

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13th November, 2025

10.00 am

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone**





AGENDA

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

Thursday, 13 November 2025, at 10.00 am
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County
Hall, Maidstone

Ask for: **Hayley Savage**
Telephone: **03000 414286**

Membership (13)

Reform UK (9):	Mr C Hespe (Chairman), Mr P Chamberlain (Vice-Chair), Mr D Burns, Mr W Chapman, Ms S Emberson, Mr L Evans, Mr J Finch, Mr M Mulvihill and Mr N Wibberley
Liberal Democrat (1):	Mr A J Hook
Green (1):	Mr M A J Hood
Conservative (1):	Mr H Rayner
Labour (1):	Mr A Brady

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcement
- 2 Apologies and Substitutes
- 3 Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
- 4 Minutes of the meeting held on 10 September 2025 (Pages 1 - 12)
- 5 25/00083 - Adoption of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028 (Pages 13 - 44)

- 6 Commercial and Procurement Performance Report (Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, 2025/2026) (Pages 45 - 52)
- 7 Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) - Strategy, Remit, Governance & Decision-Making Update (Pages 53 - 60)
- 8 Budget Planning 2026-27 Update (Pages 61 - 66)
- 9 Decant of Invicta House into Sessions House Update (Pages 67 - 72)
- 10 Work Programme 2025/26 (Pages 73 - 76)

EXEMPT ITEMS

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

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

Wednesday, 5 November 2025

This page is intentionally left blank

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 10 September 2025

PRESENT: Mr C Hespe (Chairman), Mr P Chamberlain (Vice-Chair), Mr A Brady, Mr D Burns, Mr W Chapman, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Finch, Mr A J Hook, Mr M Mulvihill, Mr H Rayner, Mr N Wibberley and Mr P Stepto

ALSO PRESENT: Mr B Collins

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive (Monitoring Officer)), Ms C Maynard (Head of Commercial and Procurement), Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Mr M Cheverton (Head of Real Estate Services), Ms J Taylor (Head of Capital) and Mr M Wagner (Chief Analyst)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**11. Apologies and Substitutes**
(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Luke Evans and Mr Mark Hood. Mr Stepto was present as substitute for Mr Hood.

Mr Mulvihill had joined the committee and filled the Reform UK vacancy.

12. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

13. Minutes of the meeting held on 8 July 2025
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 8 July were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

14. Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department
(Item 5)

1. The Chief Analyst, Mr Matt Wagner, introduced the report which included Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for services within the Chief Executive's Department (CED) and Deputy Chief Executive's Department (DCED) up to the end of June 2025.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) A Member asked, regarding KPI CS07 – *Percentage of complaints responded to timescale* - for the proportion of complaints by directorate.
 - b) Regarding KPI FN06 – *Percentage of sundry debt due to KCC under 6 months old* - Members expressed concern that due to restructuring within the NHS and possible LGR, there was a risk that debt owed by the Integrated Care Board (ICB) would not be recovered. Officers confirmed that, in the event of LGR, any debt would be passed on to the new relevant local authority. The reported figure represented gross debt and not the net position and high-level discussions with the ICB were ongoing.
 - c) Regarding Freedom of Information (FOI) and Subject Access Requests (SARs) (KPI GL03) performance remained below acceptable levels, with the majority of SARs originating from the Children, Young People and Education (CYPE) Directorate. A pilot project with the Information Commissioner's Office was underway to address the challenges and resource issues, and future reports would include directorate-level breakdowns to better identify areas needing improvement.
 - d) Concerns were raised about the transparency of contact centre KPIs as the contract allowed performance exemptions during periods of exceptionally high call volumes, Mr Wagner clarified that the contract excluded these days from monitoring but the dashboard KPIs did include them.
3. The Chairman acknowledged the substantial effort behind the dashboard and praised the officers and administration for their work.
4. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee notes the performance position for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department.

15. Fair Funding 2.0 Consultation

(Item 6)

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mr Dave Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy) introduced the report. The Consultation marked the first major review in over a decade, aiming to update outdated funding formulas and redistribute resources more fairly. The current system, based on 2013–14 data, was no longer fit for purpose. The consultation proposed consolidating various grants into a single Settlement Funding Assessment (SFA) based on each local authority needs against their ability to raise income through council tax banding.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) There was concern that the government expected councils to use their full council tax flexibility (up to 5%). Mr Shipton explained that the proposed funding floor mechanism may penalize councils that choose not to raise council tax to the maximum level, offering no protection against funding reductions.
 - b) Members questioned the transparency of the statistical modelling used in the Relative Needs Formula (RNF), particularly around deprivation and population projections. Concerns were expressed about the fairness of

redistributing funds based solely on council tax bands, as this may not accurately reflect service needs, especially for high-cost services like adult social care. Mr Shipton confirmed that the Council's response to the consultation included concern about the lack of statistical evidence to justify the use of indices of multiple deprivation.

- c) A Member raised concern regarding the uncertainty surrounding the outcome of the spending review and the potential for a zero SFA for the Council. Whilst it was unlikely Kent would receive no funding, contingency arrangements were being actively discussed.
 - d) The increasing budget deficit and forecast gap for 2026–27 remained a concern and further savings or income generation would be required regardless of the consultation outcome.
 - e) Kent had benefited from business rate pooling with district councils, enabling business rate growth in the county including approximately £4million for the council's budget and £4million for regeneration initiatives. This arrangement worked well in two-tier areas and may be impacted by future local government reorganisation.
 - f) The outcome of the consultation was expected by the end of November, ahead of the Chancellor's Autumn Budget.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee notes KCC's response to the consultation.

16. Update from the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG) (Item 7)

- 1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader), Mr Paul Chamberlain (Deputy Cabinet Member) and Ms Clare Maynard (Chief Procurement Officer) introduced the report which provided an update on the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG).
- 2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) Attendees at CMRG receive a letter outlining the group's findings, both positive and negative, along with any follow-up suggestions. A few providers had been invited back as part of the forward plan to demonstrate how they had implemented recommended changes.
- 3. The Chairman thanked Mrs Maynard and her team, particularly Mr Bridger, the Strategic Commercial and Procurement Lead, for their close collaboration with the Department for Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE).
- 4. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee notes the report.

17. 25/00058 - Freehold disposal of the former Rowhill Primary School, Stock Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ (Item 8)

- 1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of former Rowhill Primary School, Stock Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) Some Members raised concerns about the absence of Local Member views in the papers. Officers clarified that views had been sought but no response was received at the time of writing, and the Local Member had since confirmed no objections.
 - b) Ms Spore explained that public consultation was only undertaken when required, such as for designated public open spaces, and that the Council followed its property management protocol. She noted that while there was consultation at the time of the school's closure, no further public engagement had occurred since. A Member suggested that greater public engagement could help protect the Council's reputation, especially in light of media scrutiny.
 - c) A Member questioned whether the site could be used for special educational needs (SEN) provision given current shortages. Mrs Spore responded that the site would require demolition and rebuilding, making it economically unviable, and confirmed that Education colleagues had ruled it out for future SEN use. She also assured Members that local plans and future development needs were considered during disposal assessments.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. the disposal of former Rowhill School, Stock Lane, Wilmington, Dartford DA2 7BZ; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

18. 25/00059 - Freehold Disposal of land at the junction of West Malling Bypass and South of the London Road, Leybourne
(Item 9)

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of land at the junction of West Malling Bypass and South of the London Road, Leybourne. Mrs Spore explained that the land was acquired for highway purposes and was now surplus to the Council's needs. She confirmed that Local Members had been consulted and had raised no objections to the proposed disposal.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) A Member sought clarification on the nature of the land, asking whether it was agricultural and woodland, and whether the housing development would be on the agricultural portion. Mrs Spore clarified that while parts of the land had been used informally, it was not designated for agricultural use. The land was acquired specifically for the bypass project, and the unused portions were not formally set aside for farming.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:

1. the disposal of land at the junction of West Malling Bypass and land south of the London Road, Leybourne; and
2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

19. 25/00060 - Freehold disposal of land to the south of Pratling Street, Aylesford
(Item 10)

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of land to the south of Pratling Street, Aylesford.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) Clarification was sought by Members regarding the current use of the land. Mrs Spore confirmed that while there was a tenant currently using the site for grazing, this was a temporary, interim arrangement and not its designated use. It was confirmed that although the land was currently being used for grazing, it was not being sold as grazing land. The future use of the site, including any residential development, would be subject to the planning process, which was the responsibility of the local planning authority.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. the disposal of land at Pratling Street, Aylesford; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

20. 25/00061 - Freehold Disposal of land at Westcott Avenue, Gravesend DA11 7HP
(Item 11)

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of land at Westcott Avenue, Gravesend, DA11 7HP.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) A Member raised concerns about the recurring pattern of acquiring large plots of land for educational purposes, only to later decide they were not needed. Mrs Spore responded that while it was difficult to comment on historical decisions, land purchases were often made based on availability rather than precise future needs. She noted that the site in question was located near both a secondary school and a newly built primary school, which may have influenced the original acquisition.

3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. the disposal of land at Westcott Avenue, Gravesend, DA11 7HP; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.
4. In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the Constitution, Mr Stepto wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that he abstained from endorsing the decision.

21. 25/00082 - Disposal of the former Oasis Academy, Egerton Avenue, Hextable BR8 7LG
(Item 12)

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of the former Oasis Academy, Egerton Avenue, Hextable BR8 7LG.
2. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. the disposal of the former Oasis Academy, Egerton Avenue, Hextable BR8 7LG; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

22. Work Programme 2025/2026
(Item 13)

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme 2025/2026.

23. 25/00057 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters (SHQ)
(Item 14)

OPEN ACCESS TO EXEMPT MINUTES

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report regarding the Property Accommodation Strategy – Strategic Headquarters (SHQ). Ms Spore highlighted a non-material typographical error in the report at Section 3.5.1 where the last two options were ranked incorrectly and were in the wrong order.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - a) Some Members expressed strong opposition to the proposed refurbishment of Sessions House and questioned its financial viability. Members commented on the building's state of disrepair and the cost of necessary repairs and ongoing maintenance. The proposal was criticised as short-term

thinking driven by potential Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). It was noted that if LGR did not proceed the Council could potentially be left without a suitable operating base.

- b) Members highlighted the disproportionate costs in the longer term required to refurbish Sessions House compared to Invicta House.
 - c) Members emphasised the accessibility issues relating to Sessions House and the inadequacy of the building for those with mobility issues. Mr Collins acknowledged the challenges with accessibility and running costs at Sessions House, noting that efforts were underway to improve efficiency where possible but recognised the building's limitations. Mrs Spore explained that accessibility improvements had been made within existing financial constraints, but some upgrades would require significant capital investment.
 - d) It was commented that there was a need for contingency planning and financial reserves due to the unpredictable nature of refurbishment costs in old buildings.
 - e) A Member expressed concern over the exclusion of key financial details such as running costs and capital allocations from public documents.
 - f) A Member asked for clarity on possible council chamber provision at Invicta House, and Mrs Spore confirmed that while the atrium could accommodate a chamber, it was not included in the current base option of the previous decision and would require separate funding if pursued.
 - g) The assumption was that Block B of Sessions House would remain empty and not be occupied by staff. There could be capacity in Block B in the future at an additional cost.
 - h) A Member questioned the rationale for returning to office-based working given the success of remote working over recent years.
3. The Chairman proposed the motion to exclude the press and public for exempt business and it was agreed.
4. RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following business on the grounds that it involves the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.
5. The Chair put the recommendation to endorse the decision as set out in the report to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (8)

Mr Burns, Mr Chamberlain, Mr Chapman, Mrs Emberson, Mr Finch, Mr Hespe, Mr Mulvihill, Mr Wibberley

Against (4)

Mr Brady, Mr Hook, Mr Stepto, Mr Rayner

Abstain (0)

Carried.

6. RESOLVED that the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
1. Agree to discontinue with the Preferred Option as set out in decision 24/00100;
 2. Given the proposed Local Government Reorganisation timetable indicated by Government, confirm Sessions House will continue to be the strategic headquarters for KCC for the remaining life of the Authority;
 3. Allocate £4m from the 2025-34 approved capital budget to enable the essential and urgent backlog maintenance works at Sessions House to be completed;
 4. Withdraw from the sale of Sessions House and Albert Street car park with immediate effect;
 5. Dispose of Invicta House and the associated car park as soon as practical to reduce holding costs and liabilities for the Council;
 6. Realign the capital and revenue budget as required to enable the above to be implemented;
 7. Delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to authorise the execution of necessary contractual and land agreements required to implement the above.

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A
of the Local Government Act 1972.

Document is Restricted

This page is intentionally left blank

From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader of the Council
John Betts, Corporate Director for Finance
Clare Maynard, Chief Procurement Officer

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee

Date: 13 November 2025

Subject: Adoption of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028

Decision no: 25/00083

Key Decision: Yes, it affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions (the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks).

Classification: Unrestricted

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All Electoral Divisions

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

This report presents the Kent County Council (KCC) Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028. Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is invited to review, provide feedback, and make recommendations to the Deputy Leader prior to the formal decision being taken to adopt and implement it.

The Commercial Strategy sets out a Council-wide framework for delivering Best Value through procurement and contract management, aligned with the Council's strategic priorities, financial plans, and the requirements of procurement regulations. It provides a structured, outcomes-focused approach to all commercial activity that supports consistent smarter decision-making, strengthens supplier relationships, and ensures public money is spent effectively and transparently.

Recommendation:

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader on the proposed decision as set out in the attached Proposed Record of Decision (PROD).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC spends approximately £1.47 billion annually through third-party contracts, making commissioning and any resulting procurement a critical enabler of public service delivery, financial sustainability, and local economic growth.
- 1.2 The Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028 responds to a changing operating environment, including ongoing and increasing financial pressures, legislative reforms (notably the Procurement Act 2023 and the Provider Selection Regime), and anticipated local government reorganisation. It builds on previous strengths and successes, as recognised by the Council's achievement of the CIPS¹ Procurement Excellence Programme Award, and aligns with the Council's Strategic Statement and Medium-Term Financial Plan.

2. Background and Key Considerations

- 2.1 The Commercial Strategy sets a clear vision for procurement and commercial activity at KCC over the next three years with the following commitment:

“We will deliver the best possible services and outcomes for Kent residents, securing Best Value at the least possible cost. We will achieve this through smart, innovative, and efficient procurement that supports the local economy and strengthens our communities.”

