

**DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-
ORGANISATION CABINET COMMITTEE**

Tuesday, 30th September, 2025

10.30 am

Council Chamber

AGENDA

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION CABINET COMMITTEE

Tuesday, 30 September 2025 at 10.30 am
Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,
Maidstone.

Ask for: **James Clapson**
Telephone: **0300 041 7387**

Membership (17)

Reform (12):	Mr M Harrison, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr M Brown, Mr W Chapman, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr J Eustace, Mr J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mrs S Emberson, Mrs M Fothergill, Ms P Williams and one vacancy.
Liberal Democrat (2):	Mr M Ellis and Mr A J Hook
Labour (1):	Mr A Brady
Green (1):	Mr R Lehmann
Conservative (1):	Mr H Rayner

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

- 1 Apologies and Substitutes
- 2 Declarations of Interest
- 3 Minutes of the meeting held on 28.7.2025 (Pages 1 - 6)
- 4 Overview and update on collaborative Local Government Reorganisation work through Kent Council Leaders (Pages 7 - 20)
- 5 Kent County Council's position on Local Government Reorganisation and next steps (Pages 21 - 32)
- 6 Key Financial Statistics (Pages 33 - 44)
- 7 Work Programme (Pages 45 - 46)

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

Date: 22 September 2025

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

DEVOLUTION AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT RE-ORGANISATION CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 28 July 2025.

PRESENT: Mr M Harrison, Mr O Bradshaw, Mr A Brady, Mr M Brown, Mr P Chamberlain, Mr W Chapman, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Eustace, M J Henderson, Mr C Hespe, Mr H Rayner, Mrs P Williams, Mrs M Fothergill, Mr M A J Hood, Ms I Kemp, Mr G R Samme and Mr M J Sole.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs L Kemkaran.

OFFICERS: Amanda Beer (Chief Executive), Jenny Dixon-Sherreard (Strategy Manger), Paul Royel (Director of Human Resources & Organisation Development), Dave Shipton (Head of Financial Strategy), Ben Watts (General Counsel), David Whittle (Director for Strategy Policy Relationships & Corporate Assurance), Tim Woolmer (Head of Strategic Partnerships), and James Clapson (Democratic Services Officer).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chair
(Item 1)

Mr Harrison was nominated by the Leader to be the Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee Chair.

RESOLVED that Mr Harrison be the Chair of the Committee.

2. Election of Vice Chair
(Item 2)

Mr Bradshaw proposed, and Ms Williams seconded that Mrs Emberson be elected as Vice-Chair of the Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee. There were no further nominations.

RESOLVED that Mrs Emberson be Vice-Chair of the Committee.

3. Apologies and Substitutions
(Item 3)

Apologies were received from Mr Hook who was substituted by Mr Sole, Mr Ellis who was substituted by Mr Samme, Mr Lehmann who was substituted by Mr Hood, Miss

Randall who was substituted by Miss Kemp and Mr Black who was substituted by Mrs Fothergill.

4. Declarations of Interest *(Item 4)*

Mr Rayner declared an interest in item 5, KCC options appraisal and criteria assessment of current Local Government Reorganisation options, as he represented Kent County Council on the Kent Association of Local Councils.

There was a general declaration of interest noted from all Committee Members who were also Parish, District, City or Brough Councillors in relation to item 5 on the agenda.

5. KCC options appraisal and criteria assessment of current Local Government Reorganisation options *(Item 5)*

Mrs Kemkaran (Leader of the Council) introduced the item, during which she highlighted the importance of the Cabinet Committee in considering these changes that would have a profound impact upon the County.

Mr Whittle, Ms Dixon-Sherreard and Mr Woolmer presented the report, during which they made the following key points:

- 28 November 2025 was the deadline for the submission of the local government re-organisation (LGR) proposals to the Government.
- The deadline placed Kent County Council (KCC) under significant time pressure. Additionally, the timetable to meet future key milestones that included statutory consultation in 2026, shadow unitary elections in 2027, and to go live in April 2028, was also very challenging.
- There was a joint process underway to develop an evidence base and business cases for the Kent and Medway councils. Each of the councils would be required to submit a business case to the Government by the 28 November deadline.
- An external consultant would be used to prepare the business cases, and it was expected that the options appraisal would be completed towards the beginning of September.
- The report before the Committee detailed several important caveats to its findings, and it intentionally did not suggest a preferred option.

The following points and comments were made by Members during consideration of the item:

- Most residents did not know anything about LGR.
- Residents should be given assurance that they would be fully consulted on proposals at the appropriate time.
- It was important to include parish councils in the process.
- Government should be asked to confirm when Kent would be eligible to begin the devolution process as this could impact upon the business plan for LGR, and would be an important consideration when planning for the future.
- Some felt that elements of the assessment published in the pack were indicative of subjective scoring.

- Members discussed whether the fair funding review may favour Northern and Metropolitan Councils over those in the South-East, and this should be kept in mind when considering the future of Kent.
- Some of the financial information relating to the debts and asset of the councils was not yet available, this made it difficult for Members to see the full picture.
- The report contained a lot of assumptions.
- The report could have gone into more detail about the advantages to be gained from devolution and LGR for Kent.
- The option that had the lowest number of residents for each elected member was option four, this could be seen as the option with the highest level of democratic representation. As the number of unitary authorities reduced, the number of residents that each elected member would represent increased.
- There was a concern that without a single Strategic Kent Authority, some parts of Kent would be set up with higher levels of debt or higher service burdens than others.

The Leader and Officers responded with the following points in relation to comments made by Members:

- The Government would lead a consultation exercise following receipt of the business cases. Additionally, KCC considered a number of options for public engagement and awareness activities and would engage with the public once the options for the future were known.
- Those councils selected for the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP) had the same schedule for LGR as the Kent and Medway councils, but they were also expected to hold mayoral elections in 2026.
- The Government provided the Kent and Medway councils with £514,410 in funding for the development of LGR proposals. The Leaders of these councils collectively agreed that some of this funding should be used to commission a consultant to develop business cases for the preferred options. KCC undertook the procurement exercise on behalf of the Kent and Medway councils, and appointed KPMG.
- The Leaders of the Kent and Medway councils recently attended the Kent Association of Local Councils' (KALC) Annual meeting, and KCC officers met with the KALC Chair to provide updates.
- Consideration would be given to inviting KALC representatives to attend future meetings of the Committee as guests or co-opted members, although it was important to note that Parish Councils had a different relationship with the LGR situation as they were not part of the Government's process.
- Each council had different amounts of debt and assets. There would need to be an agreed basis for the apportionment of these debts and assets across the new unitary authorities. The Government had the authority to step in to make this decision if local agreement could not be achieved.
- It was anticipated that the LGR could generate efficiencies in the long term, however, there would be transition costs that would need to be managed by the new unitary authorities. KPMG would calculate the expected transition costs as part of their work in preparing the business plans. No additional funding was expected from the Government to support the transition process.
- If combined, the reserves of the borough, city and district councils would exceed the reserves held by KCC.
- LGR would not remove the current financial challenges facing the sector, there would need to be changes to services as well.
- There was concern that the new unitary authorities could be at a disadvantage compared to nearby mayoral authority areas. This was because mayoral

authority areas have historically benefited from additional responsibility and associated funding.

- The risk of disparities in service provision between authorities could potentially be mitigated through shared service arrangements.
- It was believed that a unitary authority boundary could split a district area, however, the guidance from the Government indicated that district borders should be used as a starting point. There have been no suggestions to divide a district area so far, but Mr Whittle offered to get formal advice on the implications and practicalities of doing so.
- There was recognition that the scoring of the options within the report could be subjective. To mitigate this, a group of officers with no involvement in the process were used to challenge the scoring.
- An economic divide between the West and East of Kent had been present for at least 50 years. It would remain a significant consideration as the LGR progressed.
- There would be a briefing for all Members to advise them of the latest position and the plan moving forwards. An invitation to attend the briefing would be extended to KALC representatives.
- The unitary boundaries would be an important matter for Member and resident engagement.
- Options one to four were included in the March interim submission to the Government. Since then, option five has been drafted to set out an alternative case, and option six provided a benchmark position. Options five and six were not within the scope of the previous submission to Government.
- Over the coming weeks the leaders of all the councils would be considering geographies and boundaries in preparation for their submissions to the Government. This may generate additional options.
- An option that combined option six and option one, to create a single unitary authority with three area assemblies, based upon constituted area authorities, would be explored. These area assemblies would be set up by the new unitary and would not be a separate entity from it.
- Limited details have been released about the Government's proposal for neighbourhood area committees, and how they would interact with parish councils. In preparation for the circulation of further information, the next phase of work would include some design principles that incorporated the best practices seen elsewhere in the Country.
- Measures to mitigate against the uneven distribution of burden would need to be included in the business case submissions.
- The Local Government Boundary Commission had paused all electoral boundary reviews in areas undergoing LGR. More information could be found using the following link: [Local Government Reorganisation | LGBCE](#).
- Once the unitary authority boundaries were determined, the number of councillors within each authority would need to be agreed. This would be included in the structural change orders that would officially establish the new authorities.
- School grants were currently apportioned using a national funding formula, and it was not expected that this would be significantly impacted by the LGR process.
- KPMG had been procured to assist with phase one (establishment of the evidence base and options appraisal) and phase two (creation of business cases for submission to Government by 28 November) of the process. It was expected that another procurement exercise would be required to appoint a consultant to support phase three (the transition to shadow elections) and phase four (the move from the shadow elections to vestment day), when responsibility would officially be passed to the new unitary authorities.

