Groups of the same size.

Committee	Reform	LD	Res Br	Con	Green	Lab	No group	Total
<i>Scrutiny Committee</i> +5*	7	2	1	1	1	1	0	13
<i>Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee</i> +4\$	8	2	1	1	1	0	0	13
<i>Governance and Audit Committee</i>	7	2	1	1	1	1	0	13
<i>Personnel Committee</i>	7	2	1	1	1	1	0	13
<i>Planning Applications Committee</i>	8	3	2	1	1	0	0	15
<i>Selection and Member Services Committee</i>	8	2	1	1	1	0	0	13
<i>Pension Fund Committee</i> +3# (1/1/1)	6	2	1	1	1	0	0	11
Kent Flood Risk Management Committee	4	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	0	7
Standards Committee	4	1	1	0.5	0.5	0	0	7
<u>TOTAL</u>	59	17	10	8	8	3	0	105
<u>Proportionate Share of Total</u>	61	15.5	9	8	8	2.5	1	105
<u>Difference</u>	-2	+1.5	+1	0	0	+0.5	-1	105

Affected Sub-Committees:

Sub-Committees	Reform	LD	Res Br	Cons	Green	Lab	Total
Selection and Member Services Committee Governor Appointments Panel	4	1	1	1	0	0	7
Personnel Committee Member Appointment Panel	5	1	1	1	0	0	8

Recommendations

The County Council is asked to:

- (a) **APPROVE** the amendment to the allocation of committee and sub-committee places between the political groups as set out in Appendix 1;
- (b) **DELEGATE** authority to the Democratic Services Manager, to resolve relevant appointments with the affected Political Groups.

Background Documents

Full Council 19 March 2026 Proportionality reports:

[\(Public Pack\)Report for Item 11 - Proportionality Agenda Supplement for County Council, 19/03/2026 10:00](#)

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