- 2.2 This vision underpins a shift from transactional procurement to a strategic, outcomes-focused model. The key policy choices and positions taken are evident in the four strategic priorities, which are set out in the Strategy:
 - Delivering Financial Benefits and Return on Investment
 - Strengthening Supplier Management and Partnerships
 - Supporting Local Economic Growth and Wider Public Value
 - Ensuring Compliance and Transparency
- 2.3 These priorities reflect the Council's ambition to use procurement as a lever for positive change. Delivering financial benefits and return on investment means ensuring every pound spent delivers maximum value, supporting the Council's financial sustainability. Strengthening supplier management and partnerships is about building collaborative relationships with suppliers, driving innovation, and improving service delivery across the Council.
- 2.4 Supporting local economic growth and wider public value recognises the importance of Kent-based businesses, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs), and seeks to embed social value and community benefit in KCC's commercial activity. Finally, ensuring compliance and transparency is key to maintaining public trust, meeting legal obligations, and upholding the highest standards of governance.
- 2.5 Delivery of these priorities will be supported by a commitment to eight 'key enablers' (i.e., core, day-to-day operational practices) outlined in the Strategy:
 - Embedding Category Management
 - Embedding Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)

¹ CIPS is the Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply.

- Strengthening Procurement Planning
 - Leading Effective Tendering Processes
 - Effectively Negotiating and Awarding Contracts
 - Managing Contracts to a High Standard
 - Setting Clear Procurement Policies and Governance
 - Elevating Commercial Skills and Capabilities.
- 2.6 These enablers represent the practical foundations required to achieve the Strategy's ambitions. For example, embedding category management ensures a strategic, joined-up approach to spend across service areas and SRM focuses on building long-term, collaborative partnerships with key suppliers.
- 2.7 Additionally, strengthening procurement planning and leading effective tendering processes help ensure that procurement is well-planned, competitive, and transparent. Effective negotiation and contract award, alongside a high standard of contract management, drive value and performance throughout the contract lifecycle, looking beyond procurement as a process.
- 2.8 Finally, clear procurement policies and governance provide the framework for compliance and best practice, while elevating commercial skills and capabilities ensures staff are equipped to deliver on the Strategy's goals.
- 2.9 The Strategy has been developed following engagement with senior officers, Members, and consideration of feedback from suppliers and partners. It reflects national and sector best practice, responds to legislative change, and aligns with local priorities including the Council's Strategic Statement, Medium-Term Financial Plan, and the Commissioning Framework.
- 2.10 The consideration and feedback from Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee will help ensure the new Strategy reflects the Council's strategic priorities and informs the decision that is proposed to be taken by the Deputy Leader. No public consultation has been undertaken nor is planned. However, feedback previously received from suppliers and partners was considered, and a supplier engagement event is planned for 27 January 2026.

3. Options Considered

- 3.1 A range of options were considered to determine the most effective way to improve commercial outcomes, deliver Best Value, and build resilience:

- Do Nothing / Maintain Status Quo

This option involved continuing without a formal strategy and retaining existing priorities and practices. While low-risk in the short term, it was rejected due to:

- Lack of alignment with the Council's evolving financial and policy context.
 - Missed opportunities to embed commercial thinking across services.
 - Inability to address inefficiency, inconsistent practices, and capability gaps.
- Incremental Improvement on Existing Procurement Policies

This approach proposed minor updates to the existing strategy, with limited changes to governance, capability, or delivery models. It was considered more feasible in the short term but ultimately discounted because:

- The previous strategy lacked formal approval, limiting its influence, enforceability, and stakeholder buy-in.
 - It may not align with new legislation, particularly the Procurement Act 2023.
 - It would not deliver the step-change needed to meet financial pressures or support Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings targets.
 - It lacked ambition in addressing systemic issues such as fragmented supplier engagement, supporting local and small organisations inconsistent commercial practices, and limited focus on Social Value.
- New Strategy (Proposal for Progression)

This proposal sets out a final draft of a new strategy that re-defines KCC's commercial ambition. Subject to formal approval, it will strengthen the Council's procurement governance, build capability, and align commercial activity with strategic priorities.

Key features include:

- A clear vision and strategic priorities focused on efficiency, supplier engagement, supporting Kent-based SMEs and VCSEs, Social Value, and compliance and transparency around procurement activity.
- A commitment to professional best practices and continuous improvement.
- Performance monitoring and actions to support delivery of the Strategy.

3.2 The option of a new strategy was selected as it offers the greatest potential to:

- Drive long-term financial sustainability and support budget recovery.
- Position KCC as a commercially confident, agile organisation.
- Secure Best Value for Kent residents and communities.
- Unite stakeholders around a shared framework for delivery, accountability, and improvement.

4. Financial Implications

4.1 Adoption of the Strategy is expected to be cost neutral, with implementation delivered within existing budgets. The Strategy is designed to generate financial benefits through improved value for money procurement outcomes, cost avoidance, and income generation opportunities.

4.2 These benefits will be tracked and reported regularly, aligning with the Council's wider performance and business planning frameworks.

5. Legal Implications

5.1 The Strategy supports the Council's ongoing compliance with the provisions and obligations set out within the Procurement Act 2023 with enhanced governance, procurement, and contract management.

6. Equalities Implications

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and is appended to this report. No significant adverse impacts have been identified.
- 6.2 The Strategy includes explicit commitments to inclusive procurement practices and enhanced support for SMEs and VCSEs, helping to ensure equitable access to opportunities and broader community benefit.

7. Data Protection Implications

- 7.1 No Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) is required as the Strategy does not involve processing of personal data and poses no data protection risks.

8. Other Corporate Implications

- 8.1 The Strategy complements the Council's Commissioning Framework and will support wider transformation efforts. It is expected to have positive impacts across service delivery, supplier engagement, and community outcomes.

9. Governance and Next Steps

- 9.1 Should the Deputy Leader agree to progress with the decision, a launch event is planned for 27 January 2026 to engage suppliers and stakeholders and to communicate the Council's refreshed commercial ambitions.
- 9.2 The Commercial and Procurement Division's Management Team will oversee delivery of the Strategy. Delegations will be managed via the Officer Scheme of Delegation, with the Chief Procurement Officer responsible for ongoing development and activity. This will include making non-substantial revisions to the Strategy, implementing key actions, and entering into relevant contracts or legal agreements as required to support delivery of the Strategy.
- 9.3 Progress will be reported to the Corporate Management Team, Corporate Board, and Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

10. Conclusion

- 10.1 The adoption of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028 will establish a robust framework for delivering Best Value, supporting financial sustainability, and ensuring compliance with legislative requirements. It positions KCC as a commercially confident, agile organisation equipped to meet future challenges and deliver better outcomes for residents and communities.

Recommendation:

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader on the proposed decision as set out in the attached Proposed Record of Decision (PROD).

10. Appendices / Background Documents

- Appendix A – Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028
- Appendix B – Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix C – Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

11. Contact Details

Report Author:

Michael Bridger
Strategic Commercial and
Procurement Lead
03000 410 110
Michael.Bridger@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Director/s:

John Betts
Corporate Director for Finance
03000 410 066
John.Betts@kent.gov.uk

Clare Maynard
Chief Procurement Officer
03000 416 449
Clare.Maynard@kent.gov.uk

Commercial Strategy

2026 – 2028

Procurement that Delivers:

*Improving Efficiency, Maximising Value,
and Supporting Kent*

Foreword	1
The Kent County Council Context.....	1
Introduction to the Commercial and Procurement Division	3
Our Commercial and Procurement Vision	4
Our Strategic Priorities for 2026 – 2028	5
Delivering Financial Benefits and Return on Investment	5
Strengthening Supplier Management and Partnerships	6
Supporting Local Economic Growth and Wider Public Value	6
Ensuring Compliance and Transparency	7
How We Will Deliver Our Commitments.....	9
Embedding Category Management	9
Embedding Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)	9
Strengthening Procurement Planning	9
Leading Effective Tendering Processes	10
Effectively Negotiating and Awarding Contracts	10
Managing Contracts to a High Standard.....	10
Setting Clear Procurement Policies and Governance.....	10
Elevating Commercial Skills and Capabilities	11
Tracking Progress and Ensuring Accountability	12



Foreword

We're delighted to introduce Kent County Council's Commercial Strategy for 2026 to 2028.

This Strategy sets out how we will place a greater focus on commercialising our activities and use procurement and effective contract management as strategic levers to deliver high-quality public services. Our ambition is to strengthen our local economy and ensure every pound spent has the maximum impact. It reflects our desire to be commercially confident, efficient, and focused on delivering **Best Value** outcomes for the residents and communities of Kent.

We are operating in a complex and evolving environment. Financial pressures remain significant, service demand is increasing, and with Local Government Reorganisation, we face the biggest change to the local government landscape in a generation. Our ambitions must be grounded in the realities of this operating environment, recognising our constraints, adapting, making trade-offs. However, this Strategy is ambitious yet realistic, setting a direction that is achievable and responsive in this context.

Despite the pressures, there are great opportunities, and we have a strong foundation, recognised by our achievement of the CIPS Procurement Excellence Programme Award in July 2024. Alongside our skilled workforce and many existing examples of commercial best practice across the Council, we have strong relationships with innovative suppliers, committed to delivering for Kent. At the same time, the new **Procurement Act 2023** will enable us to further modernise our practices and deliver even greater value.

Procurement and effective contract management is central to how we deliver services across Kent – from supporting vulnerable residents to investing in key infrastructure works and innovation projects. This Strategy outlines how, over the next three years, we will foster strong commercial agreements, support and enhance supplier performance, and embed even greater value creation and cost control.

We will also reaffirm our commitment to supporting Kent-based businesses, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises (VCSEs) – recognising the vital role they play in creating jobs, building local economic strength, and delivering wider public benefit. We will simplify processes, engage early, and work in partnership with these organisations to ensure opportunities are accessible, solutions are co-designed, and insights are shared.

This Strategy reinforces our commitment to transparency, compliance, responsible procurement and contract management. We will tackle risks in our supply chains, uphold high standards, and ensure our governance is proportionate. We will work in partnership with suppliers to deliver Social Value – supporting local employment and skills development and protecting the Kent environment.

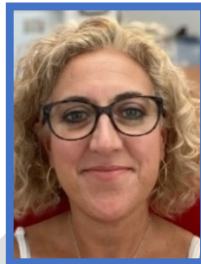
Our approach aligns with the Council's **Strategic Statement** and the **Medium-Term Financial Plan**. It will support the delivery of our organisational priorities, serving us

well now but also ensuring resilience in the face of the further changes expected in our operating environment.

The success of this Strategy will depend on continued strong collaboration – across the Council and with our partners and suppliers. Over the next three years, we will deliver this Strategy together, building on what works, and challenging ourselves to continuously improve – ensuring that procurement delivers **Best Value** outcomes for Kent and the population that we serve.



Brian Collins
Deputy Leader of the Council



Clare Maynard
Chief Procurement Officer

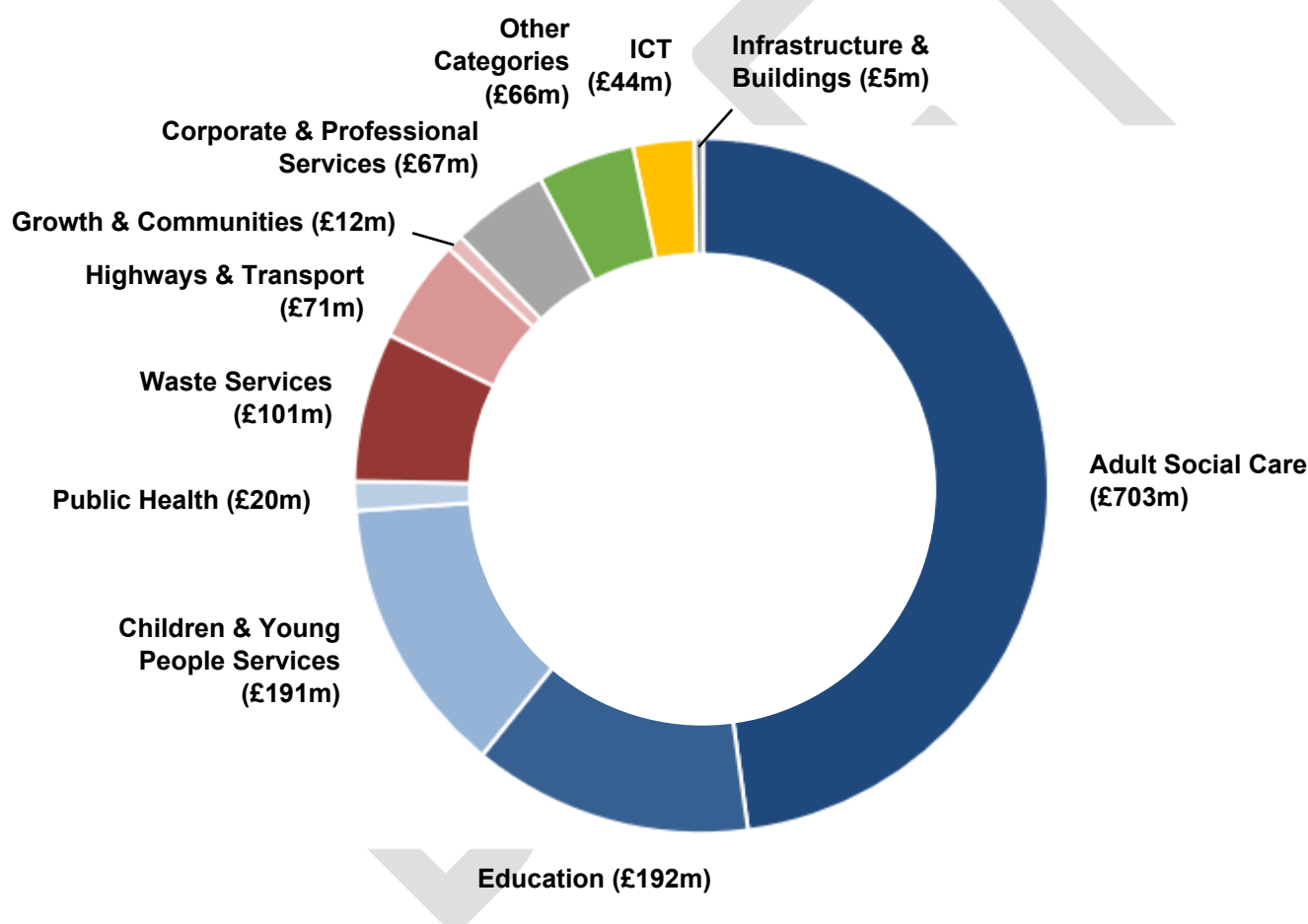


The Kent County Council Context

Kent County Council proudly serves a population of over 1.6 million residents across one of the largest geographical areas in England. As one of the largest local authorities in the country, we play a critical role in delivering public services that touch on every aspect of our residents' lives – from education and social care to major infrastructure, public health, and economic development.