- There was a lot of similar work underway in other parts of the Country, however, Kent's importance was recognised nationally, and the procurement process had been robust and had generated a lot of interest from the sector.

After the debate, the Leader made the following closing remarks:

- Thanks were offered to officers for their work and efforts in answering the Committee's questions.
- There would be investigation into an additional option that combined options one and six.
- It was important that the KCC engaged with the process as it was the largest authority in the area.
- The Leader was not convinced that LGR would be in the best interest of residents and was concerned that it could result in higher costs that would need to be borne by the taxpayer.

RESOLVED that the recommendations outlined in the report be noted and that the comments raised during the debate for consideration by the Executive be noted

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From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive

To: **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee – 30 September 2025**

Subject: Overview and update on collaborative Local Government Reorganisation work through Kent Council Leaders

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper provides an overview of the collaborative work to date on Local Government Reorganisation at a Kent and Medway level between Kent County Council, Medway Council and Kent's 12 District and Borough Councils.

This includes the process for developing a shared evidence base and business cases, the timeline and key milestones leading up to 28 November 2025 submission date, and next steps.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Note** the joint work to date and the process leading up to 28 November 2025 submission date, the ongoing collaboration between all 14 Councils and the geographies in scope for strategic business case development
 - (2) **Note** the commitment to continue to engage with this Committee on the collaborative process as and when appropriate.
-

1. Background

- 1.1 Kent & Medway's 14 Local Authorities have a strong history of working closely together on shared risks and opportunities, lobbying on significant areas of common interest, and on responding collectively to strategic developments nationally or regionally. This is primarily through existing groups including *Kent Council Leaders* (a group made up of Kent's 14 elected Council Leaders) and *Joint Kent Chief Executives* (a group made up of the Chief Officers of Kent's 14 Local Authorities alongside our wider strategic local partners).
- 1.2 On 16 December 2024, HM Government published the *English Devolution White Paper* setting out its ambition to reshape local government in England. This would be through a combination of devolution to new strategic authorities and reorganisation of all of the remaining two-tier local government areas in England into unitaries. The *English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill* published on 10 July 2025 formalised HM Government's intentions to enact these changes.
- 1.3 In response to the White Paper, Council Leaders in Kent were invited to apply

for, and submitted a formal request to receive priority status to be included in the Devolution Priority Programme (DPP). If successful, this would have accelerated the devolution process and provided additional Government support for those Councils on the DPP.

- 1.4 On 5 February 2025 Government notified Councils in Kent and Medway in a letter from the then Local Government Minister that they were not selected to be on the DPP, and instead received a statutory invitation to submit proposals for Local Government reorganisation (LGR). This included guidance around the development of proposals and an expectation that all 14 Councils would collaborate.
- 1.5 The letter detailed a timeline for the process, including a requirement for a joint interim proposal by 21 March 2025 setting out direction of travel and intentions, and a deadline of 28 November 2025 to receive a final submission on reorganisation. Kent Council Leaders agreed to endeavour to work together to respond to the Minister's direction.
- 1.6 On 21 March 2025, Kent Council Leaders submitted an interim response setting out the councils' commitment to working together on reorganisation, highlighting examples of exceptional challenges faced only by Kent, the importance of aligning devolution with reorganisation and the risks of not having a strategic countywide body for Kent. Alongside the collective response signed by all 14 Council Leaders, there were a number of 'side letters' from individual councils in Kent, including KCC.
- 1.7 Work is now ongoing at pace in preparation for meeting the 28 November 2025 submission deadline.

2. Current work

- 2.1 Government have been clear that councils are expected to work together to develop LGR proposals for their areas. Each area nationally has been awarded funding to contribute towards the development of proposals. Kent and Medway were awarded £514,410.
- 2.2 Kent Council Leaders agreed to use this money collectively to develop a shared evidence base, options appraisal and business case(s) to prepare for the 28 November 2025 submission, and procure the necessary external support and expertise to meet the deadline. KPMG were appointed as Kent and Medway's Strategic Business Partner following a joint procurement process for Phases 1 and 2 as set out below and commenced work with all 14 Councils in July 2025.
- 2.3 The work is split into 4 phases as follows:

Phase 1 – Evidence Base and Options Appraisal

KPMG work with all 14 Councils to develop a single, impartial, shared

evidence base and options appraisal, identifying a long-list of options (geographies) and appraising them according to the Minister's specified criteria. This work then underpins Kent Council Leaders' decision on which options to proceed to full business case.

Phase 2 – Strategic Business Case Development

Informed by Kent Council Leaders' decision, KPMG will then work with all 14 Councils on preparing and refining the chosen options into strategic business cases in preparation for 28 November 2025 submission deadline.

Phases 3 and 4 – Ongoing Support to Vesting Day Requirements

Following Ministerial decision, significant work will then be required to prepare for transition from the existing 14 Councils to the new Unitary Council(s) in a safe and legal way. Phase 3 will run from Ministerial decision to election to shadow authority(s), and Phase 4 from election to shadow authority(s) to vesting day (the day upon which formal responsibility is handed over).

- 2.4 A further procurement process will be required for any additional external support determined necessary for Phases 3 and 4. The existing contract with KPMG is for Phases 1 and 2 only.
- 2.5 At an extraordinary Kent Council Leaders meeting on 03 September 2025, Leaders were presented with the evidence base and options appraisal assembled by KPMG colleagues with significant input from staff across all 14 Councils. There were seven geographies in scope (see appendix 1).
- 2.6 As per the governance jointly set around the strategic business partner contract and the funding from Government, each Leader was asked to select the option they would support progressing to strategic business case, the two with the most support then being prioritised for the collective process. As a result of the vote, Options 3a and 4b were selected to progress.
- 2.7 Leaders were then asked to vote on whether they would like to progress any additional options to strategic business case at an additional cost, requiring a simple majority (8 out of 14 Leaders) to progress as part of the jointly funded work. Votes were then held on Options 1a, 4c, 4d and 5a however they did not attract a majority and as such were not agreed to progress within the jointly-funded work.
- 2.8 Subsequently, Kent County Council (Option 1a), Medway Council (4d) and Dartford and Gravesham Borough Councils (5a) have determined they are willing to self-fund strategic business cases for their specified options. These will progress as part of the joint process with support from the jointly appointed strategic business partner and aligned with collective work around the shared evidence base and overarching governance and timescales. Ultimately, strategic business cases can be submitted by individual councils or groups of councils. Each council will only be able to support one case.
- 2.9 Timescales leading up to 28 November 2025 submission are tight and as

such, a regular rhythm of collaborative governance meetings, milestones and activity in the interim is planned and progressing well. These include:

Steering Group – weekly officer meetings to oversee the activity leading into the strategic business cases and ensure it is delivered to time and on budget with the strategic business partner

Local Authority Chief Executives – to provide a Programme Board role in terms of officer decision-making, oversight, and liaison with Leaders

Kent Council Leaders – meetings at regular intervals and at key decision points to ensure the process is genuinely politically-led and proceeds as per Leaders' collectively agreed approach, ultimately producing what Leaders need to satisfy governance in each of their individual Councils and enable a submission on 28 November 2025.

- 2.10 Each group has strong Senior Kent County Council representation on it.
- 2.11 Drafting work on the strategic business cases is scheduled to be completed by end of October 2025 with first drafts in advance of that, to ensure that aligned governance processes in each individual Council scheduled for November can take place.
- 2.12 Individual Councils will then determine their positions and ultimately which strategic business case they will each support in advance of 28 November 2025.

3. After submission

- 3.1 Following submission, it is likely there will be a period of several months until we receive notice of the Minister's decision on a selected option and geography. Early indications are this will likely be between Spring/Summer 2026.
- 3.2 In the interim, learning from other areas that have been through reorganisation before, it will be important for Councils to collectively prepare for Phases 3 and 4 so that they will be ready to progress the necessary and extensive transition work required to ensure services are safe and legal on day 1 of the new Unitary Council(s).
- 3.3 Therefore, whilst waiting for decision, it is envisaged that Leaders and Chief Executives will work collaboratively and focus on putting in place the arrangements required and to determine any procurement activity they deem necessary for a strategic business partner for Phases 3 and 4.

4. Next steps

- 4.1 This report has aimed to set out the basis of the collaborative approach to LGR in Kent to date, how decisions have been made thus far, and next steps.
- 4.2 The joint work with Kent Council Leaders and the external partner will continue at pace. KCC is integral to this work and is committed to fully taking part in the process utilising the shared evidence base and supporting development of the strategic business cases.
- 4.3 As this joint work continues, further reports and updates will be brought to this committee as and when appropriate.

