

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### **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, 11 March 2026

PRESENT: Mr P Chamberlain (Vice-Chair), Mr W Chapman, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Finch, Mr M A J Hood, Mr M Mulvihill, Mrs B Porter, Mr H Rayner, Mr N Wibberley and Mr M Paul

ALSO PRESENT: Mr B Collins and Mr C Hespe

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms L Adam (Operations and Client Relationships Manager), Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs C Head (Head of Finance Operations), Mr M Scrivener (Head of Risk and Delivery Assurance), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr D Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance), Ms L Gannon (Director of Technology), Ms C Maynard (Chief Procurement Officer), Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), James Church (Chief Information Security Officer) and Ms R Anderson (Head of Business Information, Strategy and Assurance)

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

##### **43. Election of Chair**

*(Item 2)*

1. Mr Paul Chamberlain was nominated by the Leader to be the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee and this was agreed by the Committee. In light of this nomination the position of Vice-Chairman became vacant. The Chairman asked for proposals for the election of Vice-Chairman.
2. Mr Chapman proposed, and Mr Finch seconded, that Mr Nick Wibberley be elected Vice-Chairman of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee
3. RESOLVED that Mr Chamberlain be elected Chairman of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee, and Mr Nick Wibberley be elected Vice-Chairman of the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee.

##### **44. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 3)*

Apologies were received from Mr Evans and Mr Hook. Mr Paul was present as substitute for Mr Evans.

##### **45. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda**

*(Item 4)*

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **46. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026**

*(Item 5)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 14 January 2026 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

#### **47. Risk Management: Chief Executive's and Deputy Chief Executive's Departments**

*(Item 6)*

1. Mr Brian Collins (Deputy Leader) and Mr Mike Hand (Risk and Delivery Assurance Officer) introduced the report on Risk Management. Mr Hand explained that the annual report presented the strategic risks on KCC's Corporate Risk Register relevant to this Committee.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
  - (a) In relation to Risk CRR0053 (Asset Management and Degradation and associated impacts, linked to Capital Programme affordability), a Member raised concerns about the impact of budget decisions on the Council's ability to maintain its asset base and expressed concern that insufficient maintenance funding could result in assets deteriorating and being placed into the disposal programme. Mr Collins responded that steps had been taken to improve the Council's financial position, including reducing long-term debt, and that budgets remained subject to review and adjustment. Mrs Cath Head (Head of Finance Operations) advised that the backlog maintenance figure in 2021–22 was £165 million and noted that inflation would need to be added to reflect subsequent years.
  - (b) Members referred to Risk CRR0059 (Risk of significant adverse variance to the level of savings and income agreed in KCC's budget), noting concerns about the adequacy of reserves to manage potential pressures, particularly in adult social care. A Member asked what contingency arrangements were in place should external pressures worsen, referring to rising inflation, international events affecting oil and gas prices, and the potential impact on Council services and costs. Mr Collins acknowledged the global situation and stated that recent movements in oil prices had eased slightly. He advised that the Administration was aware of the risks, holding ongoing discussions, and committed to maintaining a stable financial trajectory.
3. RESOLVED to note the report.

#### **48. Key Performance Indicator Review for 2026/27: Chief Executive's and Deputy Chief Executive's Departments**

*(Item 7)*

1. Mr Matt Wagner (Chief Analyst) introduced the report on the Key Performance Indicator (KPI) Review for 2026/27 relating to the Chief Executive's and Deputy Chief Executive's Departments. He advised that, as part of this year's review, particular focus was given to improving performance management

arrangements across KCC and ensuring that KPIs supported the delivery of value for money. A key outcome of the review was the introduction of a new proposed KPI section for the Commercial and Procurement Division. Mr Wagner highlighted the new Local Outcomes Framework published by the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government in mid February which sets out outcome based performance measures linked to national priorities delivered locally by councils. It was proposed that a further paper be brought to the Committee's July meeting to map the Local Outcomes Framework metrics against existing KPIs, activity indicators and the quarterly performance report.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
  - (a) Asked about the removal of KPIs CS13 and CS14 relating to average speed of answer and KPI CS01 relating to customer satisfaction scores, Mr Wagner explained that the changes were linked to the transition to a new contact centre contract commencing in April. He explained that average speed of answer would not be measured under the new contract, but alternative indicators were in place to monitor responsiveness and quality. He advised that customer satisfaction was now monitored through a more detailed quality scorecard, measured through KPIs CS06A and CS06B, which provided a more comprehensive assessment of call quality for both in hours and out of hours calls. Mr Wagner clarified that the proposed KPIs had been streamlined to reduce duplication and reflect contractual monitoring arrangements.
  - (b) A Member commented on the KPI relating to the percentage of complaints responded to within timescales, noting that current performance stood at 69% against a proposed target of 85%. She expressed hope that appropriate resources would be allocated to support improvement in this area and enhance residents' experience.
3. RESOLVED to note the KPIs and targets proposed for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department for 2026/2027 and to note that a further paper on the Local Outcomes Framework be brought to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee in July.

#### **49. Implementation of the Commercial Strategy - Feedback on Supplier Day** *(Item 8)*

1. Mr Chris Hespe (Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency) introduced the report on the implementation of the Commercial Strategy and highlighted the importance of the event held on 27 January 2026. He stated that Kent County Council spent approximately £1.47billion per year on third party contracts. He thanked Ms Maynard and her team for delivering a well run and successful event which was attended by over 300 businesses, the majority of which were Kent based SMEs and VCSEs.
2. Ms Claire Maynard (Chief Procurement Officer) confirmed that engagement from local suppliers had been positive. She reiterated the Council's objective of increasing the proportion of spend with SMEs and Kent based suppliers and emphasised the importance of understanding supplier needs to support this

aim. She advised that feedback from the event would inform future engagement and highlighted the importance of continuing to reach both existing and prospective suppliers.