In the 2024-25 Financial Year, **the Council's procured spend totalled £1.47 billion**. This makes us one of the largest buyers in the local government sector and places us among the largest public sector buyers in the South East region. The scale and complexity of our procurement and contract portfolio reflects the breadth of the services and works that we commission – from care and support for vulnerable residents, to key construction and highways projects for our communities, digital transformation, and corporate services vital to keeping the Council operating smoothly.

To illustrate this, the chart below provides a breakdown of our spend by category:



The largest portion of the Council's procured spend in the 2024-25 Financial Year was in Adult Social Care (£703m), followed by Education (£192m), Children & Young People Services (£191m), Waste Services (£101m), and Highways & Transport (£71m). This was then followed by spend in Corporate & Professional Services (£67m), ICT (£44m), Public Health (£20m), Growth & Communities (£12m), and Infrastructure & Buildings (£5m). Other categories account for £66m of spend.

Procurement and effective contract management are not just back-office functions – they are strategic enablers for successful service delivery, financial sustainability, and the delivery of public value to Kent residents. Across the Council, teams have demonstrated commercial awareness,

developed strong supplier relationships, and shown a commitment to delivering value for money in the interests of Kent Residents. This Strategy builds on those strengths and sets out our ambition to go further.

We are operating in a dynamic and challenging environment. Financial pressures remain acute, demand for services is rising, and Local Government Reorganisation will introduce the biggest change to the structure of local government in a generation. At the same time, the **Procurement Act 2023** provides a renewed regulatory framework for public procurement – emphasising value, innovation, transparency and delivering greater public value and social impact through procurement – and we will need to monitor for additional legislative changes that the Government may introduce to support implementation of the **National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS)**.

This Strategy responds to that context, aiming to provide:

- **Officers** with a clear outline of expectations and guidance to make commercial decisions.
- **Elected Members** with visibility of the strategic priorities driving our commercial activity and the necessary assurance that procurement decisions align with our organisational goals.
- **Partners and suppliers** with clarity and consistency around our priorities, our commitment to collaboration, and our expectations for working together.
- **Residents and communities** with the confidence that public money is being spent wisely, with the Council focused on delivering results for the people of Kent.

The Strategy complements the Council's **Commissioning Framework**, which sets out the standards we aim to achieve through our commissioning practices. It will help to ensure that procurement expertise is brought in early in the commissioning process to deliver the best possible outcomes.

Critically, the Strategy aligns with the Council's **Strategic Statement** and supports the **Medium-Term Financial Plan**, ensuring that our commercial activity contributes to the delivery of wider organisational goals. It builds on our strengths, responds to the opportunities presented by new legislation, and prepares us for further changes in our operating environment – so that we remain ready to meet the needs of Kent.

At the same time, it marks a clear shift from previous approaches – introducing a more structured, strategic framework and moving us beyond transactional procurement to a value-led, outcomes-focused model. By embedding commercial thinking earlier in the commissioning cycle and aligning procurement more closely with our organisational priorities, we will unlock greater financial and social value, improve service delivery, and strengthen long-term resilience.

Introduction to the Commercial and Procurement Division



The Commercial and Procurement Division (CPD) leads on the Council's most significant procurements and plays a central role in ensuring that public money is spent effectively.

Working across the Council's directorates and with key external partners, the Division provides expert commercial and procurement advice, supports contract management, and helps shape sourcing strategies that deliver real value.

Between September 2024 and September 2025, Kent County Council published over 500 procurement notices, of which 85 related to tenders and 341 detailed contract awards. The remaining notices included prior information notices, expressions of interest, market engagement exercises, and updates or amendments to existing opportunities. This reflects the scale and activity of the Council's commercial operations and the key role that the Division plays.

The Division works closely with commissioners in the early stages of the commissioning cycle, including where Make-Buy-Sell assessments are being developed, seeking assurance that commissioning decisions have been fully considered before progressing to market.

While the Council's directorates retain responsibility for managing contracts, the CPD works in partnership with them to ensure that procurement is well-planned, compliant, and commercially sound, and that contracts are managed effectively throughout their life. The Division also helps set the tone for how KCC engages with suppliers – promoting transparency, fairness, and collaboration.

The CPD provides strategic oversight, operational support, and continuous improvement. It also works with colleagues across the Council's finance, legal, policy, and audit functions to ensure procurement governance is robust, proportionate, and practical, while also helping interpret and embed legislative developments, case law, and sector trends into our sourcing approaches.

The Division also leads on embedding and raising commercial skills across the Council, including developing training, guidance, and peer support and helping Officers build greater confidence in market engagement, negotiation, and supplier management.

As this Strategy is delivered, the CPD will act as a central enabling function – supporting directorates and services, engaging suppliers, and driving commercial excellence across the organisation. However, throughout this document, “we” refers to Kent County Council as a whole – recognising that commercial success depends on collaboration across the Council, as well as with external partners.

To support this shift, we will re-balance resources within the CPD to prioritise commercial planning, early market engagement, and strategic supplier management – while continuing to provide operational support. This will involve upskilling staff, refining roles, and investing in the tools and systems that enable smarter, data-driven decision-making. Our focus will be on high-impact activity that drives Best Value and supports the Council's wider transformation agenda.



“We will deliver the best possible services and outcomes for Kent residents, securing Best Value at the least possible cost. We will achieve this through smart, innovative, and efficient procurement that supports the local economy and strengthens our communities.”

Our vision for commercial and procurement at Kent County Council reflects our ambition to embed commercial thinking across the Council, ensuring that procurement is not just a process, but a strategic enabler of better public services, stronger supplier relationships, and greater public value.

Across KCC, there are already many excellent examples of commercial thinking – from successful cost-saving initiatives to innovative supplier partnerships. This Strategy builds on those strengths, aiming to scale what is working already and spreading further best practice across the Council.

This will involve making sure that we are applying a value-led mindset to how we plan, procure, and manage services and manage costs carefully, not just at the point of procurement, but throughout the whole contract life cycle. However, while we will scrutinise spend and identify and address inefficiencies to ensure we are delivering **Best Value**, we will also enhance how we monitor and support supplier performance, encourage innovation, support local businesses, and deliver measurable Social Value.

As part of this, we will explore opportunities to generate additional income – whether through commercial partnerships, new trading models, or the innovative use of our data, insights, and specialist expertise – ensuring that procurement contributes not only to savings, but to broader financial sustainability.

Commerciality is not just about individual behaviours – it is an organisational culture shift that must be embedded in our systems and processes. From planning tools and templates to contract management processes, platforms, and reporting dashboards, we will ensure that our infrastructure supports smarter, more commercial decision-making and continued best practice across the Council.

Our commercial activity will support the Council's strategic priorities – as set out in the Council's **Strategic Statement** – and the **Medium-Term Financial Plan**. It will also help us improve outcomes, ensure resilience in the face of future changes within our operating environment, and ensure that every pound spent contributes to Kent's long-term success.

This Strategy sets the direction for the next three years, outlining the strategic priorities that we will focus on and the core practices, systems, and capabilities we will develop. Acknowledging that change takes time, our approach will be iterative, collaborative, and sensitive to the pressures faced by services and suppliers alike, and we are confident that – through working together – we can deliver the best possible services and outcomes for Kent residents, securing Best Value in a cost-effective manner. This approach will continue to be Officer-led, building on the capability and expertise already demonstrated across the Council.

Our Strategic Priorities for 2026 – 2028



To deliver on our vision, we will focus on four strategic priorities over the next three years. These priorities reflect the scale and complexity of our procurement activity, the opportunities we have, and the Council's ambition to deliver better services, stronger partnerships, and greater public value.

Each priority is designed to support the Council's **Strategic Statement** and the **Medium-Term Financial Plan**, while aligning with the principles of the **Procurement Act 2023**. Together, these strategic priorities form the backbone of this Strategy and will guide our commercial decisions, shape our supplier relationships, and ensure procurement and our contracts continue to deliver for Kent.



Delivering Financial Benefits and Return on Investment

We will deliver strong financial outcomes through early and effective planning, smarter contracting, and informed, outcome-focused commercial decision-making. This includes assessing delivery models and conducting cost-benefit analysis early in the commissioning cycle to determine whether outsourcing is the right approach, with commercial input for constructive challenge and to inform decision-making. It also means strong but fair negotiation of contracts and closely monitoring spend and contract performance throughout their duration to ensure that every pound delivers **Best Value**.

We will build on previous successes – including £23 million in financial benefits delivered on key procurements over the last two years – by embedding this commercial approach across the Council. This includes exploring additional income generation opportunities, identifying areas for improvement, and ensuring procurement and our contracts deliver **Best Value**, having the maximum impact possible, and helping us to realise long-term financial sustainability.

We will also review how we track and report on financial benefits delivered through procurement and our contracts, ensuring that savings and other financial benefits are consistently captured, validated, and communicated. This will help to build further confidence in our commercial activity and demonstrate the contribution that excellent procurement makes to the Council's strategic goals.

Our approach will be underpinned by the intelligent use of data, analysis of categories of spend as well as strong financial oversight of contracts, and close collaboration between our commissioning, procurement, legal and finance teams as well as Officers in services who are managing our contracts. Together, **we will ensure that commercial decisions are well-informed and strategically aligned**, focused on delivering the best possible outcomes and **Best Value** for Kent.

What success will look like:

- ☐ Clear evidence of savings and financial benefits from procurement activity.
- ☐ Strong cost control and benefits tracking across contracts.
- ☐ Commercial decisions are well-informed and aligned with strategic goals.



Strengthening Supplier Management and Partnerships

We will take a consistent, more streamlined and value-focused approach to managing supplier relationships, building on the strong examples we have from doing this to date. This includes setting clear expectations and performance requirements, which we will monitor closely, and encouraging continuous improvement and innovation. We will also work collaboratively with suppliers to understand their perspectives, solve problems together, share insight, and deliver better outcomes.

With our strategic suppliers, we will look to apply Supplier Relationship Management (SRM) practices. This will include structured governance, regular performance reviews, and shared planning. **We will recognise and reward strong performance, while constructively addressing areas for improvement.** Given the collective resource needed to embed SRM principles, we will take a phased, proportionate approach, focusing initially suppliers and contracts where the greatest value and risks reside.

Recognising the value of commercial skills and that contract management is a vital capability, we will also invest in enhancing these skills across the Council to support better supplier engagement. This includes providing the training, tools, and guidance needed to help Officers negotiate effectively, manage contracts proactively, and build productive supplier relationships. **We will also strengthen our ability to review contract performance and value for money** throughout the contract lifecycle, identifying opportunities to enhance delivery through collaborative dialogue with suppliers.

Alongside this, harnessing our existing partnerships that have delivered real value, **we will further strengthen our partnerships with key public sector organisations.** This includes our trading companies, the Integrated Care Board, and other local authorities in Kent and beyond – to help align procurement and service delivery, reduce duplication and avoid excess spending, and maximise impact.

What success will look like:

- ☐ Supplier performance is consistently monitored, supported, and improved.
- Strategic suppliers are engaged through structured, collaborative relationships.
- ☐ Procurement is joined-up across the Council and with our public sector partners.



Supporting Local Economic Growth and Wider Public Value

We will support Kent-based businesses, SMEs, and VCSEs by engaging early, simplifying our processes, and removing barriers to participation, wherever possible. While we already spend above the local government average with local businesses and smaller organisations – with 32% of our third party spend in 2024-25 being with Kent-based SMEs and VCSEs – this renewed focus recognises the value that that these organisations bring to service delivery and the crucial

role that local spending plays in supporting jobs, building resilience, and strengthening our communities.

Our ambition here aligns with the Council's **Strategic Statement** and the commitments that have been made in our **Commissioning Framework**. These emphasise the importance of investing in Kent, using our buying power to support the local economy, and supporting local suppliers for Kent's long-term success.

As well as strengthening how we capture the voices of residents and engage with our external partners, we will work closely with our suppliers, ensuring their insights also inform our procurement activity and help shape innovative solutions that reflect and address local needs. This will include engaging the market early, providing clear and accessible information, ensuring our procurement processes are proportionate and accessible, and working constructively to help suppliers develop.

We will also continue to embed Social Value across our procurement activity – working with suppliers who have shown great innovation in this space to date. Our contracts will deliver measurable additional benefits, including support for local employment, skills development, and environmental improvements to the benefit of Kent residents and communities.

To support this, we will develop a **Social Value Policy** that sets out how we define, evaluate, measure, and report on Social Value. We will work with services and suppliers to develop a consistent approach, build capability, and **ensure Social Value commitments are meaningful, deliverable, aligned with our strategic goals, and support the communities of Kent.**

What success will look like:

- ☐ Kent-based SMEs and VCSEs are actively participating in Council procurements.
- ☐ Social Value is considered early and tracked throughout contract delivery.
- ☐ Procurement supports community outcomes and local economic resilience.



Ensuring Compliance and Transparency

We will continue to uphold the highest standards of governance, integrity, and transparency across our procurement and contracting activity. This means ensuring compliance with internal policies and regulations, maintaining clear audit trails, and applying proportionate, risk-based due diligence – recognising requirements may differ between high-value procurements and lower-value activity. It also means ensuring our procurement processes remain open, fair, and accountable.

Aligned with the ambitions of the **Procurement Act 2023**, and the **Health Care Services (Provider Selection Regime) Regulations 2023**, transparency will remain a cornerstone of our approach. We will continue to publish relevant procurement and contracting information, engage openly with suppliers, and provide assurance to elected Members, Officers, and the public.