5. Recommendations

5.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) Note** the joint work to date and the process leading up to 28 November 2025 submission date, the ongoing collaboration between all 14 Councils and the geographies in scope for Strategic Business Case development
 - (2) Note** the commitment to continue to engage with this Committee on the collaborative process as and when appropriate.
-

6. Relevant Director:

David Whittle, Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance – david.whittle@kent.gov.uk

7. Report Authors:

Tim Woolmer, Head of Strategic Partnerships, Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance – tim.woolmer@kent.gov.uk

8. Appendices:

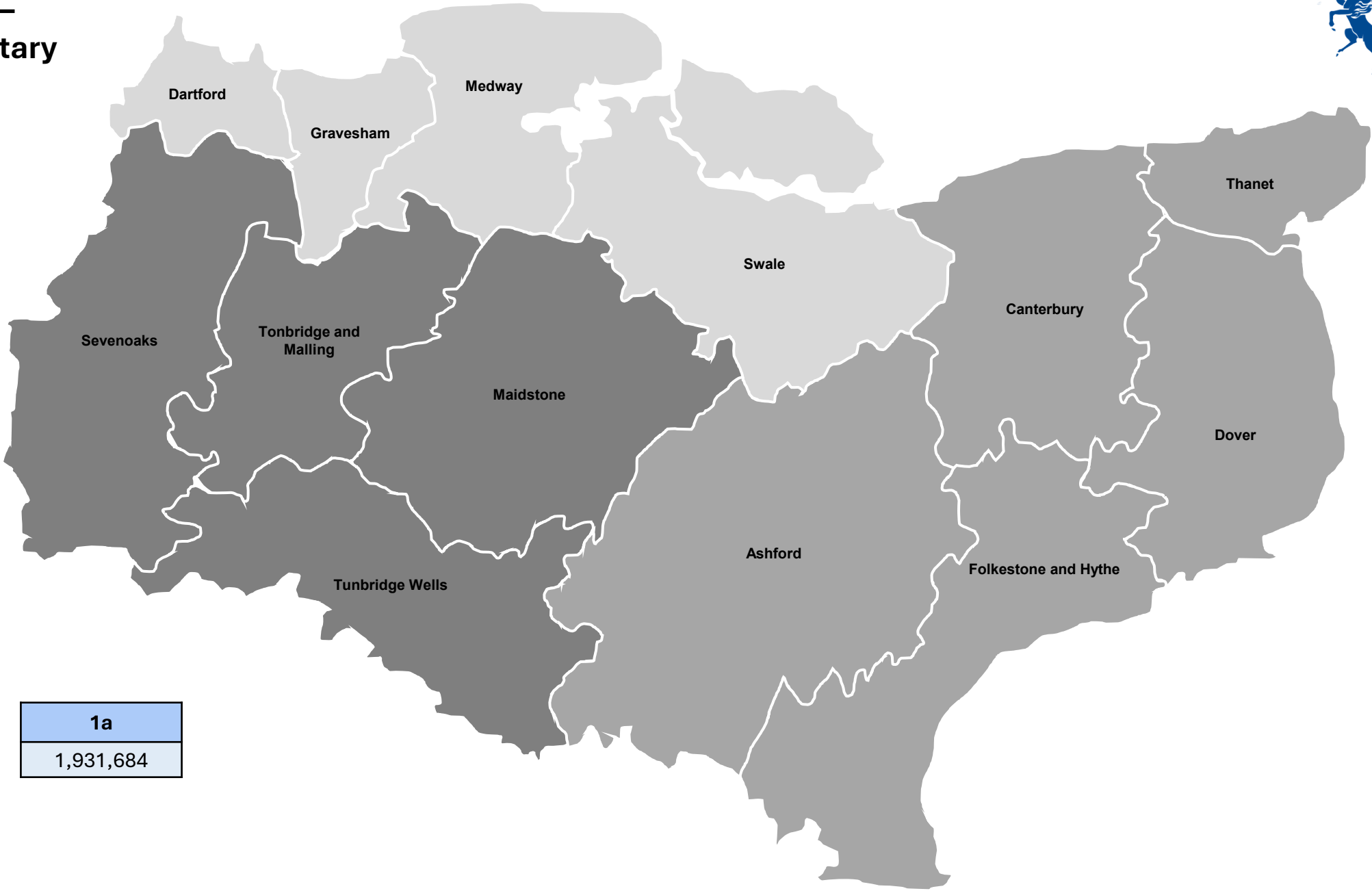
Appendix 1 – Maps detailing options and associated geographies presented to Kent Council Leaders on 03 September 2025.

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Kent LGR – Visual Maps of Geographies

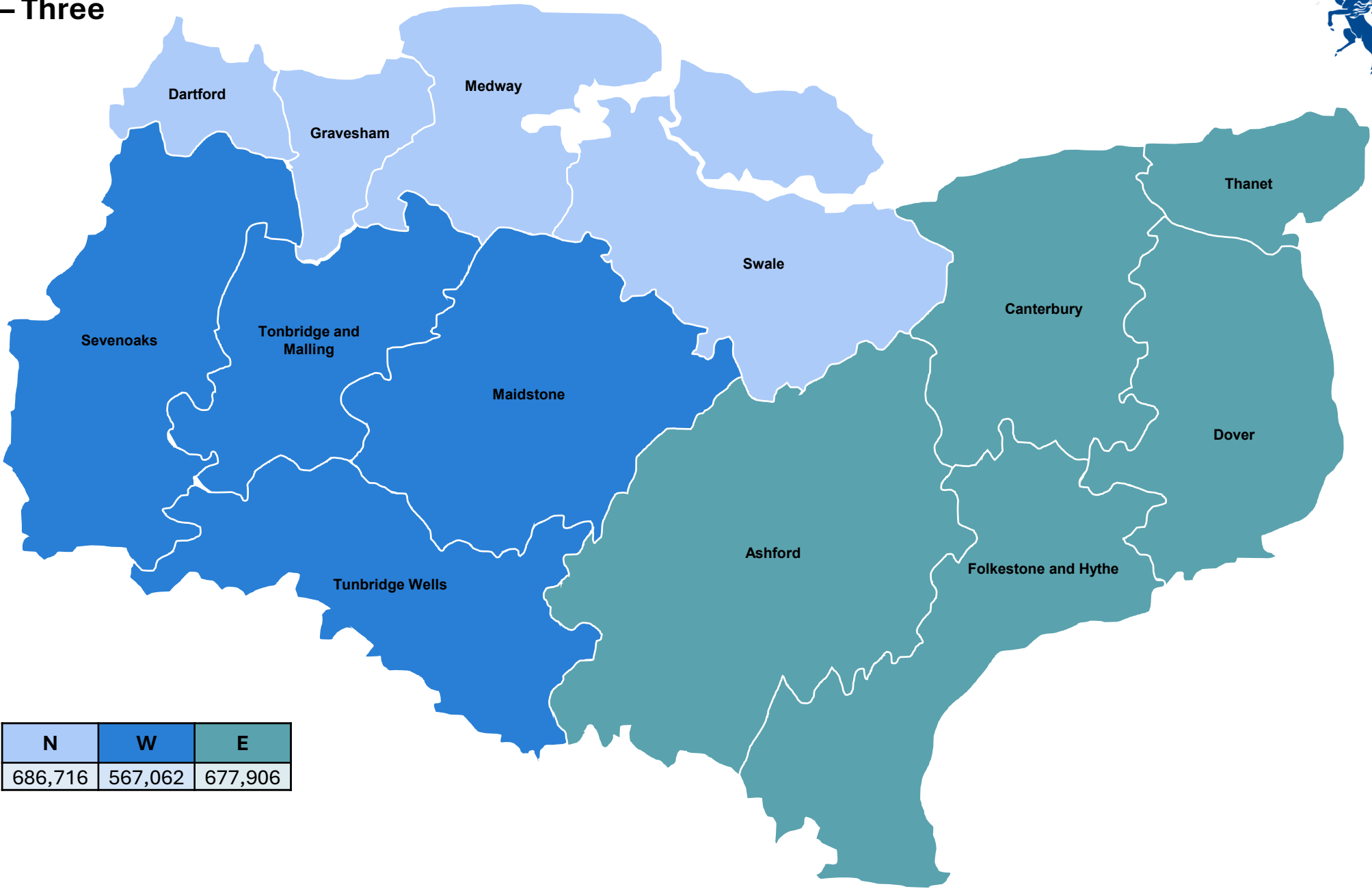
Please note that these maps are intended solely as visual aids. These maps are taken from the options appraisal produced by KPMG. For precise boundary details, particularly where changes are proposed, please refer to the relevant councils that submitted the models.