3. Mr Collins highlighted that the event had been delivered at no cost to the Council and congratulated those involved. Asked whether similar events were planned for the future, Ms Maynard responded that feedback from suppliers had indicated strong support for further events. She confirmed that events would remain cost neutral and while further events were planned, dates had not yet been set.
4. RESOLVED to note the report.

## **50. Biodiversity Net Gain Overview**

*(Item 9)*

1. Mr Brian Collins and Ms Rebecca Anderson (Head of Business Information, Strategy and Assurance) introduced the report which provided an overview of Biodiversity Net Gain units and how Kent County Council could potentially use part of its land portfolio to create habitats capable of generating BNG units for sale. Ms Anderson outlined that planning legislation requires developers to deliver a minimum 10% increase in biodiversity value as part of new developments, resulting in higher quality habitats for wildlife. She explained that a range of delivery models were being considered, from in house provision to fully outsourced arrangements. Each option would be assessed using critical success factors and a weighted scoring approach, as detailed in the report. Ms Anderson confirmed that specific sites would be brought back to the Committee for consideration.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
  - (a) A Member commented that the detailed implications would be important, particularly in balancing biodiversity objectives with public access where sites such as country parks might be involved. He asked whether there was potential to combine biodiversity net gain with other uses, such as solar farms on closed landfill sites, and suggested that dual use sites could deliver benefits for successor councils. Ms Anderson responded that, when assessing sites, all potential options would be considered. She advised that sites would need to be of sufficient size to support multiple uses and that viability, sustainability, and value for money would be key factors in determining how sites were used.
3. RESOLVED to note the report.

## **51. 26/00012 - Microsoft 365 Licences Enterprise Agreement and Azure Consumption 2026 – 2029**

*(Item 10)*

1. Mr Collins and Ms Lisa Gannon (Director of Technology) introduced the report concerning the renewal of the Microsoft 365 Licences Enterprise Agreement and Azure Consumption contract for the period 2026–2029. Ms Gannon

explained that the Council renewed its Microsoft contract every three years and that the agreement covered a substantial proportion of the Council's technology infrastructure. She advised that Microsoft pricing was standard and publicly set, with licences purchased through a reseller who provided advice to ensure the most cost effective mix of licences. Licence usage was reviewed annually, with a full contractual renewal required every three years.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
  - (a) A Member raised concerns regarding the proposed contract period extending beyond March 2028 in the context of potential local government reorganisation (LGR). Mr Collins responded that the Administration was mindful of the risks associated with LGR but noted that there was currently uncertainty regarding the timetable and outcome. He stated that contracts needed to be negotiated on the basis that the Council continued to operate as the decision making authority until formal change occurred. Mr Whittle explained that once a Structural Change Order was approved by Parliament, the Secretary of State would issue Section 24 directions limiting councils' decision making powers without reference to shadow authorities. Until such directions were issued, the Council was required to continue operating as normal. Officers confirmed that provisions enabling novation or transfer to successor authorities were included in contracts.
  - (b) Ms Gannon advised that the available commercial options were a one year or three year contract, with a one year contract being significantly more expensive. She added that successor authorities would still need Microsoft infrastructure during the vesting period and that the transition of ICT systems could take several years, meaning the expenditure would not be wasted.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
  1. enter into a new Microsoft licencing agreement for 3 years to meet KCC business and Infrastructure licensing requirements – including the Microsoft Azure Consumption; and
  2. delegate authority to the Director of Technology, in consultation with the Deputy Leader to take all necessary actions, including but not limited to, undertaking negotiations, finalising terms, entering into any required contracts or legal agreements, and executing all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement this decision.

## **52. Work Programme**

*(Item 11)*

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme subject to the addition of 'Information Governance' to the May agenda, and 'Government's Local Outcomes Framework' being added to the July agenda.

## **53. 26/00002 - Extension for Kent County Council's insurance arrangements**

*(Item 12)*

1. Mr Collins and Mrs Cath Head (Head of Finance Operations) introduced the report on the extension of Kent County Council's insurance arrangements. Mrs Head advised that the Council's current insurance agreement was due to expire at the end of December 2026. She explained that, due to the impending local government reorganisation, it was anticipated that running a competitive tender at this time would be unlikely to achieve value for money. The report therefore sought approval to extend the existing insurance contract by two years, to December 2028. She noted that the extension would ensure the Council remained insured beyond the anticipated "go live" date for LGR and an exit arrangement would be built into the contract to allow KCC to exit in April 2028, should this be required.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
  - (a) A Member reiterated earlier points regarding the importance of ensuring appropriate contractual provisions in the event of LGR, particularly given the nature of insurance contracts. He expressed concern that changes to the Council's asset base following reorganisation could affect insurance arrangements and stressed the importance that provisions be in place to avoid payment of premiums beyond the period for which cover was required, including appropriate cessation or return of premiums if KCC ceased to exist.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
  - (a) Extend the Council's current insurance arrangements for a further two years, through to 31st December 2028.
  - (b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Finance, in consultation with the Deputy Leader of Kent County Council to, take relevant actions, including but not limited to negotiating, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts, contract variations or other legal agreements, as required, to implement the decision.

#### **54. Cyber Security** (Item 13)

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

#### **(Open Access to Minutes)**

1. Mr Collins, Ms Gannon and Mr James Church introduced the report, which outlined the annual cyber security position for the Committee. Mr Church explained the actions being taken to manage cyber security risks and highlighted the importance of staff training and awareness.
2. RESOLVED to note the report.