We will also continue to effectively manage our supply chain risks – including risks relating to fraud, modern slavery, and long-term supply chain resilience – from the start of the commissioning cycle. We will strengthen our internal controls and reporting mechanisms, ensuring that risks are identified and mitigating actions developed, aligning with the Council's risk management

framework. We will also improve how we use data to monitor compliance, flag issues, and drive improvements.

Alongside this, **we will work to ensure that our governance remains proportionate, practical, and supportive of good commercial outcomes**. This is with the aim to strike the right balance between necessary control and flexibility, ensuring that procurement remains agile without compromising integrity. We will ensure our governance supports good commercial decision-making.

What success will look like:

- ☐ High levels of compliance with procurement policies and regulations.
- ☐ Supply chain risks are identified and managed effectively.
- ☐ Governance supports strong commercial outcomes and public assurance.

These priorities will guide our commercial activity through to 2028 and support the Council to navigate the evolving operating environment over the next three years. They are ambitious but achievable and reflect our commitment to deliver better outcomes through smarter, more strategic procurement and effective contract management. The next section of the Strategy sets out the key enablers to delivering on these priorities, ensuring we have the right tools, skills, and systems in place to succeed.



How We Will Deliver Our Commitments

To deliver on our strategic priorities, we must build on our existing strengths and ensure we have the right core practices, systems, and capabilities in place. These foundations will enable smarter commercial decision-making, better procurement outcomes, and stronger contract management.

From planning and governance to supplier engagement and skills development, these key enablers will help embed commercial thinking more deeply across the Council. They are interconnected and support every stage of the commissioning and procurement lifecycle.



Embedding Category Management

We will take a strategic, joined-up view of our spend across service areas by grouping related goods, services, and works into categories and managing them holistically. This means using market insight, spend data, and cross-service collaboration to identify opportunities for efficiency and value. The National Audit Office has estimated that category management could save the public sector £500 million over five years. We will apply these principles locally to ensure smarter sourcing.

We will develop category strategies for priority areas, piloting new sourcing approaches, and rolling out best practice across the Council. This will help to reduce duplication, identify efficiencies, strengthen our supplier relationships, and ensure that procurement decisions are consistently informed by data, insight, and a clear understanding of needs, markets, and risks.



Embedding Supplier Relationship Management (SRM)

We will build strong, collaborative relationships with our strategic suppliers – those suppliers whose contracts are high in value, complexity, or risk, and critical to delivering our core objectives. This will involve working together on long-term planning and shared goals, and engaging in structured, conversations around performance, problem solving, and opportunities for continuous improvement.

Over time, we aim to extend such principles more widely. **We will also work towards a unified approach to supplier engagement across the Council** – ensuring suppliers experience consistency in their interactions with us, making sure we listen to and understand their perspectives, and ensuring smaller suppliers are not disadvantaged and continue to have fair access to opportunities.



Strengthening Procurement Planning

We will embed a clear procurement pipeline aligned with our budget and service planning cycles. This will help the Council to plan, reducing the need for reactive procurement activity, while supporting the consideration of delivery models and sourcing strategies. It will also support early market engagement, ensuring suppliers have sufficient time to prepare for contracting opportunities.

We will improve internal engagement, ensuring procurement is involved early in the commissioning process and planning is collaborative and coordinated across functions – including commissioning, finance, audit, legal, and policy which will help deliver good commercial outcomes.

Leading Effective Tendering Processes

We will design and manage fair, transparent, and robust procurement competitions that lead to strong commercial solutions. This includes standardising documentation, streamlining processes, and co-designing solutions – drawing on lessons learned from suppliers, partners, and previous procurements and contracts to inform better outcomes, where appropriate.

This will help the Council and our partners and suppliers learn from experience, strengthen future delivery, and ensure our contracts consistently deliver **Best Value** and maximum, positive impact.

Effectively Negotiating and Awarding Contracts

Effective negotiation is a fundamental part of procurement and critical to securing **Best Value**. **We will enhance our negotiation capability across the Council** through training, peer support, and providing modelling tools. By negotiating well and awarding contracts with a balanced assessment of cost, quality, and long-term value, we will achieve even stronger commercial outcomes.

We will also lead with strong due diligence processes, ensuring that suppliers are financially stable and capable of delivering on their commitments. We will protect the public interest from unscrupulous suppliers and those that pose an unacceptable risk to public money.

Managing Contracts to a High Standard

We will take a consistent and proactive approach to contract management – recognising contract management as a discipline that demands clear roles and responsibilities, targeted training, effective tools, and systems that monitor performance, risks, and financials. Research from Deloitte shows that poor contract management can erode up to 20% of contract value, underscoring the importance of investing in strong governance, digital tools and commercial capability.

Securing **Best Value** does not end at the point of contract award. **We will carefully review the ongoing value for money case for contracts in life**, engaging in open and constructive dialogue with suppliers to identify opportunities for improvement, innovation, and enhanced delivery – particularly when considering contract changes or extensions. This will require continued close collaboration between the CPD and Officers managing contracts across our directorates.

Setting Clear Procurement Policies and Governance

We will simplify and clarify our procurement policies, ensuring our internal spending rules remain up to date considering the evolving legislative landscape, but also making them easier to navigate. **We will also further strengthen our controls around non-compliant activity**, reducing the use of Waivers and spot purchasing, while setting out our expectations for responsible procurement with the introduction of a **Responsible Procurement Charter** to raise standards internally and with suppliers.

We will ensure governance is robust, proportionate, and supportive of good commercial outcomes, working closely with commissioning, finance, legal, policy, and audit teams. We will encourage feedback on our procurement approach internally and from our partners and suppliers.

We will look to continuously improve – embedding a culture of learning that improves year-on-year.



Elevating Commercial Skills and Capabilities

We will invest in building commercial capability across the Council. This includes providing a clear training offer for our staff and developing communities of practice, extending these opportunities to procurement and commissioning colleagues, contract managers, and other staff members whose role touches on commercial activity. We will also share lessons learned from our procurements and contracting, embedding peer support and mentoring opportunities to further help staff development. Where possible, we will also extend helpful resources and materials to support supplier development.

Finally, **we will harness data, technology, AI, and automation to drive efficiency, transparency, and control** across our commercial activity. By digitising our processes and building digital capability, we will support smarter, faster decision-making and streamlined, joined up working across the Council. We will also support effective collaboration with suppliers and partners, while ensuring that our processes, tools, and systems remain flexible and proportionate.

With these foundations in place, we can achieve our ambitions. We will diligently ensure adherence to these core practices, making sure we have the right tools, skills, and systems in place to succeed.

Tracking Progress and Ensuring Accountability



Delivering this Strategy will require clear accountability, consistent monitoring, and a shared understanding of what success looks like over the next three years.

We will track progress against each of our strategic priorities through contextual goals and actions aligned with the Council's business planning and performance management framework.

Implementation will be focused, visible, and responsive. Progress will be reported regularly to the Corporate Management Team, Corporate Board, and the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, with annual updates published to provide assurance to residents, suppliers, and partners.

While the CPD will coordinate performance tracking and lead on many of the enabling actions, successful delivery of the Strategy will depend on collective effort across the Council. Collaboration with commissioning teams, services, and corporate functions will be the key to our success.

This Strategy is designed to be dynamic. It will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant aligned to changes in legislation, market conditions, and Council priorities – particularly those relating to unlocking efficiencies and ensuring that every pound spent delivers maximum public value.

Through this committed and accountable approach, we will ensure that procurement delivers the **Best Value** outcomes for Kent – now and into the future.

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Brian Collins, Deputy Leader of the Council

DECISION NUMBER:

25/00083

For publication

Key decision:

Yes, it affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions (the adoption or significant amendment of major strategies or frameworks).

Title of Decision: Adoption of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028.

Decision:

That the Deputy Leader agree to:

- (a) Approve the adoption and implementation of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy 2026-2028.
- (b) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Finance, to refresh and/or make non-substantial revisions to the strategy where changes do not require additional governance.
- (c) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the above decision.

Reason(s) for decision:

To establish a Council-wide framework for delivering Best Value through procurement and contract management, aligned with the Council's strategic priorities, financial plans, and the requirements of procurement regulations. The Strategy provides a structured, outcomes-focused approach to commercial activity that supports consistent smarter decision-making, strengthens supplier relationships, and ensures public money is spent effectively and transparently.

By approving the Strategy, the decision will allow the Council to:

- **Embed commercial thinking as a core organisational discipline**, positioning procurement as a strategic lever for achieving Best Value.
- **Enable delivery of the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP)** by improving cost control, identifying efficiencies, and supporting smart, data-led commercial decisions.
- **Strengthen supplier relationships and contract performance**, through phased adoption of Supplier Relationship Management (SRM), targeted capability-building, and enhanced governance for high-value and high-risk contracts.
- **Increase support for Kent-based businesses, SMEs¹, and VCSEs²**, by simplifying procurement processes, removing barriers to entry, and embedding a consistent approach to Social Value to deliver tangible community benefits.
- **Ensure compliance with the Procurement Act 2023**, aligning with new statutory

¹ Small and Medium Enterprises.

² Voluntary, Community, and Social Enterprises.

requirements around transparency, innovation, and public value.

- Build internal capability and accountability, through committing to commercial skills, clearer policies, and robust performance tracking.
- **Reinforce Kent's leadership in public sector procurement**, building on its CIPS³ Procurement Excellence Award and positioning the Council as a commercially confident, agile organisation equipped to meet future challenges.

Financial Implications

Adoption of the Strategy is expected to be cost neutral, with implementation delivered within existing budgets. The Strategy is designed to generate financial benefits through improved value for money procurement outcomes, cost avoidance, and income generation opportunities.

These benefits will be tracked and reported regularly, aligning with the Council's wider performance and business planning frameworks.

Legal Implications

The Strategy supports the Council's ongoing compliance with the provisions and obligations set out within the Procurement Act 2023 with enhanced governance, procurement, and contract management.

Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed. No significant adverse impacts have been identified.

The Strategy includes explicit commitments to inclusive procurement practices and enhanced support for SMEs and VCSEs, helping to ensure equitable access to opportunities and broader community benefit.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

A range of alternative options were considered to determine the most effective way to improve commercial outcomes, deliver Best Value, and build organisational resilience. These included:

1. Do Nothing / Maintain Status Quo

This option involved continuing without a formal strategy and retaining existing priorities and practices. While low-risk in the short term, it was rejected due to:

- Lack of alignment with the Council's evolving financial and policy context.
- Missed opportunities to embed commercial thinking across services.
- Inability to address inefficiency, inconsistent practices, and capability gaps.

2. Incremental Improvement on Existing Procurement Policies

This approach proposed minor updates to the existing strategy, with limited changes to governance, capability, or delivery models. It was considered more feasible in the short term but ultimately discounted because:

³ CIPS is the Chartered Institute for Procurement and Supply

- The previous strategy lacked formal approval, limiting its influence, enforceability, and stakeholder buy-in.
- It may not align with new legislation, particularly the Procurement Act 2023.
- It would not deliver the step-change needed to meet financial pressures or support Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) savings targets.
- It lacked ambition in addressing systemic issues such as fragmented supplier engagement, supporting local and small organisations inconsistent commercial practices, and limited focus on Social Value.

3. New Strategy (Proposed Decision)

This proposal sets out a final draft of a new strategy that re-defines Kent County Council's commercial ambition. Subject to formal approval, it will strengthen the Council's procurement governance, build capability, and align commercial activity with strategic priorities.

Key features include:

- A clear vision and strategic priorities focused on efficiency, supplier engagement, supporting Kent-based SMEs and VCSEs, Social Value, and compliance and transparency around procurement activity.
- A commitment to professional best practices and continuous improvement.
- Performance monitoring and actions to support delivery of the Strategy.

This proposal was selected as it offers the greatest potential to:

- Drive long-term financial sustainability and support budget recovery.
- Position Kent County Council as a commercially confident, agile organisation.
- Secure Best Value for Kent residents and communities.
- Unite stakeholders around a shared framework for delivery, accountability, and improvement.

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

Signed.....

Date.....

This page is intentionally left blank

EQIA Submission – ID Number

Section A

EQIA Title

Adoption of the Kent County Council Commercial Strategy for 2026-2028

Responsible Officer

Michael Bridger - CED CP

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

Clare Maynard - CED CP

Type of Activity

Service Change

No

Service Redesign

No

Project/Programme

No

Commissioning/Procurement

No

Strategy/Policy

Strategy/Policy

Details of other Service Activity

No

Accountability and Responsibility

Directorate

Strategic and Corporate Services

Responsible Service

Commercial and Procurement Division

Responsible Head of Service

Clare Maynard - CED CP

Responsible Director

John Betts - CED F

Aims and Objectives

The Kent County Council Commercial Strategy 2026-2028 sets out a structured framework for improving commercial outcomes, securing Best Value, and strengthening organisational resilience. It aims to embed commercial thinking across services, enhance procurement governance, and support more consistent supplier engagement - particularly with SMEs and VCSEs.

The Strategy responds to financial pressures, legislative changes (including the Procurement Act 2023), and the need for a more professional and efficient approach to procurement and contract management. It includes commitments to cost control, transparency, compliance, and supporting local economic growth through fair and proportionate procurement practices.

Equality Impact Analysis Summary:

No significant negative impacts have been identified for protected groups. While the Strategy does not directly alter service delivery models, it will influence how services are procured and how contracts are managed. The Strategy includes commitments that may have a positive impact through supporting:

- Closer scrutiny of supplier performance and monitoring of legislative compliance.

- Encouraging innovative service delivery.
- Promoting a more diverse supplier base with support for smaller organisations.
- Promoting the inclusion of Social Value in contracts, which could benefit protected groups.
- Prioritising transparency and compliance across our procurement and contracting activity.
- Emphasising the importance of supply chain risk management, including around risks such as modern slavery.

Equality Recommendation:

Proceed with implementation. The Strategy should be monitored through existing governance and performance frameworks to ensure that equality considerations are appropriately reflected in procurement and contract management practices. Ongoing engagement with suppliers and stakeholders will help identify any emerging impacts and support continuous improvement.

Section B – Evidence

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

Yes

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

Yes

Is there national evidence/data that you can use?

Yes

Have you consulted with stakeholders?

Yes

Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?