Option 1a –
Single Unitary



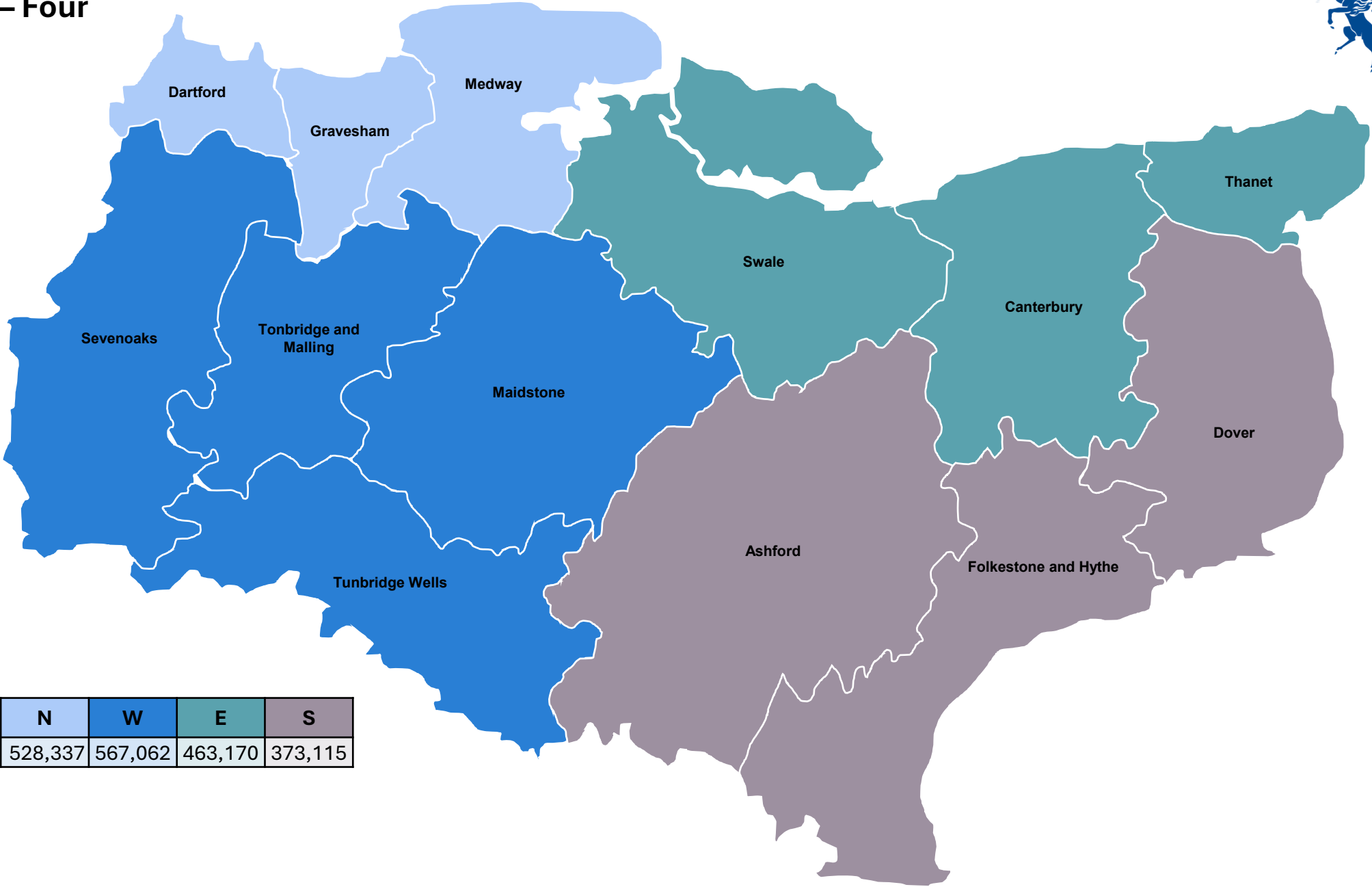
1a
1,931,684

Option 3a – Three Unitaries



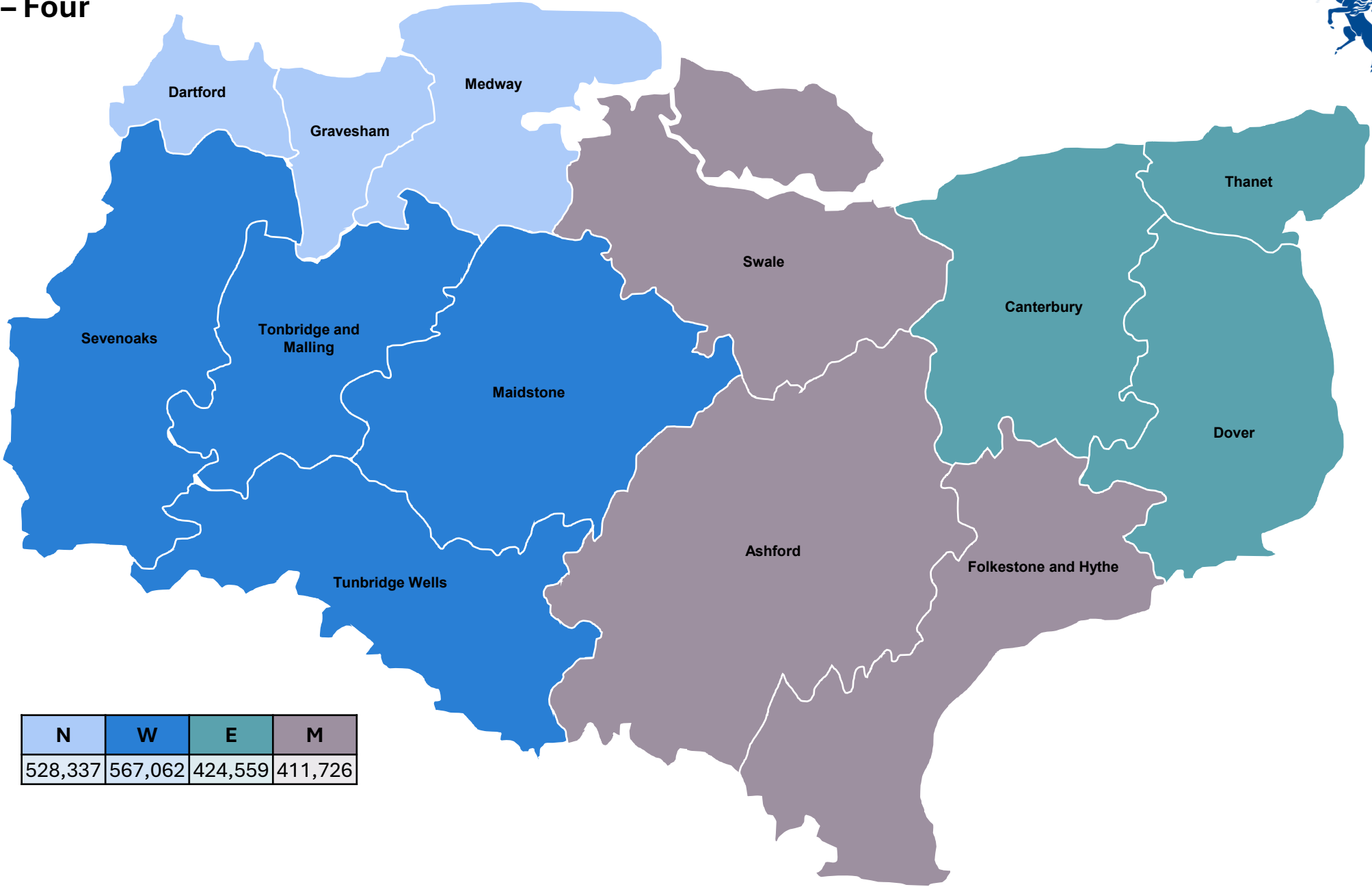
N	W	E
686,716	567,062	677,906

Option 4a – Four Unitaries



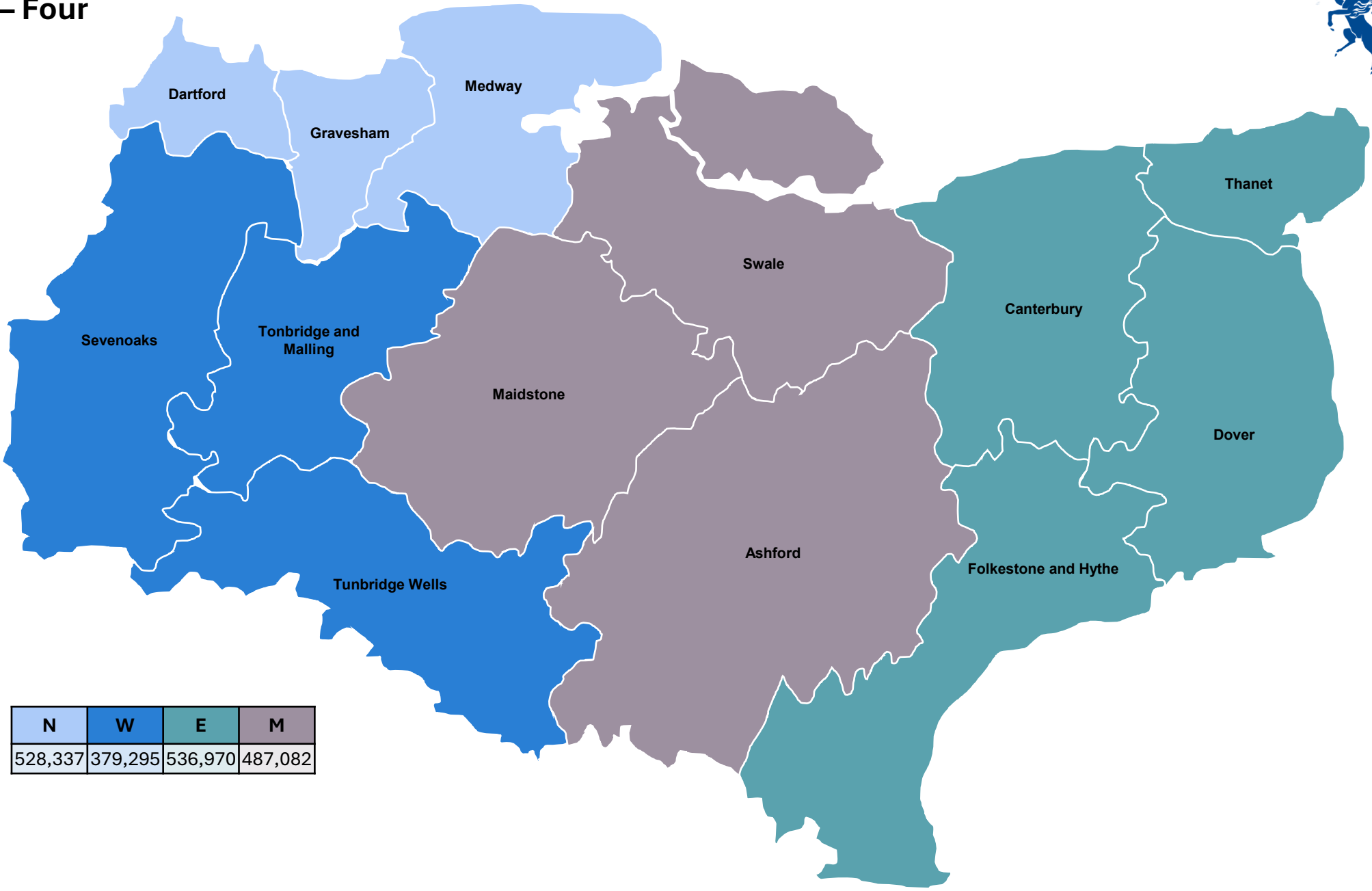
N	W	E	S
528,337	567,062	463,170	373,115