Corporate Management Team (CMT)
Deputy Leader of the Council
Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency
Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance and Cross-Cabinet Activity
Deputy Cabinet Member for Corporate and Traded Services
Senior Officers across Directorates
Kent County Council Members (via Cabinet Committee and County Council governance pathway) (to follow)
Suppliers and Delivery Partners (via previous feedback and planned engagement event in January 2026)

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

No

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

Yes

Section C – Impact

Who may be impacted by the activity?

Service Users/clients

Service users/clients

Staff

No

Residents/Communities/Citizens

Residents/communities/citizens

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

Yes

Details of Positive Impacts

Age:
The Strategy's focus on better supplier management and engagement, encouraging innovation, social value, and ensuring legislative and regulatory compliance, may support services that address the needs of different age groups, including older people and young adults.

Disability:

Commitments to supplier scrutiny, engaging smaller organisations, supporting innovation, and compliance may again help ensure services are accessible and responsive to the needs of disabled people. Social Value commitments, which will be encouraged, may also support improved accessibility and inclusion.

Gender / Gender Identity:

While no direct impacts are identified, the Strategy's emphasis on supplier accountability, and fair, transparent, and compliant procurement, which also encourages social value commitments, may support organisations working to promote gender equality and inclusive service delivery.

Race / Ethnicity:

As well as similar potential benefits to those outlined above, encouraging supplier diversity and supporting SMEs and VCSEs may help broaden participation from minority-led organisations and improve service responsiveness to diverse communities.

Religion or Belief:

Inclusive procurement, supplier engagement, and contract management may support services that are sensitive to cultural and religious needs, particularly where VCSEs are involved.

Sexual Orientation:

No direct impacts identified, but the Strategy's commitment to ethical standards and making sure we and our supply base are compliant with legislation may support organisations working with this protected group.

Pregnancy and Maternity:

No direct impacts identified, though inclusive service design and supplier diversity, which is encouraged through the Strategy, may help ensure services are responsive to the needs of parents and carers.

Marriage and Civil Partnership:

None identified.

Gender Re-assignment:

None identified, but the Strategy's commitment to ethical standards and making sure we and our supply base are compliant with legislation may support organisations working with this protected group.

Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

Are there negative impacts for age?

No. Note: If Question 19a is "No", Questions 19b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval

Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Completed

Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Completed

Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – AgePage 41

Not Completed
20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability
Are there negative impacts for Disability?
No. Note: If Question 20a is "No", Questions 20b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of Negative Impacts for Disability
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Disability
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Disability
Not Completed
21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex
Are there negative impacts for Sex
No. Note: If Question 21a is "No", Questions 21b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Details of negative impacts for Sex
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sex
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Sex
Not Completed
22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
No. Note: If Question 22a is "No", Questions 22b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender
Not Completed
23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race
Are there negative impacts for Race
No. Note: If Question 23a is "No", Questions 23b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Race
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race
Not Completed
24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief
No. Note: If Question 24a is "No", Questions 24b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Religion and belief
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief

Not Completed
25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
No. Note: If Question 25a is "No", Questions 25b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation
Not Completed
26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
No. Note: If Question 26a is "No", Questions 26b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity
Not Completed
27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
No. Note: If Question 27a is "No", Questions 27b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships
Not Completed
28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
No. Note: If Question 28a is "No", Questions 28b,c,d will state "Not Applicable" when submission goes for approval
Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed
Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities
Not Completed

This page is intentionally left blank

From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader of the Council
 Clare Maynard, Chief Procurement Officer

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee

Date: 13 November 2025

Subject: Commercial and Procurement Performance Report
 (Quarter 1 and Quarter 2, 2025 / 2026)

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary:

This report provides an overview of the performance reporting of the Commercial and Procurement Division (CPD) covering Quarter 1 and Quarter 2 of the 2025/2026 Financial Year.

The paper summarises the CPD and wider Council's achievements in delivering financial benefits and return on investment during this period, detailing the value added and savings secured through commercial and procurement activity.

Additionally, the report highlights efforts to enhance wider public benefit, such as spend with local suppliers, SMEs, and VCSEs. The report also discusses improvements in reporting, supplier relationship management, and transparency and compliance.

The paper further addresses the CPD's commitment to improved policies and procedures, governance, investing in staff capability, improved systems, and working collaboratively across the Council and with partners.

Finally, the report outlines the key plans for further improvement to explain how the Council can continue towards its vision to have the best commercial and procurement function in local government.

Recommendation(s):

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- **Consider** and **note** this report.

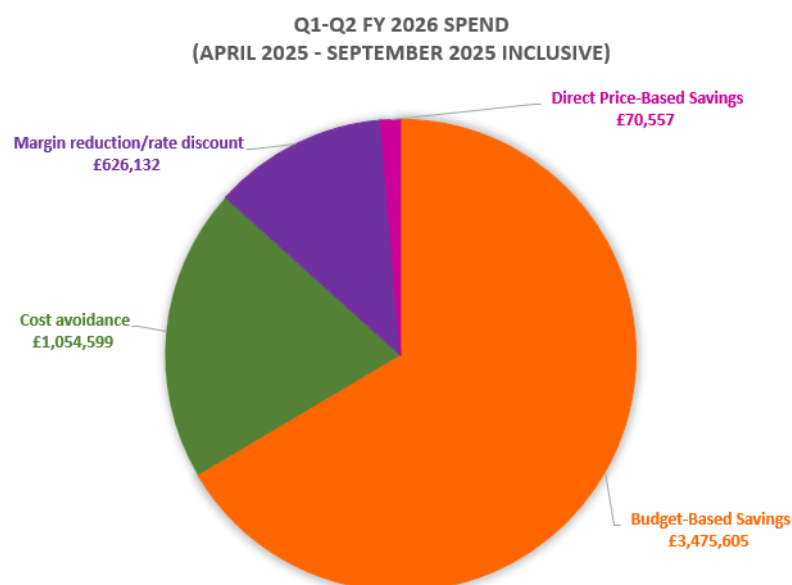
1. Introduction

- 1.1. The Commercial and Procurement Division (CPD) are responsible for leading on the Council's strategic and high value procurements and plays a central role in ensuring that public money is spent effectively. The Division provides expert commercial and procurement advice, supports contract management, and helps teams across the Council deliver value for money through their sourcing and contracting activities.

- 1.2. The CPD also works with colleagues across the Council's finance, legal, policy, and audit functions to ensure procurement governance is robust, proportionate, and practical.
- 1.3. This report provides an overview of performance in Quarters 1 and 2 of the Financial Year 2025-2026 against the key priorities outlined. It will focus on the key achievements against those priorities, and plans and recommendations to further enhance commercial and procurement practice.

2. Financial Benefits and Return on Investment

- 2.1. Delivery of financial benefits and return on investment through expert procurement and contract management is key in supporting KCC to provide quality services to Kent residents whilst delivering on best value for the Council.
- 2.2. The reporting period included the successful delivery of a complex procurement for the Council's Road Asset Renewal Contract (RARC). Working alongside colleagues within the directorate, CPD were able to secure approximately £44 million of Rate-Based Efficiency Gain over the 10-year lifetime, which allows KCC to deliver more work within this contract and the financial envelope. This gain was secured by a 19% reduction in the Schedule of Rates over the lifetime of the contract and will vary depending on how these rates are used and allow the Council to increase their investment in roads and deliver benefits to Kent residents.
- 2.3. The CPD has seen a total of £5,226,893 financial benefit in this period, not including the efficiency gain from the RARC contract. In the last financial year CPD secured £7.2 million of financial benefits and are on track to deliver a similar level of benefit in the FY 25/26. Including the RARC contract with the other financial benefits there has been a total of £68,369,890 value now having been secured since the CPD was first formed in September 2023.



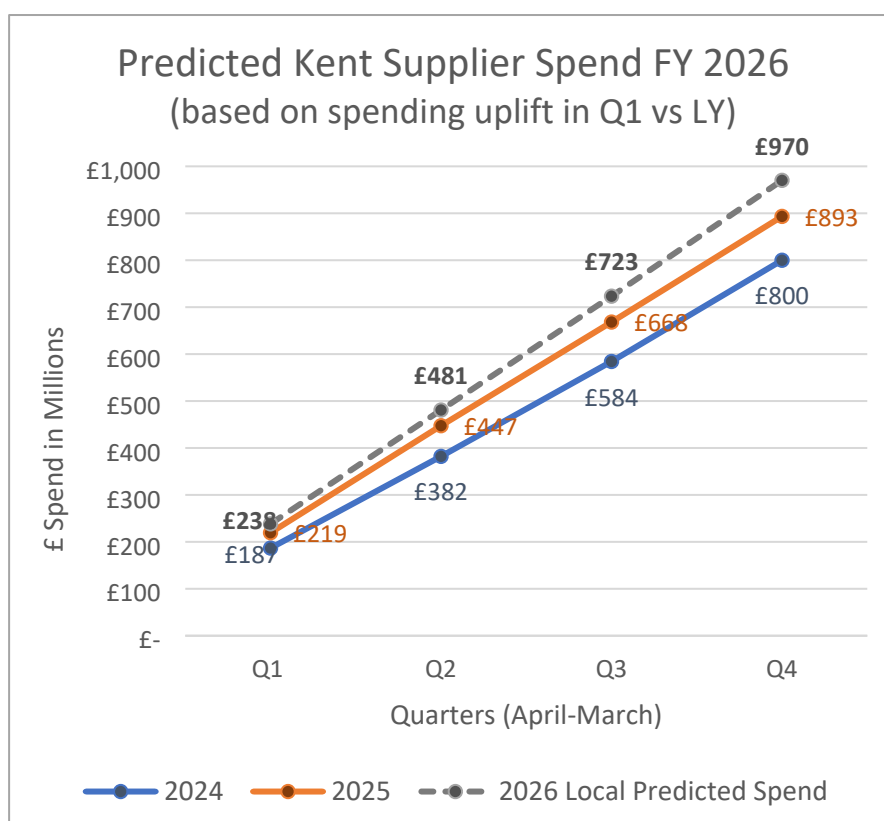
- 2.4. This added value has been realised through negotiating for better rates, securing lower costs than were initially anticipated, and by having a greater

focus on minimising specifications and scrutinising need to avoid costs. These benefits are delivered through the hard work of Directorates, working with the CPD, applying negotiation and embracing constructive challenge, from specification to the procurement process, and during contract.

- 2.5. This work also recognises the importance of delivering social value across Kent services, with several contracts embedding commitments to support local communities and protect the Kent environment within service specifications.
- 2.6. The CPD and Directorates will continue to work closely, particularly on contracts valued above the UK Public Procurement Thresholds, to take advantage of opportunities to negotiate with suppliers. Continued engagement from the CPD and wider stakeholders with the procurement governance boards will be key to identifying savings opportunities in both specification development and contract management. The CPD will continue to improve how value added is captured and reported and ensure this becomes routine for all procurements undertaken.

3. Wider Public Benefit

- 3.1. The CPD continue to monitor the Council's contracted spend with Kent-based suppliers, Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs), and Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprises (VCSEs). In Quarter 1, 61% of KCC spend was with Kent based suppliers with a total of £25 million more spent compared to this quarter last year. There has been an increase of 17% spent with SMEs this year compared to last year, which shows a positive shift towards recognising the importance these businesses play in the Kent market. Kent has also maintained its level of spend with VCSEs this year compared to last year.



- 3.2. These figures do not capture spend with prime suppliers who sub-contract to SMEs, VCSEs and/or Kent-based suppliers. There are several examples across KCC where such arrangements are key to supporting small, local suppliers. Additionally, although significant strides have been made through the introduction of the new Oracle Cloud Programme, there is a notable volume of spend which is uncoded in terms of supplier type, and so the Council's SME spend may be higher. As this new programme is embedded into the Council's reporting systems, we will be able to be more accurate with the level of spend within SMEs, VCSEs and Kent-based suppliers.
- 3.3. Following on from the introduction of the Procurement Act 2023, the CPD has seen growing efforts to reduce barriers to SMEs and VCSEs in accessing our contract opportunities, supported by the increased transparency requirements under the new legislation. Consideration of splitting contracts into lots (i.e. dividing up large contracts), and having due regard for SMEs when designing a procurement procedure, can contribute to increased accessibility of contracting opportunities. The CPD has added resources to the KCC website to support SMEs and VCSEs interested in tendering for contracting opportunities and is currently developing a dedicated supplier hub on the KCC website to further enhance access to guidance and opportunities.
- 3.4. Obtaining wider benefits for Kent residents is continually championed by the CPD, with work underway to standardise the Council's approach to Social Value in procurement and tackling the risk of modern slavery and bribery, fraud and corruption in KCC's supply chains. A Social Value Policy is being drafted to establish a shared understanding of the Council's social value priorities strengthen our measurement and reporting on wider public benefit. Alongside this, a Responsible Procurement Charter is in development, bringing together our existing commitments to social value, protecting Kent's environment, and managing supply chain risks. Together, these documents will set our intentions around supporting Kent businesses, Kent communities, and the Kent environment.