Option 4b – Four Unitaries



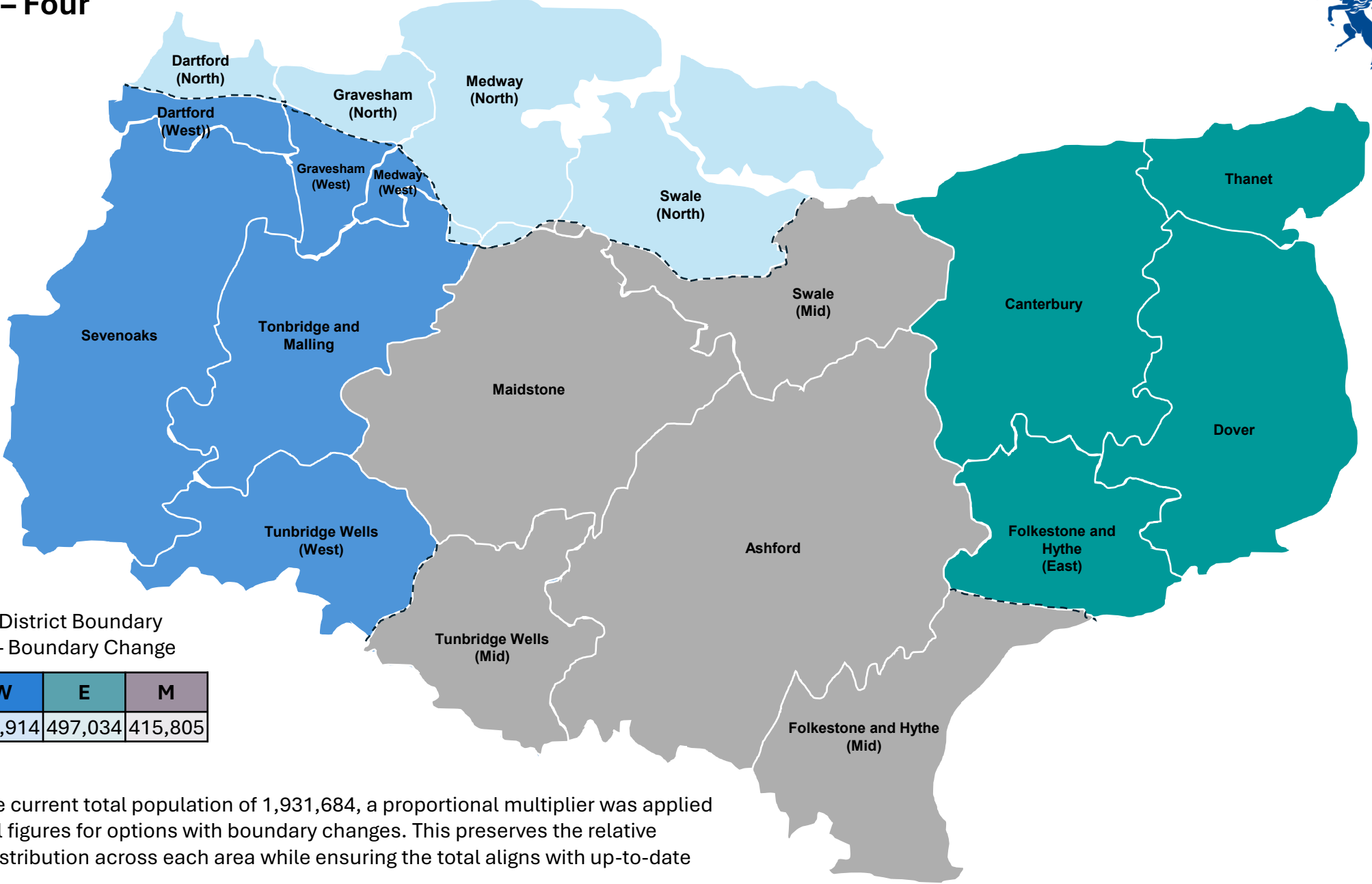
N	W	E	M
528,337	567,062	424,559	411,726

Option 4c – Four Unitaries



N	W	E	M
528,337	379,295	536,970	487,082

Option 4d – Four Unitaries*



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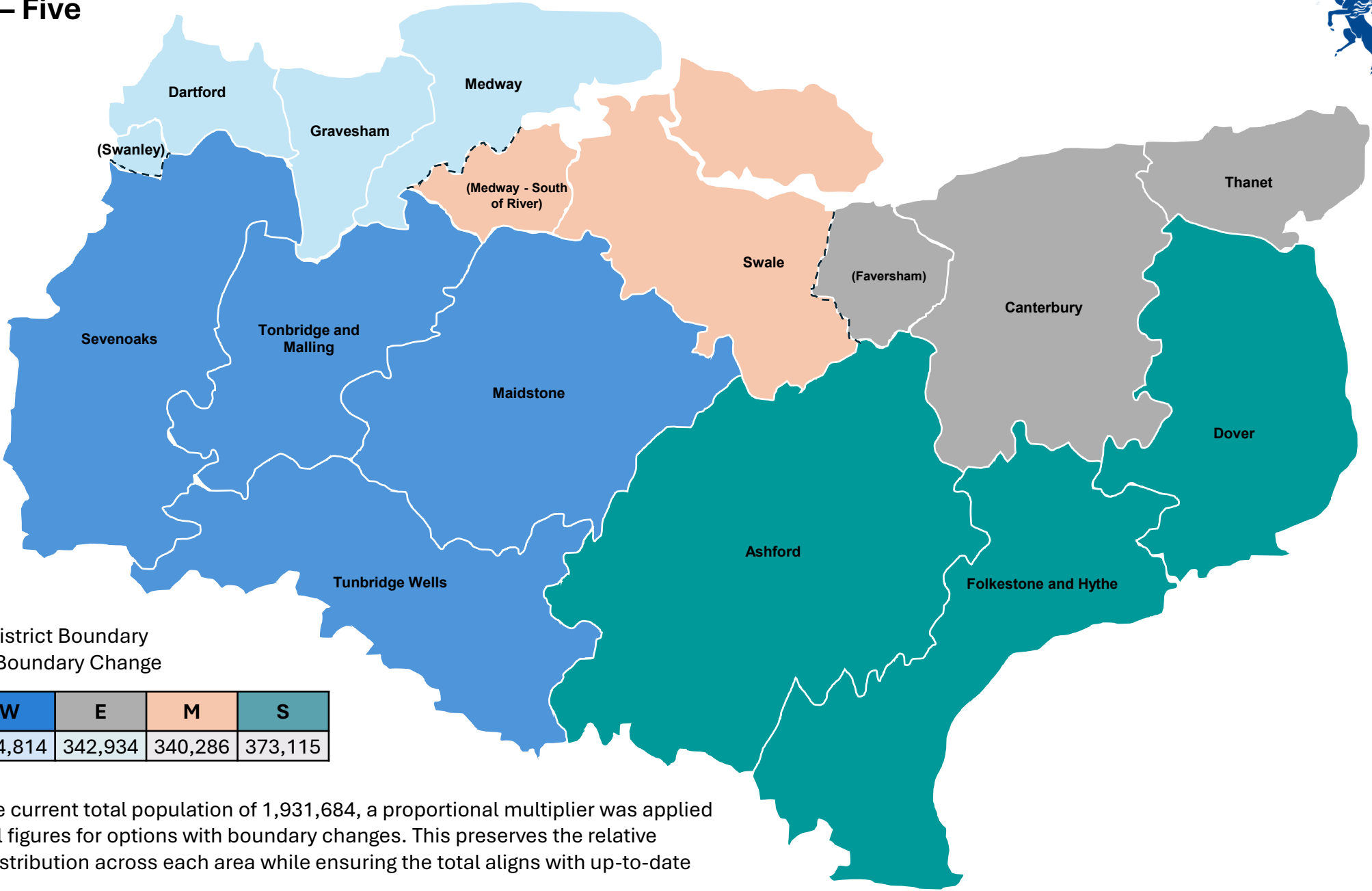
Key