4. Supplier Management and Partnering

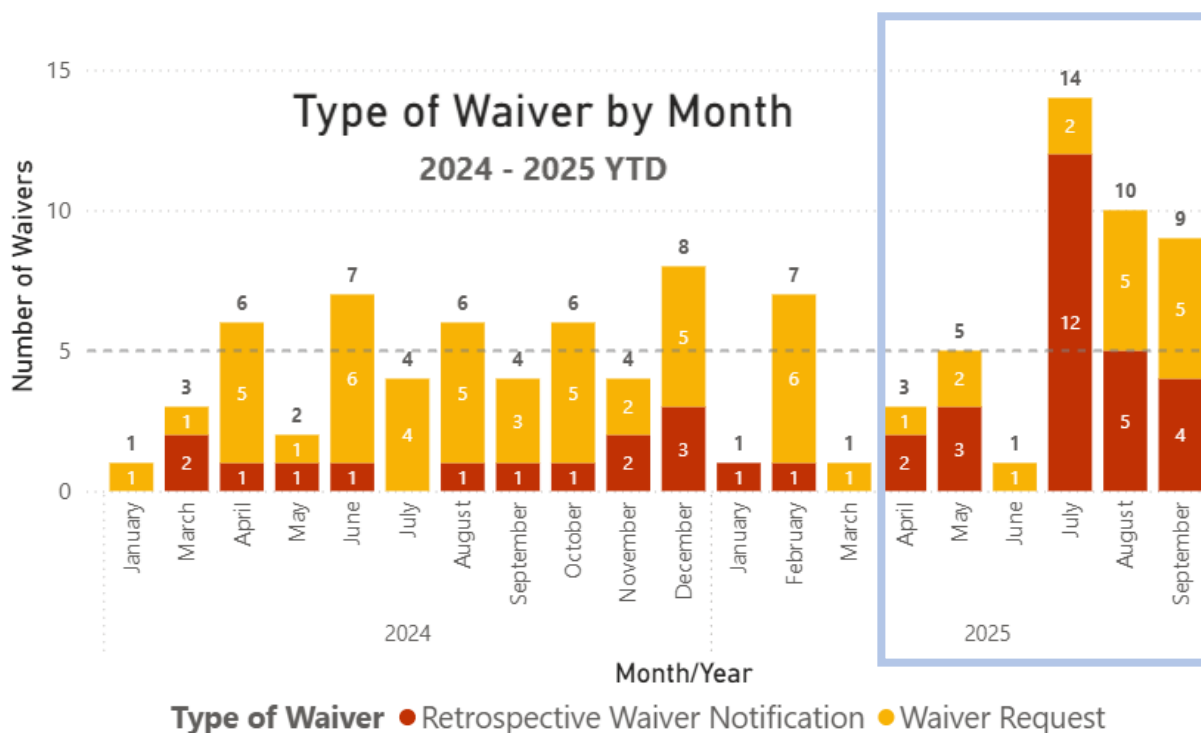
- 4.1. CPD utilises Oracle Business Intelligence Spend analysis and the Oxygen Finance Insights tool to understand the Council's key suppliers (based on spend). This supports KCC identify where it is most critical to build strong supplier relationships, but also ensure KCC explores negotiation opportunities, manages risks, and collaborates with other contracting authorities and public sector partners. KCC's key suppliers, based on annual spend, are predominately within the GET Directorate. However, there are also significant expenditures with single providers in ASCH and CYPE, in the adult and children's social care markets.
- 4.2. The CPD will be developing category strategies and supporting Directorates to manage key suppliers, getting even greater value from KCC's third party spend. There will also be further interrogation of those suppliers that comprise 80% of spend per category. The CPD will collaborate with Directorates to roll out shared resources and systems, ensuring shared data and identifying opportunities for collaborative procurement and partnerships with other local authorities and public sector partners. The ambition for future reporting is to update on the

above work, but also, over time, to include condensed summaries of performance across KCC's key contracts.

- 4.3. In addition to understanding our key suppliers the CPD is committed to improving the management of these suppliers through enhancing the capabilities of contract management across the Council. The Division will be launching a Contract Management Policy to ensure that supplier performance is consistently monitored, supported and improved and that strategic suppliers are engaged through structured, collaborative relationships.

5. Transparency and Compliance

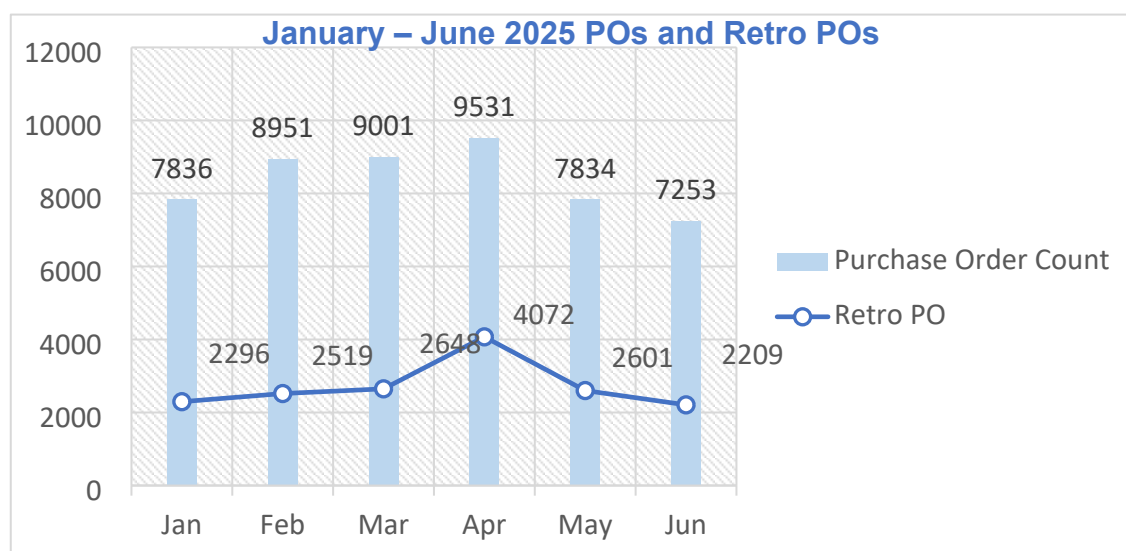
- 5.1. The CPD are key holders for the spending rules set out in Spending the Council's Money, and reports against compliance with these rules as part of this role. Within Spending the Council's Money, there are provisions for when Officers must request to waive their obligation to follow the internal rules, if these cannot be followed (no waiver can be given to avoid a legislative requirement). Only if approval is offered can the internal rules be waived in that instance. The CPD monitor when and how this occurs including instances where an action that has already taken place that did not follow the mandatory spending rules (acknowledged via a retrospective waiver).



- 5.2. In this Financial Year, the CPD has received forty-two requests through the 'Waiver Process', 39% of these have been retrospective. This increase has been driven by a number of retrospective waivers received in Quarter 2. These concerned urgent health and safety concerns, safeguarding requirements, and time-sensitive compliance works that could not be delayed without significant risk. In several cases, works were directly awarded to trusted contractors already on site to ensure continuity, avoid disruption, and meet critical deadlines, particularly where competitive tendering was impractical due to market limitations or specialist expertise. However, in all cases of retrospective waivers, the CPD team engage with the area that has submitted the waiver to

understand how improvements to practice and early engagement with procurement professionals can support running a compliant process within the timeframes.

- 5.3. This level of challenge towards waivers emphasises the aim for the Council to reduce the retrospective waivers to zero. Improvements to the Waiver process and closer working with Directorates and the Corporate Management Team will allow better understanding the trends behind the retrospective waivers. The CPD consistently engage with the Directorates to ensure the expectations set out within Spending the Council's Money are clear and understood.
- 5.4. In partnership with Finance, the CPD helps to ensure compliance with the Council's No Purchase Order No Pay Policy, which requires all spending is authorised before purchases occur. This will ensure that the Council has robust control over its budgets, whilst accountability for spending decisions sits with those who are authorised to make them. Between January and June 2025 32% of the total purchase orders were retrospective.
- 5.5. The CPD continue to raise awareness of the No PO No Pay Policy by continually communicating this across the Council and providing training to officers with responsibility for raising purchase orders. With the new Oracle Cloud system we will be able to identify retrospective POs that are exempt from the No PO No Pay policy and this will provide a better picture of compliance with this policy and allow for better targeted training.



- 5.6. The Commercial and Procurement Oversight Board (CPOB) and re-introduction of the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG), each including CPD, Finance, and Legal representation, are essential for ensuring that commercial and procurement activity is effective, compliant, and ultimately results in the delivery of Best Value for Kent residents. There have been several positive implications of the Board and subsequent improvements to the Council's approach on strategically important procurement projects and contracts. Both CPOB and CMRG have proven to be a valuable forum for providing constructive challenge and identifying common areas for development that should be addressed.

- 5.7. Going forward, especially in the current financial climate, CPOB and CMRG will remain a key part of KCC's commercial and procurement governance structure, supporting compliance, promoting best practice and collaboration with Directorates, ensuring that best value is achieved. These will be but one core component of the wider governance arrangements KCC has in place to provide robust oversight and assurance of such activity, which will be increasingly important.

6. Conclusion and Next Steps

- 6.1. The CPD, working closely with Directorates, has made good progress towards achieving its vision of becoming the best commercial and procurement function in local government. The Division's efforts have resulted in substantial value added to contractual spend, enhanced supplier management, and increased transparency and compliance. However, there is still work to be done to fully realise this vision.
- 6.2. Moving forward, the CPD will continue to focus on delivering value for money, supporting local businesses, and promoting Social Value and best value through procurement practices. The Division will also work on improving data quality and reporting, ensuring that all procurement activities are aligned with the latest legislation and best practices. Continued collaboration and engagement with all stakeholders will be essential in driving further improvements and achieving the best outcomes for the residents of Kent.
- 6.3. In January 2026, the CPD will be launching a new Commercial Strategy which will place a greater focus on commercialising Council activities and use procurement and effective contract management as strategic levers to deliver high-quality public services. This will strengthen our local economy and ensure every pound spent has the maximum impact and deliver best value outcomes for the residents and communities of Kent.

7. Recommendation(s)

Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- **Consider** and **note** this report.

8. Contact details.

Report Author:

Paige Edwards, Commercial Policy and Governance Lead

Relevant Director/s:

Clare Maynard, Chief Procurement Officer

This page is intentionally left blank

From: Matthew Fraser Moat – Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency

To: Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee – 13 November 2025

Subject: Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) – Strategy, Remit, Governance & Decision-Making Update

Decision no: N/A

Key Decision: No

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: Not Applicable

Future Pathway of report: N/A

Electoral Division: All

Is the decision eligible for call-in? N/A - not key decision

Summary: This paper outlines the strategy, remit, governance, and decision-making mechanisms for Kent County Council's Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) and sets out the proposed way forward for consideration by the members of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee.

Recommendation(s): The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **DISCUSS** this update report and **NOTE** the direction of travel.

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council's Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) was established by the Leader in May 2025. Following discussions at Scrutiny Committee, this paper formally sets out the strategic intent, remit, governance, and decision-making arrangements for the programme, so this is understood by residents, Members, staff, and other stakeholders.

1.2 DOLGE's strategy seeks to identify efficiencies and savings opportunities to ensure that value for money is provided to Kent residents. The intention of the programme is to provide a relentless focus on controlling costs and ensuring

opportunities for efficiency are prioritised, resourced, and delivered. Dedicating political and officer capacity to the opportunities most capable of impacting the Council's budget in an objective, commercial, and cost-conscious way will help contribute to the financial challenge that the Council and sector generally faces.

1.3 It is also acknowledged that much good work continues throughout the whole authority to identify and deliver savings opportunities as part of the budget and spending controls. DOLGE has been working and will continue to work closely with both Members and Officers to identify areas for investigation, associated opportunities to realise efficiencies, develop business cases, and make recommendations to the respective Cabinet portfolio holders in their capacity as decision makers. The intention is to provide a dedicated engine to support those efficiency projects and ensure the opportunities are better realised.

1.4 The overarching ambition of DOLGE is to ensure that the people of Kent receive quality and cost-effective services which align with the priorities of the proposed new Council Strategic Statement.

1.5 A relentless focus on efficiency is a good thing. Politically and operationally, this is about the whole organisation delivering the services that are required providing exceptional value to the residents of Kent. It is about finding out opportunities where things could be done differently or better, with a particular focus on finding savings. For Members and Officers alike, that is not about retaining or criticising the past, it is about looking at opportunities that can improve the future.

1.6 Given the importance and significance of this activity to the County Council and Kent residents the governance and reporting arrangements must be clear. Whilst the immediate work of DOLGE does not constitute a key decision, recommendations made may result in key decisions being taken by individual Cabinet Members or full Cabinet moving forward. DOLGE should be regarded as a driver of change for the organisation who will support the improvement of the financial position.

1.7 The Scrutiny Committee received a report on 16th July 2025 updating on DOLGE progress and it was clarified that the similarly named DOGE project at Reform Head Office is a separate initiative. This was a valuable discussion, and it was helpful to update on and clarify the remit of DOLGE to Members at early stage.

2. Key Considerations

2.1 The financial position of Kent County Council remains extremely challenging year on year given the increased demand levels and costs for services. Without a stronger and additional focus on the identification and delivery of efficiencies and savings it is likely that the existing relative position will continue to worsen.

2.2 A focused and objective view of the opportunity areas and challenges for the whole organisation is needed from a Member perspective, so decision makers have all available information to evaluate options and make the best value for money decisions for the county. The importance of professional and specialist

Officer advice continues to be highly regarded and will be carefully considered as DOLGE moves through the ongoing programme of work and any specific deep dive areas.

2.3 Working closely with Officers, DOLGE will continue to provide advice to Members and form recommendations to support the delivery of savings, future cost avoidance, different ways of doing things, and income generation. This type of dedicated approach is essential to ensure that Kent County Council's financial position can positively improve.

2.4 It is important that Kent County Council can leave a fit for purpose financial legacy and delivery model(s) for any newly shaped local authority structure that could be created through Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), and the work of DOLGE will support the achievement of this. Whilst the exact LGR and business case detail continues to be worked through, KCC must continue to play its part to ensure that any new local government structure in Kent has a smooth transition and there must be minimal disruption to Kent residents.

3. Background

3.1 KCC's Department of Local Government Efficiency was formed as a new portfolio when the new Administration was appointed in May 2025. A Cabinet Member is in place who is supported by two Deputy Cabinet Members (Deputy Cabinet Member for Finance & Cross-Cabinet Activity and Deputy Cabinet Member for Corporate and Traded Services) to deliver the required activity.

3.2 The DOLGE team are researching opportunity areas across the organisation and sharing outputs with Cabinet Members who are then accountable for the development and decisions where specific proposals for their portfolios to realise efficiencies or savings can be taken forward. The vastness and the complexity of the organisation and its remit is acknowledged and therefore the DOLGE team are mindful that a carefully planned approach is required.

3.3 The individual Cabinet Members are responsible for exploring recommendations in detail and addressing these with Corporate Directors and services. Dependent on the viability of proposals Cabinet Members may seek to progress key decisions to secure a policy change, service efficiency, saving, or work with Corporate Directors to progress a specific operational activity in instances where the key decision threshold is not met. The County Council's governance and due diligence requirements will be adhered to and the implications of any proposed decisions thoroughly considered. The distinction between the role of Members and Officers will continue to be regarded, and DOLGE activities will continue to be directed, designed, and delivered by elected Members of the administration.

3.4 DOLGE will challenge all budgetary spend to ensure expenditure is necessary and provides value for money for Kent's residents. This will support the continued adherence to the existing spending controls which were introduced by KCC's Corporate Management Team.

The work of the DOLGE team so far has focussed on several areas including:

- Achieving immediate savings
- Future cost avoidance
- Identification of areas for deep investigation
- Doing things differently (especially in regards to contracts and procurement)

3.5 Productive conversations have taken place with Officers on topics such as the procurement process and training on commercialisation in contracts; discussions continue in multiple different areas. The DOLGE team wish to sustain this positive dialogue as a whole organisation approach is required.

3.6 The DOLGE team continue to develop a register of areas of exploration and plan to update members of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on a bi-annual basis about the work underway.

3.7 The initial work of DOLGE over the last six months has very much been exploratory throughout the organisation and as recommendations are considered and accepted, they will be monetarised, so the financial impact and benefits of this activity are clear. It is recognised and accepted that some recommendations may be discounted by Cabinet Members, but the appetite to progress different options will nevertheless still be tested.

3.8 The new strategic statement for KCC will provide DOLGE with a firm foundation to ensure that activities undertaken are underpinned by the priorities and ambitions of the organisation. 'Reforming Kent 2025-28' will guide and prioritise the areas of exploration.

3.9 DOLGE are ambitious and are keen to see positive shifts within the organisation's financial position and explore how things can be done more efficiently and differently to achieve positive change for the county's residents. A meaningful difference must be seen and felt.

3.10 DOLGE wish to evaluate how systems and technology can best support the County Council's activities and support the ambition to realise further savings and efficiencies to deliver best value for money for Kent. Data will also be used as an evidence base to support the recommendations made.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

4.1 DOLGE will have an initial specific focus on the delivery of 2025/26 in-year savings but also, the medium-term savings for 2026/27 and beyond to ensure a planned and sustainable approach. Given the immediate and significant financial challenge faced, there is little option than to place further attention on cost-saving opportunities across the authority and DOLGE will be the vehicle by which the required focus will be delivered. The Leader has appointed a Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency to specifically drive forward and co-ordinate this activity.

4.2 The risk of not progressing a targeted approach to the identification of efficiencies and savings would have a detrimental impact on Kent County Council's financial resilience and the ability to sustain the delivery of quality services to Kent residents

that provide value for money and respond to statutory duties. DOLGE will support cross portfolio thinking so strategies are not developed in a siloed way, and any replication is identified and removed as appropriate. The right links must be made and maximised across the whole organisation.

4.3 All are requested to work together to deliver the DOLGE strategy, without this connectivity there is a risk that opportunities for positive change will be missed or delayed. It is hoped that new thinking, different perspectives, and constructive challenge will be welcomed by all.

5. Financial Implications

5.1 As a priority, the DOLGE team are working with services and Cabinet Members to identify and develop savings that will be used to balance the 2026/27 budget and also to support the delivery of the in-year savings profile. Given the financial position of Adult Social Care & Health, it is recognised that there must be a specific focus in this area and discussions with the relevant Cabinet Members and senior managers continue to ensure a shared understanding of the current situation.

6. Legal implications

6.1 Any proposals will be subject to appropriate legal advice to manage risk and ensure legal compliance. The programme recognises the existing statutory framework that the Council operates in and will explore opportunities in all areas where the Council is providing services in excess of that statutory minimum. The programme will use legal advice to understand and underpin opportunities for transformation in all areas of the Council, including statutory services.

7. Equalities implications

7.1 As and when Cabinet Members consider and subsequently progress recommendations made by the KCC Department of Local Government Efficiency, Equality Impact Assessments (EqIA) will be conducted on a subject-by-subject basis and appended to the required committee reports for consideration by Members.

8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 The DOLGE Team will review only anonymised data in adherence with Data Protection principles. Any review activity will be undertaken with supporting guidance and advice from appropriate Officers.

8.2 Information will continue to be provided to the Kent DOLGE team in accordance with the usual provisions of information sharing to elected Members and training has been provided to Cabinet and Deputy Cabinet Members who both understand and have been advised on the basis of information sharing.

9. Other corporate implications

9.1 This activity will touch upon most aspects of the County Council's work, and the specialist and professional advice of Officers will be required to assess and validate the feasibility of DOLGE's recommendations. It is envisaged at this stage that legal, financial, and commercial and procurement support will specifically be required as options are explored and evaluated, but all directorates will also be engaged in and requested to support this activity.

10. Governance

10.1 The importance of cross-party political oversight of the financial position is acknowledged and for this reason, the regular monitoring reporting will continue, and the process will be unchanged. The Cabinet Member of Local Government Efficiency also recommends providing bi-annual progress updates to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

10.2 DOLGE will report to appropriate Cabinet Committees in conjunction with the relevant Cabinet Member(s) on specific proposals which necessitate policy change or wider support.

10.3 Full Council will consider any organisational cultural shift issues from a political perspective that affect potential savings.

10.4 DOLGE will lead cross-party meetings of the Contract Review Group to review two significant contracts every six weeks.

10.5 Each Cabinet Member will appropriately progress any proposed key decisions in line with their functions and responsibilities as set out in KCC's Constitution.

10.6 Officers will continue to deliver the operational response in line with the Schemes of Delegation.

11. Conclusions

11.1 There must now be a specific and further emphasis on the identification of efficiencies and savings opportunities to guarantee that value for money is provided to Kent residents. This has never been so important given the increasing pressures placed on the authority and the continued challenging financial position. The whole organisation is requested to work together with DOLGE to deliver the required change, and support is welcomed to maximise opportunities and further innovate services.

11.2 DOLGE will advise and make recommendations to KCC's Cabinet Members in their capacity as the decision makers for each portfolio. Progress and proposed key decisions will be reported and considered through the authority's existing governance channels with the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee receiving bi-annual overarching updates.

11.3 'Reforming Kent 2025-28' will support and underpin the prioritisation of the areas which will be explored by the DOLGE team. The delivery of in-year savings and the balancing of the 2026/27 will also be a key area of focus.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **DISCUSS** this update report and **NOTE** the direction of travel.

12. Background Documents

Strategic Statement – Reforming Kent (County Council report 6 November 2025)
[County Council report Strategic Statement.pdf](#)
[Reforming Kent - Draft Statement - Nov 2025.pdf](#)

13. Appendices

Not Applicable

14. Contact details

Matthew Fraser Moat
Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency
Email address: matthew.frasermoat@kent.gov.uk

This page is intentionally left blank

From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader
John Betts, Interim Corporate Director – Finance

To: Policy & Resources Committee - 13 November 2025

Subject: **Budget Planning 2026-27 Update**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper sets out:

- The major issues affecting revenue spending and the high level strategy to achieve a balanced budget for 2026-27
- The timetable for preparing the draft budget 2026-27 and medium term financial plan 2026-29
- Main messages from the summer budget consultation
- The next steps

For several years the Council (in common with the majority of other councils) has been facing spending increases in excess of the resources available from central government and local taxation. This has required the budget to be balanced through a combination of savings, generating additional income, and temporary one-off measures including use of reserves and where permitted capital receipts to fund revenue costs. 30 councils (not including KCC) have been approved for additional measures in 2025-26 under the government's Exceptional Financial Support arrangements, with 6 of these also subject to statutory interventions. Due to the significant changes in funding expected following the Fair Funding 2.0 Review it has not been possible to publish a meaningful full draft budget for the November round of cabinet committees. However, key decisions on individual elements within the budget plans for 2026-27 can be considered by cabinet committees, in principle, ahead of final draft budget and approval by County Council in February 2026. Consultation on budget strategy has now closed with nearly double the number of responses compared to last year.

Recommendations:

Policy and Resources Committee is asked to NOTE and COMMENT on 2026-27 Budget planning, timetable and strategy towards setting a balanced budget.

1. Introduction

1.1 The 2025-26 revenue budget, 2025-28 medium term financial plan (MTFP) and 2025-35 capital programme were approved by County Council on 13th February 2025. The one-year local government finance settlement meant that revenue plans for 2026-27 and 2027-28 were indicative. The indicative plan for 2026-27 included the amounts as set out in Table 1 below which left an unresolved gap of £20.1m. The indicative plan was based on a number of assumptions e.g. same council tax referendum limits as 2025-26 (5%), no increase in government settlement other than from indexation for grants linked to business rates, inflation based on November 2024 Office for Budget Responsibility forecasts, demand and cost driver spending growth based on recent trends.

Table 1 – High Level Budget Equation

	Core Funded
Forecast spending growth	£113.0m
Estimated increased funding	£73.9m
Funding Gap	£39.1m
Resolution of Gap	
Reversal of temporary savings	+£10.7m
FYE and new savings and income	-£42.6m
Net Change in Reserves	+£12.9m
Unresolved balance	-£20.1m

1.2 Consultation on the 2026-27 budget strategy was launched on 5th August 2025 and ran for 8 weeks up to 29th September. In the consultation the unresolved balance was estimated to have increased to circa £50m to take into account the need to replenish the General Reserve for the £20m drawdown to balance 2024-25 outturn, and early monitoring forecasts for 2025-26.

1.3 An initial refresh of the previous plans for 2026-27 and 2027-28 has been undertaken based on more recent 2025-26 forecasts and up to date assumptions including the Council's estimated share of additional funding for local government announced in the June 2025 Spending Review, latest inflation forecasts and other latest forecasts for spending growth, and updated profiles for savings delivery. These updates increase the unresolved balance to an estimated circa £60m for 2026-27. However, this is before any assumption on the outcome of Fair Funding 2.0 review or changes to reflect the draft strategic priorities for Reforming Kent presented to County Council on 18th September 2025.

2. Spending Growth and Budget Strategy

2.1 The levels of spending growth continue to pose the biggest financial challenge. This has been acknowledged in the Ministerial Forward to Fair Funding 2.0 "This government is under no illusion about the scale of the issues facing local government. We know that the demand for, and cost of, services has increased significantly – and that this has made the job for local authorities in recent years much harder". This acknowledgement is welcome, as is the Government's intention to re-establish a multi-year local government finance settlement, which should improve medium term financial planning. However, it does not mean that all spending growth will be fully funded and that councils will not continue to have to find innovative new solutions to balance revenue budgets over the coming years.

2.2 The spending growth arises from the different factors as set out in Table 2. These reflect a continuing pattern of recent years.

Table 2 – Main drivers of spending growth

Base Budget changes	Full year effect of variances (ups and downs) from current year
Price uplifts	Includes forecast contractual index linked uplifts and negotiated increases. These uplifts impact on totality of current spending covered by contracts e.g. all social care client placements.
Demand drivers	Includes forecast increases in client numbers/activity levels, e.g.

	increases in the number of clients eligible for adult social care
Cost drivers	Non-inflationary cost increases due to market availability e.g. higher cost for new client placements. Also includes forecast increases from retendering contracts due to market forces.
Pay	Second year of transition to new pay scales and progression within pay scales, annual pay award provision, existing policy to match Foundation Living Wage uplift for lowest paid staff
Service strategies	Cost increases associated with individual service plans although this is by far the smallest element of spending growth.

2.3 The proposed strategy to balance the 2026-27 budget needs to include a mix of actions including resisting spending growth where there is an element of local choice, maintaining adult social care net growth (growth less savings/income) within an affordable level without imposing unrealistic savings targets (and ensuring central government requirements on use of adult social care council tax and grants are met), identifying further savings/income in other areas of council activity excluding adult social, reviewing contributions to reserves and the outcome of Fair Funding 2.0 reforms. We are anticipating a policy statement on the government's decisions following consultation on funding reforms towards end of October/early November. Depending on the timing and content of this announcement, it may be possible to provide a verbal update to the committee.

3. Budget Timetable

3.1 The significant uncertainty over the impact of funding reforms has meant it does not make sense to publish a full draft budget for detailed scrutiny in the November round of cabinet committee meetings. It is also important that the new Administration needs time to consider what elements of the existing plan should be retained and what new elements should be added, both to resolve the budget gap and to reflect emerging strategic priorities. A full draft budget will be published for the January round of cabinet committee meetings before being presented to Cabinet on 29th January 2026 for endorsement ahead of full County Council budget meeting on 12th February 2026. The key milestones culminating in final budget decisions are set out in Table 3.

Table 3 – Key Milestones

Dates	Event
11 th June 2025	Outcome of Spending Review published setting out public spending plans up to 2028-29 (day to day spending) and 2029-30 (capital investments)
20 th June to 15 th August	Government Fair Funding 2.0 consultation
5 th August to 29 th September	KCC budget consultation
Late October/Early November	Policy decisions announced following Fair Funding 2.0
13 th November 2025	Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee KCC budget update
26 th November 2025	Chancellor's Autumn Budget statement
Mid December	Anticipated Provisional Local Government Finance settlement
13 th to 21 st January 2026	KCC cabinet committees to consider KCC 2026-27 budget proposals and medium term financial plan (MTFP)
22 nd January 2026	Scrutiny Committee to consider KCC 2026-27 budget and MTFP

29 th January 2026	Cabinet to endorse 2026-27 budget and MTFP
Late January/Early February	Anticipated Final Local Government Settlement
12 th February 2026	County Council Budget meeting
Tbc	Reserve date for County Council
26 th March 2026	Cabinet to receive any late information e.g. local share of business rates

4. Exceptional Financial Support

4.1 The framework to support those councils in the most challenging financial circumstances and unable to set a balanced budget was published in November 2024. We are anticipating similar arrangements will apply for 2026-27. Under the framework councils can make a request for financial assistance towards financial pressures that they consider to be unmanageable and to enable them to set a balanced budget.

4.2 Exceptional Financial Support usually comes via a capitalisation direction that enables a local authority to borrow to fund revenue spending (borrowing to fund revenue is not permitted other than following a capitalisation direction). Borrowing is usually short-term and the costs of financing the debt have to be included within the balanced budget alongside a medium term strategy to manage spending in future years without the need for further capitalisation.

4.3 In 2025-26 exceptional support was approved for 30 authorities. Seven of those councils were also approved for increased council tax referendum thresholds of between 2.5% to 5%. Six of the councils in receipt of exceptional financial support were also subject to statutory interventions. These interventions include strengthening the powers of supporting bodies and ultimately appointment of commissioners to take over some of the council's responsibilities.