White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

N	W	E	M
615,931	402,914	497,034	415,805

*To match the current total population of 1,931,684, a proportional multiplier was applied to the original figures for options with boundary changes. This preserves the relative population distribution across each area while ensuring the total aligns with up-to-date data.

Option 5a – Five Unitaries*



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Key
White line – District Boundary
Dotted line – Boundary Change

N	W	E	M	S
330,536	544,814	342,934	340,286	373,115

*To match the current total population of 1,931,684, a proportional multiplier was applied to the original figures for options with boundary changes. This preserves the relative population distribution across each area while ensuring the total aligns with up-to-date data.

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader

To: **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee, 30 September 2025**

Subject: Kent County Council's position on Local Government Reorganisation and next steps

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This report sets out the process by which the administration has identified its preferred option for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway, which is for a single unitary council with three Area Assemblies. The paper sets out how KCC will now develop its business case to submit to government.

Recommendations:

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Note** KCC's position on the development of its business case for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway
 - (2) **Note** the commitment from KCC to continue to take part in the joint work to support the development of a shared evidence base to inform the development of all business cases for Kent and Medway
 - (3) **Note** the next steps to develop KCC's business case by the government deadline.
-

1. Introduction

1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has been undertaking preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) since receiving government's invitation in February to submit a proposal for the Kent and Medway area. This has been both jointly through the Kent Council Leaders process, as set out in a separate paper to this committee, and through internal analysis and an options appraisal which was presented to the Cabinet Committee on 28 July.

1.2 This report sets out KCC's position and next steps to develop a business case for LGR by the government deadline of 28 November 2025.

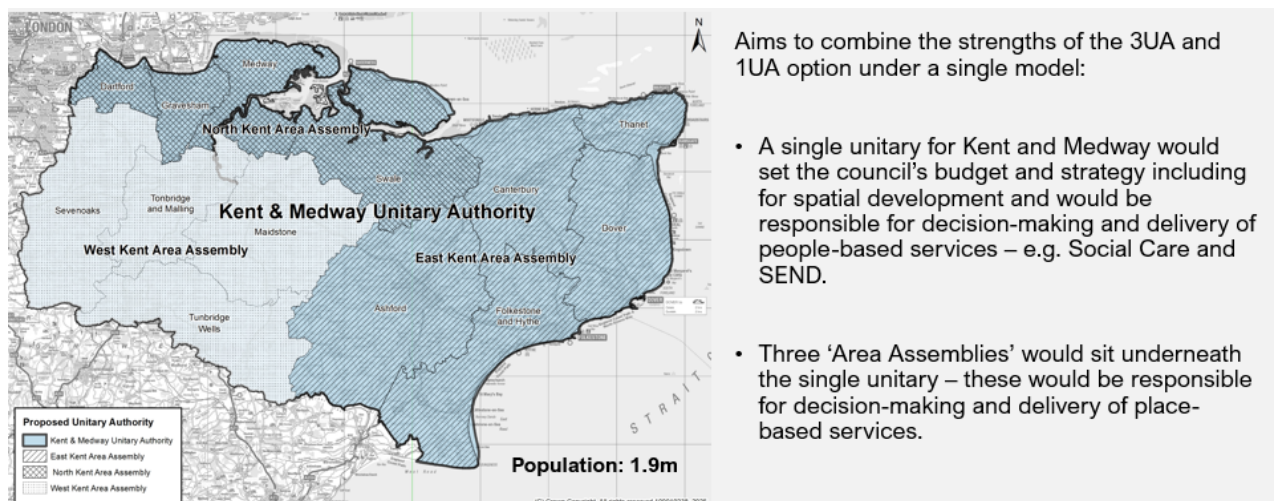
2. KCC's position on the development of a business case for LGR in Kent and Medway

2.1 The internal options appraisal presented to the Cabinet Committee on 28 July set out the six options for Kent and Medway which were known to be in consideration at the time and evaluated how they could score against

government's criteria for LGR. To support this evaluation, an evidence base was collated which included financial modelling on the costs and benefits of the different LGR options and the likely financial implications for key KCC services.

2.2 The report to the Cabinet Committee also identified some cross-cutting issues for LGR in Kent, many of which are unique, or more significant, compared to other areas and require special consideration. Significant disparities between the East and the West of the county and concentrations of high demand on social care services in some district areas means that splitting the county is likely to cause disadvantage for some parts. This is exacerbated by Kent's border location bringing exceptional pressure on services in the East of the county and on the county's transport system. KCC is only currently able to manage these pressures through the critical mass of capacity provided by operating as a large county. It is unlikely that any voluntary shared service or partnership arrangement between new unitaries could maintain the necessary countywide response to these issues over time, particularly with no timescale in place for the introduction of a Strategic Authority for Kent and Medway. Government has acknowledged the border issues and asked that proposals for LGR in Kent and Medway should set out how a countywide response can be maintained.

2.3 Taking into account the issues raised in the report presented and after a detailed debate, at the end of the Cabinet Committee meeting, a proposal was put forward for a 'hybrid' option to be considered, which would create a single unitary for Kent and Medway with three Area Assemblies, as set out below:



2.4 The single unitary hybrid option was put forward with the aim of combining the advantages of the single unitary and three-unitary options that were identified through the internal options appraisal. The single unitary option scored the highest on financial viability, delivering the greatest efficiencies and shortest payback period. Modelling predicts that a single Kent and Medway unitary could save £16.2 million per year on children's and adult's social care and SEND service, for example. It could also avoid additional costs of up to £40 million per year that would be incurred by separating the county into up to four unitaries. However, its overall score was lowered because it received low

scores for enabling community engagement and reflecting local identity due to its large size, and for the criteria on devolution.

- 2.5 The three-unitary option was judged to best reflect local identity and provide a good basis for engaging with local communities, with population groupings that closely meet government's expectations, but scored lower on financial criteria.
- 2.6 KCC conducted an initial options appraisal on the single-unitary hybrid option using the methodology and assumptions applied to the other options in the internal options appraisal. As with the other options considered and as set out by government, the six criteria were weighted equally. This was shared with Kent Council Leaders so that it could be considered alongside the other options identified for Kent and Medway. The initial options appraisal is attached as Appendix 1.
- 2.7 Having considered the findings of the initial options appraisal and taken part in discussions about all of the options identified by Kent Council Leaders, it is KCC's position that it will submit a business case to government for a single Kent unitary council covering the Kent and Medway area, with three Area Assemblies for North, East and West Kent.
- 2.8 The administration considers that the financial dis-benefits of the other options presented do not represent good value for money for Kent's taxpayers. Initial financial modelling on some of the four-unitary options shows that the costs might never outweigh the benefits, and in other options the payback period is multiple years during which time the additional financial pressures would need to be managed within the county, potentially impacting service delivery and Council Tax. Evidence also suggests that splitting up countywide services such as social care and highways, which represent the majority of council spend in Kent and Medway, would incur significant costs and risk disruption and reductions in service quality. Conversely, the single-unitary hybrid option is predicted to deliver financial benefits in less than a year which will continue to accrue and allow reinvestment into services for residents.
- 2.9 Kent's unique position and challenges mean that maintaining the county's scale and identity is vital. At the same time, the single unitary option allows Area Assemblies to reflect the natural groupings of Kent's communities and established service delivery patterns, while allowing delegated decision-making on place-based services to reflect local needs and circumstances. A single-unitary will have the capacity to deliver a well-designed community engagement approach, ensuring that residents are heard and providing greater clarity for them to hold the council to account for delivery.

3. Next steps

- 3.1 The decision of Kent Council Leaders not to pursue KCC's preferred option through the joint process means that KCC will develop the business case independently. Due to the internal preparation work undertaken to date, KCC is in a good position to deliver the business case by the government deadline.

The single unitary option is being further developed, informed by analysis of efficiencies and governance requirements.

- 3.2 While KCC is developing its business case independently, it continues to be important that all councils in Kent and Medway have access to information about the likely impacts of LGR on current KCC services to accurately inform the development of all business cases for the area that will be submitted to government. It is also an expectation of government that councils will contribute to a shared evidence base to inform business case development.
- 3.3 KCC is therefore committed to continuing to share relevant information and evidence with partners through the joint process as the work continues. Equally, KCC will have regard to information provided by other councils through the shared evidence base in developing its business case.
- 3.4 In order to support the shared evidence base and ensure that financial analysis of KCC's preferred option is comparable with other options being developed, KCC is working with KPMG to develop the financial case that will form part of the KCC business case. This is an additional piece of work within the existing contract with KPMG to support the joint process at an expected cost to KCC of less than £30,000. Development of the financial case will use financial data from all Kent and Medway councils to provide an accurate analysis of the costs and benefits. Aside from this, business case development will be delivered internally, minimising the costs.
- 3.5 The timescales set by government, which have been further constrained by KCC's election and change of administration, do not allow for extensive engagement on LGR in this phase of the process. However, on such a critical issue for the future of the county, it is important that KCC's business case includes the views of Kent residents and partners. KCC is planning to engage with residents through a survey that will be launched shortly. Key partners will also be contacted to seek their views in the coming weeks. The findings of the engagement will be incorporated into the business case. A statutory consultation process will be led by MHCLG in the New Year on the options for Kent and Medway that they will be considering.
- 3.6 A draft of KCC's business case will be presented to the Devolution and LGR Cabinet Committee in November for comment. A series of Member briefings are being held to inform all Members on the LGR process.
- 3.7 The business case will be presented to County Council in November before it is taken to Cabinet for approval ahead of the government deadline.

4. Recommendations

4.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- (1) **Note** KCC's position on the development of its business case for Local Government Reorganisation in Kent and Medway
 - (2) **Note** the commitment from KCC to continue to take part in the joint work to support the development of a shared evidence base to inform the development of all business cases for Kent and Medway
 - (3) **Note** the next steps to develop KCC's business case by the government deadline.
-

5. Relevant Director:

David Whittle, Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance – david.whittle@kent.gov.uk

6. Report Authors:

Jenny Dixon-Sherreard, Strategy Manager, Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance – jenny.dixon-sherreard@kent.gov.uk

7. Appendices:

Appendix 1 – initial Options Appraisal of the option for a single unitary with Area Assemblies

8. Background documents:

Paper to Devolution and LGR Cabinet Committee, 28 July 2025, available at <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=979&MId=9870&Ver=4>

KCC webpage for Local Government Reorganisation and devolution, containing letters to and from KCC and government and further information regarding LGR and devolution, available at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/local-government-reorganisation-and-devolution>

English Devolution White Paper, Power and partnerships: Foundations for growth, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 16 December 2024 available at [English Devolution White Paper: Power and partnership: Foundations for growth - GOV.UK](https://www.gov.uk/government/white-papers/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnerships-foundations-for-growth)

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, July 2025, available at <https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0283/240283.pdf>

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Initial Options Appraisal of single unitary with 3 Area Assemblies

An initial options appraisal against the government criteria for LGR proposals was conducted using the same assumptions, methodology and with reference to the same evidence base as was used in the KCC internal options appraisal that was presented to the Cabinet Committee on 28 July.

Criterion	Score (out of 5)	Ranking
A - A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government	4	Joint 2 nd (with option 2b)
B - Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks	4	Joint 2 nd (with option 2b)
C - Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens	4	Joint 2 nd (with options 1b, 2b and 3a)
D - Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views	4	Joint 1 st (with option 3a)
E - New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	1	Joint last (with option 1b)
F - New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment	3	Joint 2 nd (with 3a and 4a)
TOTAL	20	Second (after 3a)

Initial options appraisal – main issues impacting scoring (1)

A. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government - Score = 4/5	B. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks - Score = 4/5	C. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens - Score = 4/5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A single unitary is the most effective way to ensure that the taxbase is appropriate for the area and there is no undue disadvantage for one part of the county over another. • Demand pressures, income and spend can be spread across the county rather than being concentrated in individual smaller unitaries, avoiding unmanageable demand in specific localities. • Would maximise the available area to manage housing demand and spatial planning constraints. • However, delegating planning decisions to Area Assemblies could mean some existing challenges of planning across LA boundaries remain. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Population greatly exceeds Government's indicated range for LGR proposals. • Likely to provide significant efficiencies and value for money with short payback period. • Keeping social care and SEND services countywide eliminates large disaggregation costs; modelling suggests potential saving. • Strong financial resilience plus local responsiveness through Area Assemblies provides high potential for transformation and invest-to-save. • Transition costs are predicted to be low. • However, there would be some additional cost of setting up and operating as three Area Assemblies. • Legacy debt would be manageable by spreading it across the whole area. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Economies of scale and local flexibility provides high potential for improving service delivery and tackling current challenges, assuming agreement between administration and Area Assemblies on key issues. • Removes unnecessary fragmentation – K&M can decide the most appropriate scale at which each service should be delivered. • High capacity to invest in Public Service Reform, and Area Assemblies follow some partner service delivery boundaries. • However, holding social care decision-making centrally could lead to 'bottlenecks' of decision-making and need to engage with multiple partnership arrangements, potentially slowing localised opportunities for PSR. • Manages impacts for crucial services well with minimal service disruption and risk.

Initial options appraisal – main issues impacting scoring (2)

D. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views - Score = 4/5	E. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements - Score = 1/5	F. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment - Score = 3/5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Likely to provide efficiencies including in back-office costs, albeit there would be some costs in operating Area Assemblies. • Area Assemblies counter remoteness and provide local decision-making around visible services. • Could be perceived as 'fair' due to no disparities in Council Tax levels. • Retains the three-area (N, W and E) model for many services that some key partners indicated they preferred, although social care and HCP boundaries would not align unless delivery designed that way. • N, W, E split is sensitive to local identity and how people live, while the single unitary retains county identity. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Would not support devolution – a single unitary and Strategic Authority cannot be established on the same geographical footprint. • There is no geographical neighbour for K&M to combine with. • Under current Government criteria, devolution opportunities would be very minimal / non-existent. • Population ratios between the local authority and a strategic authority are not 'sensible'. • Provides capacity to manage border issues and does not separate border infrastructure into separate authorities. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong financial position would support resourcing of community engagement arrangements. • Resilient services would have more capacity to respond to the issues raised by communities. • Area Assemblies operate closer to communities and support place-based decision making, but the geographies are larger than proposed in some options - significant resource would be required to ensure meaningful engagement. • Area Assemblies could provide effective platforms for developing neighbourhood-level engagement arrangements that Government requires. • Number of elected Members required is far more than LGBCE's recommendation for new unitaries.

Detailed scoring table including sub-criteria (1)

Criteria	Score /5
A. A proposal should seek to achieve for the whole of the area concerned the establishment of a single tier of local government	4
Sensible economic areas with an appropriate tax base, no undue advantage for one part of the area	5
Sensible geography which will help to increase housing supply and meet local needs	3
B. Unitary local government must be the right size to achieve efficiencies, improve capacity and withstand financial shocks	4
Population of 500,000 or more	1
Delivers efficiencies and best possible value for money for taxpayers	4
Transition costs are manageable	4
Opportunities for transformation from existing budgets and invest-to-save projects	5
Debt is manageable within the new structures	5
C. Unitary structures must prioritise the delivery of high-quality and sustainable public services to citizens	4
Will improve local government and service delivery and avoid unnecessary fragmentation of services	5
Provides opportunities to deliver public service reform, including where this will lead to better value for money	3
Manages impacts for crucial services - social care, children's services, SEND and homelessness, and for wider public services including for public safety	5

Detailed scoring table including sub-criteria (2)

Criteria	Score /5
D. Proposals should show how councils in the area have sought to work together in coming to a view that meets local needs and is informed by local views	4
Supported by partners and residents	4
Sensitive to issues of local identity and cultural and historic importance	4
E. New unitary structures must support devolution arrangements	1
Will help unlock devolution	1
Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority, with timelines that work for both priorities	1
F. New unitary structures should enable stronger community engagement and deliver genuine opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment	3
TOTAL	20

Scoring

- 5: Entirely meets the criteria
- 4: Strongly meets the criteria
- 3: Sufficiently meets the criteria
- 2: Partially meets the criteria
- 1: Does not meet the criteria

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From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader
John Betts, Interim Corporate Director – Finance

To: Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee
30th September 2025

Subject: Key Financial Statistics

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper sets out:

- Current levels of borrowing across the 14 existing councils and illustration of this could impact on debt levels inherited by new authorities under different unitary configurations
- Council tax levels across the 14 existing councils and illustration of impact of harmonising council tax in new authorities under different unitary configurations
- The geographic distribution of KCC social care clients across existing district areas and disproportionate inheritance by new authorities under different unitary configurations

Recommendations:

Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE and COMMENT on these key financial statistics.