4.4 As long as the Local Authority can set a balanced budget that reflects viable savings proposals and the maintenance of appropriate levels of reserves, then there should be no need to apply for Exceptional Financial Support (EFS). However, Members need to be aware that EFS is an option, but that option comes with strings attached.

5. Budget Consultation

5.1 KCC undertook budget consultation for 8 weeks from 5th August 2025 to 29th September 2025. As in recent years the consultation sought views on council tax increases and priorities for spending and savings. The consultation was hosted on KCC website [Let's Talk Kent](#) and was supported by communications campaign. The consultation included a questionnaire and budget quiz to help respondents better understand the council's budget. Workshops and other forms of outreach took place for staff, trade unions, youth county council, and voluntary and business sector representatives. The promotion included a digital campaign (social media and e-mail to subscribers), posters/postcards in public buildings and offices, media releases/interview and promotion by elected members. In total 4,670 responses were received, nearly double the number than previous year.

5.2 The majority of responses supported increases in both the general and adult social care elements of council tax, with higher support for the general element (with over a half of these supporting increases up to the maximum referendum level). Around ¼ of

responses were opposed to council tax increases with slightly higher proportion opposing increases in the adult social care element.

5.3 The areas where respondents were most uncomfortable with spending reductions were highways, children's social care and services for schools. Respondents supported additional spending in social care (children's slightly higher than adults) as highest priority. There was strong support for realising savings from working more effectively with partners, moving services on-line and charging service users for discretionary services.

5.4 A separate fuller report on the consultation has been published and can be found at [Budget Consultation 2026-27 | Let's Talk Kent](#).

6. Next Steps

6.1 Over the coming weeks the Administration will continue to develop plans for 2026-27 revenue budget, 2026-29 MTFP and 2026-36 ten year capital programme. A high priority has been placed on immediate actions that need to be taken to bring the forecast overspend for 2025-26 down as these actions may also impact on 2026-27 budget plans. The work done to date has identified that there are no easy solutions or quick wins and that difficult decisions will need to be taken both in relation to current year spending and plans for subsequent years.

6.2 There is a need to follow due governance process throughout and where there are aspects of the budget that require key decisions these will be subject to due scrutiny. Wherever possible we will seek to obtain decisions affecting 2026-27 budget agreed in principle pending final budget approval by full Council. This will then enable decisions to be implemented to generate maximum value in the financial year. Such is the nature of the financial challenge that we will need to move at pace to find solutions, but this pace should not be at the expense of due diligence. It is anticipated that some of the actions will not require key decisions as they will be operational implementation in line with existing policy.

7. Financial Implications

7.1 Setting the annual revenue budget and ten-year capital programme is one of the most significant decisions the Council takes each year. It sets the County Council's share of council tax and the overall resource framework in which the Council operates. The budget represents the financial expression of the Council's strategic priorities and provides delegated authority to Corporate Directors and Directors to manage the budget within the parameters set out in the constitution and financial regulations. Delivery of budget plans is reported to Cabinet via quarterly budget monitoring reports.

8. Legal Implications

8.1 The Council is required by law under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 to set a balanced budget for 2026-27 before 1st March 2026. There is a separate requirement under Section 25 of the Local Government Finance Act 2003 for the Chief Finance Officer to prepare a statement on the robustness of the budget estimates and the adequacy of reserves.

9. Equalities Implications

9.1 The draft budget 2026-27 and medium term financial plan 2026-29 will include a published Equality Impact Assessment.

10. Data Protection Implications

10.1 None.

11. Contact details

Report Author:

Dave Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy)

03000 419418

dave.shipton@kent.gov.uk

Relevant Corporate Director:

John Betts (Interim Corporate Director of Finance)

03000 410066

john.Betts@kent.gov.uk

From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Rebecca Spore – Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 13 November 2025

Subject: Decant of Invicta House into Sessions House Update Report

Classification: Unrestricted

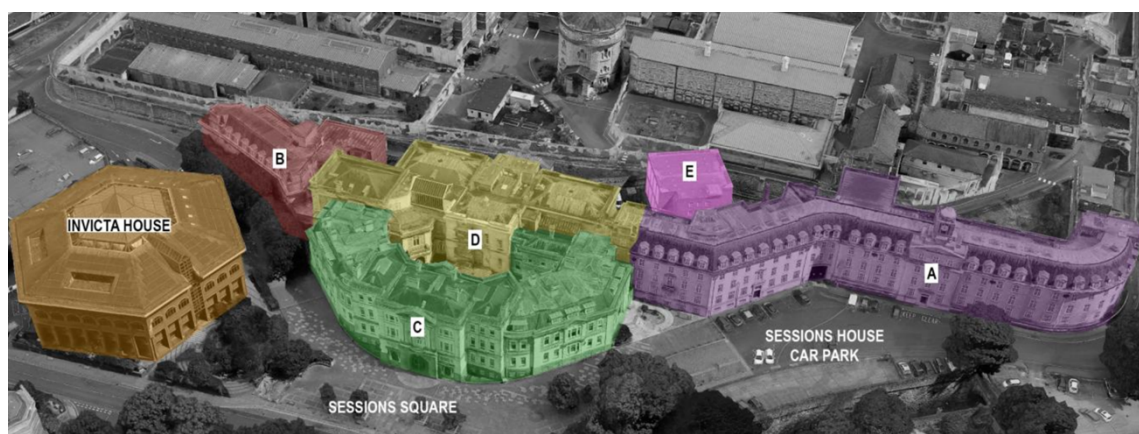
Summary: This report updates the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on the recent decant from Invicta House into Sessions House.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The decant of staff from Invicta House to Sessions House A Block was authorised by Key Decision ref 24/00100, which also approved a £1.75m capital spend to facilitate the minimum compliance and condition works required to enable staff to safely reoccupy A Block on a temporary basis and the relocation of the case conferencing suite.
- 1.2 At the end of the decant parts of blocks A, C and D in Sessions House are occupied with Block B and E remaining closed.



2. Compliance and Alteration Works

- 2.1 Compliance works were focused on A Block of Sessions House, and infrastructure throughout the building to support the reoccupation of A Block.
- 2.2 The majority of works focused on compliance with modern fire safety regulations, including the replacement of fire alarms, emergency lighting, and the introduction of new fire doors throughout A Block. Due to the listed status of

much of the building, there was a heavy reliance on wireless systems to avoid the need for new cable runs. Some of these works such as the fire alarm works were required across the whole building.

- 2.3 In addition, limited works were undertaken to heating, hot water, and lift systems to improve their resilience. The Facilities Management team are holding spare components in stock at Sessions House to minimise downtime in the event of component failure, but it should be noted that many of the building systems are now life expired.
- 2.4 While no lifts within the building are fire-rated with alternative evacuation procedures in place, the ongoing lift functionality is critical to the routine operation of the building, particularly for staff and members with accessibility needs.
- 2.5 The decant strategy adopted involved a like-for-like replacement of bookable desks and meeting rooms as to those that were previously available in Invicta House, to minimise the impact on service delivery during the decant period. The majority of needs could be met within A Block, but the specific requirements of the Case Conferencing function at Invicta House necessitated additional works, as set out below.
- 2.6 The Case Conferencing function has been relocated close to the Sessions House main reception, with its own sub-reception service delivered within the space due to service requirements. Limited works were undertaken to refurbish this space and create new rooms capable of accommodating the case conferencing function; this included sound-attenuating plasterboard and installation of video conferencing systems.
- 2.7 The majority of works concluded in June/July 2025, allowing for utility services to be recommissioned in the building.
- 2.8 Accounts are being finalised, but current projections indicate that all works will have been carried out within approved budgetary limits.

3. Basement

- 3.1 The courtyard car park has been closed for a number of years due to the structural condition of the reinforced concrete deck below the entrance archway, above the basement.
- 3.2 Temporary propping has been in place to ensure the archway remained safe and open for pedestrian movements, as a key component of the fire evacuation strategy, but this propping was not sufficient to safely allow vehicles to travel over the surface.
- 3.3 Listed building consent was obtained in liaison with Maidstone Borough Council for a permanent reinforcement solution which would allow limited vehicle access to the courtyard to be reinstated.
- 3.4 Width restrictions in the form of bollards are being introduced within the archway to ensure vehicles travel at low speeds and in the centre of the passageway.

- 3.5 Works will be delivered within the overall budgetary limit for the compliance and decant project.
- 3.6 These works are due to conclude on 31 October 2025 and following scheduled cleaning of the Courtyard the 8 spaces will then be made available for allocation.

4. Decant

- 4.1 Following conclusion of compliance works, an exercise to relocate equipment and staff from Invicta House to Sessions House A Block took place within the period from 21 July 2025 to August 2025.
- 4.2 Close liaison with impacted staff and services was necessary to scope storage and spatial requirements as part of the relocation exercise. While the majority of desks within SHQ are openly bookable, there are a number of teams and individuals who require dedicated provision which needed to be replicated in the move.
- 4.3 Engagement also took place with staff groups to understand the impact on specific cohorts, including engagement with Level Playing Field to capture any reasonable accommodations which could be integrated into plans.
- 4.4 It was possible to populate the majority of A Block with desks in advance of the relocation dates by sourcing desks from elsewhere across the estate, with limited need to purchase replacements where spatial constraints limited options. Any furniture that could not be reused was recycled via licensed contractors.
- 4.5 Relocation works involved the movement of storage, equipment, and records for specific teams, as well as the relocation of all IT equipment from Invicta to Sessions House.
- 4.6 Movement activity was broken down into discrete areas per week, with the majority of the actual move activity taking place over weekends to minimise disruption and Health and Safety implications for staff. This strategy allowed a consistent desk and meeting room availability across the wider SHQ estate to be maintained through the entire decant period, with areas of A Block beginning to open before Invicta was fully closed.
- 4.7 Works were strategically targeted at the Summer Holiday break to minimise staff presence and disruption.
- 4.8 With the exception of the Case Conferencing service, Invicta House closed to staff on the 8 August 2025 with the closure of Floor 3.
- 4.9 Sessions House A Block is now principally laid out as follows, excluding spaces allocated to specific teams which are not bookable:
 - 1st Floor – 118 Bookable desks, plus 18-person team space
 - 2nd Floor – Meeting rooms – 23 Bookable rooms, plus 5x 2 person non-bookable

- 3rd Floor – 145 Bookable desks, plus 50-person team collaboration desks
- 4.10 As part of the decant, there has been no net reduction in the number of available desks or available meeting rooms. Familiarisation tours were made available to staff with staff from infrastructure undertaking floor walk to help staff transition into a new space.
- 4.11 All other facilities which were provided at Invicta House have also been relocated to Sessions House, including the "coffee shop" facility which has reopened in the Sessions House former restaurant, and the post room function.
- 4.12 Following the relocation to Sessions House the booking system for SHQ has transitioned from the previous outlook arrangement to the Matrix system. This allows for greater oversight when it comes to the utilisation of space, but also greater tools to address the issue of obsolete bookings not being cancelled in a timely manner to allow other staff to use the space.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 Feedback from staff post-relocation has been broadly positive, with expected snagging issues which have been resolved. Some minor tweaks to floorplans are likely to be necessary to meet specific requirements which have emerged.
- 5.2 Ongoing engagement is taking place with staff groups to ensure that any emerging issues are understood.
- 5.3 The relocation activity has been delivered as planned, and within required budgets.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the report.

6. Background Documents

- 6.1 [Decision - 24/00100 - Property Accommodation Strategy - Strategic Headquarters \(SHQ\)](https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2919)
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2919>

7. Contact details

<p>Report Author:</p> <p>Hugh D'Alton Acting Strategic Programme Manager 03000 41 88 35 hugh.d'alton@kent.gov.uk</p> <p>Phillip Murphy</p>	<p>Director:</p> <p>Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure 03000 41 67 16 rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</p>
---	---

<p>Business Relationship Team Manager 03000 41 02 82 phillip.murphy@kent.gov.uk</p> <p>Mark Cheverton Head of Real Estate Services 03000 41 59 40 Mark.Cheverton@kent.gov.uk</p>	
---	--

This page is intentionally left blank

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2025/26

14 January 2026 – 10am		
Draft Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan	John Betts Dave Shipton	<i>Regular item - annual</i>
Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department (to include review and setting of KPIs)	David Whittle Matt Wagner	<i>Regular Item</i>
Asset Management Strategy	Rebecca Spore	
Freehold Property Assets Disposal Policy	Rebecca Spore	
Leases and Peppercorn Rents	Rebecca Spore	
Work Programme 2025/2026		<i>Standing item</i>
11 March 2026 – 10am		
Risk Management (Including RAG ratings)	David Whittle Mark Scrivener	<i>Regular item - Annual</i>
Cyber Security	Lisa Gannon	<i>Regular Item – six monthly</i>
Contract Management Review Group update	Clare Maynard	<i>Regular Item –six monthly</i>
Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	John Betts Dave Shipton	<i>Regular item</i>
Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy Annual Update	Iona Hunter-Whitehouse	<i>Annual update</i>
Work Programme 2025/2026		<i>Standing item</i>

6 May 2026 – 10am		
Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department	David Whittle	<i>Regular item</i>
Work Programme 2025/2026		<i>Standing item</i>
8 July 2026 – 10am		
Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	John Betts Dave Shipton	<i>Regular item</i>
Work Programme 2025/2026		<i>Standing item</i>

PATTERN OF REGULAR ITEMS

JANUARY	Annual	Draft Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan	John Betts Dave Shipton
	Every other meeting	Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department	David Whittle Matt Wagner
MARCH	Annual	Risk Management (Including RAG ratings)	David Whittle Mark Scrivener
	Six-monthly	Cyber Security	Lisa Gannon
	Six-monthly	Contract Management Review Group update	Clare Maynard
	Every other meeting	Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	John Betts Dave Shipton
MAY	Every other meeting	Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department	David Whittle Matt Wagner
	Every other meeting	Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	John Betts Dave Shipton
JULY	Every other meeting	Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department	David Whittle Matt Wagner
SEPTEMBER	Every other meeting	Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	John Betts Dave Shipton

ITEMS WHICH HAVE NOT BEEN ALLOCATED TO A MEETING

LATCOs -		Mr Brady suggested at P&R CC 8 July 2025
Oracle Update		Mr Brady suggested at P&R CC 8 July 2025

This page is intentionally left blank