1. Introduction

1.1 Unitary authority business cases tend to focus on additional implementation costs, additional recurring costs for new authorities arising from unitary configuration and savings from new configuration. This report does not cover appraisal of these potential costs or savings as they will be fully covered in the business case. However, it is also important to consider key financial metrics that new authorities will inherit from existing authorities especially debt levels (albeit current budgets will include cost of servicing debt and/or income earned from assets on which debt has been incurred), council tax levels and distribution of key cost drivers such as social care clients.

1.2 This report sets out these key financial metrics under three different unitary configurations. These show a baseline for one single unitary for Kent and Medway and the 3 unitary and 4 unitary configurations which received the greatest support from Kent Council Leaders. Other configuration options are still under consideration.

2. Borrowing

2.1 Table 1 shows the total borrowing as the end of 2024-25 for all 14 authorities in Kent. This information is published on the government website for all local authorities [gov.uk statistical-data-sets](https://www.gov.uk/statistical-data-sets).

Table 1 – Outstanding Borrowing 31/3/25

	Total	Short term Loans	Bonds & Securities	Longer Term PMLB	Longer Terms Banks and others	Short Term Other Local Authorities	Longer Term Other Local Authorities
	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s	£000s
Ashford	260,857	4,807	0	171,050	0	85,000	0
Canterbury	182,589	0	0	141,586	3	41,000	0
Dartford	26,888	0	0	26,888	0	0	0
Dover	102,378	0	0	65,378	0	37,000	0
Folkestone & Hythe	107,562	0	0	69,322	0	28,240	10,000
Gravesham	176,131	14	0	123,617	0	46,500	6,000
Kent	732,563	0	0	428,548	304,015	0	0
Maidstone	65,000	0	0	5,000	60,000	0	0
Medway Towns	612,129	10	0	421,024	60,500	1,110	129,485
Sevenoaks	13,999	0	0	11,399	0	0	2,600
Swale	13,000	0	0	5,000	0	8,000	0
Thanet	37,138	0	0	32,638	4,500	0	0
Tonbridge & Malling	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Tunbridge Wells	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	2,330,234	4,831	0	1,501,450	429,018	246,850	148,085

2.2 Table 2 shows the total debt compared to population in each council area.

Table 2 - Borrowing per Head

	Total	Population	Total Debt per Head
	£000s		
Ashford	260,857	138,283	£1,886
Canterbury	182,589	159,939	£1,142
Dartford	26,888	120,699	£223
Dover	102,378	118,591	£863
Folkestone & Hythe	107,562	110,995	£969
Gravesham	176,131	107,737	£1,635
Kent	732,563	1,610,251	£455
Maidstone	65,000	184,187	£353
Medway Towns	612,129	286,800	£2,134
Sevenoaks	13,999	121,262	£115
Swale	13,000	155,893	£83
Thanet	37,138	140,439	£264
Tonbridge & Malling	0	135,206	£0
Tunbridge Wells	0	117,020	£0
Total	2,330,234		£1,228

2.3 Table 3 shows the levels of inherited borrowing under three different unitary configurations. KCC debt has been apportioned based on population (v1) and band D

equivalent council tax base (v2). The resulting total assumed borrowing is shown as an amount per head for the new unitary area under each of the three configurations.

Table 3 – Inherited Borrowing by Potential Unitary areas

	Inherited from District or Unitary	V1. Pro rata share of KCC (Population)	V2. Pro rata share of KCC (taxbase))	Total Debt V1 per Head	Total Debt V2 per Head
	£000s	£000s	£000s		
One Unitary	1,597,671	732,563	732,563	£1,228	£1,228
Three Unitary					
East	690,524	304,010	294,286	£1,488	£1,474
North	828,148	174,846	159,071	£1,494	£1,471
West	78,999	253,707	279,206	£597	£642
Four Unitary					
East	322,105	190,605	181,215	£1,224	£1,201
Mid	381,419	184,327	176,018	£1,396	£1,376
North	815,148	103,924	96,125	£1,784	£1,769
West	78,999	253,707	279,206	£597	£642

2.4 As demonstrated different unitary configurations will result in very differing levels of inherited debt with consequence on for the successor authorities to service debt costs.

3. Council Tax

3.1 Table 4 shows the 2025-26 Band D council tax charge and the band D equivalent council taxbase for each of the 14 authorities in Kent. This information is published on the government website for all local authorities derived from statutory CTR1 return from all authorities [gov.uk CTR1 statistics](https://gov.uk/ctr1-statistics).

Table 4 – 2025-26 Band D council Tax and taxbase

	2025-26 Band D Charge	2025-26 Taxbase (BDE)
Ashford	£193.58	49,332.00
Canterbury	£247.05	55,053.98
Dartford	£188.64	41,702.34
Dover	£220.77	42,119.72
Folkestone & Hythe	£304.81	41,413.64
Gravesham	£237.96	35,442.89
Kent	£1,691.19	587,921.91
Maidstone	£301.68	68,085.50
Medway UA	£1,834.27	92,100.20
Sevenoaks	£251.01	53,008.33
Swale	£206.64	50,518.20
Thanet	£271.05	48,260.89
Tonbridge & Malling	£245.30	53,849.82
Tunbridge Wells	£211.20	49,134.60
Total		680,022.11

3.2 Under the Local Government Finance Act 1992 local authorities are required to set a single basic ["band D"] amount of council tax for their entire area¹. Where local authorities merge or unitary authorities are established setting a single level of council tax across the new area could result in large increases in bills in some areas and/or a significant loss of income for the authority. Regulations allow authorities scope "to harmonise more equitably their council tax levels" over a number of years.

3.3 In two-tier areas being reorganised into single unitary the starting point is the combined band D charge of the outgoing district and county council in each predecessor area. A new weighted single band D rate for the unitary area is determined using the band D equivalent tax base in each of the predecessor areas i.e. setting a band D rate for the new unitary area that would raise the same overall council tax as the predecessor areas. The transitional arrangements would allow the new authority to set different Band D council tax amounts in its predecessor areas for up to 7 years (provided the overall amount levied across the entire new unitary area does not exceed the referendum level) but the uniform level of council tax must be achieved by year 8. During this transition period the gap must narrow between the highest charging predecessor area and the others (there is no minimum narrowing requirement).

3.4 Table 5 shows the current combined upper tier/lower tier charge in each existing area and the calculation of new weighted charge for 3 different unitary configurations which would raise the same overall council tax as the predecessor areas.

¹ Additional special expenses can be added in specific circumstances across parts of the local area.

Table 5 – New unitary area uniform Band D council tax amounts

	Combined 2025-26 Band D Rate	Band D Taxbase	New Weighted Band D Rate for Unitary Area		
			1 Unitary	3 Unitaries	4 Unitaries
Canterbury	£1,938.24	55,053.98	£1,919.86	£1,937.42	£1,938.59
Dover	£1,911.96	42,119.72			
Thanet	£1,962.24	48,260.89			£1,922.05
Ashford	£1,884.77	49,332.00			
Folkestone & Hythe	£1,996.00	41,413.64		£1,872.83	£1,865.37
Swale	£1,897.83	50,518.20			
Medway	£1,834.27	92,100.20			£1,947.49
Gravesham	£1,929.15	35,442.89			
Dartford	£1,879.83	41,702.34		£1,947.49	£1,947.49
Maidstone	£1,992.87	68,085.50			
Sevenoaks	£1,942.20	53,008.33			£1,947.49
Tonbridge & Malling	£1,936.49	53,849.82			
Tunbridge Wells	£1,902.39	49,134.60			

3.5 Table 6 shows the maximum band D council tax charge up to referendum limit for new single unitary and increases on the current charge in each predecessor area. It is these increases that can be phased in each area over a 7 year period (although this could entail not increasing up to the maximum referendum level across the area in each year resulting in a potential loss of council tax revenues – this would be a decision for the new unitary authority how the transitional arrangements were applied).

Table 6 – Referendum increase for single unitary configuration

One Unitary	Combined 2025-26 Band D Rate	Maximum Permitted New Unitary Charge within Referndum Limits	Increase	
Canterbury	£1,938.24	£2,015.82	£77.58	4.00%
Dover	£1,911.96		£103.86	5.43%
Thanet	£1,962.24		£53.58	2.73%
Ashford	£1,884.77		£131.05	6.95%
Folkestone & Hythe	£1,996.00		£19.82	0.99%
Swale	£1,897.83		£117.99	6.22%
Medway	£1,834.27		£181.55	9.90%
Gravesham	£1,929.15		£86.67	4.49%
Dartford	£1,879.83		£135.99	7.23%
Maidstone	£1,992.87		£22.95	1.15%
Sevenoaks	£1,942.20		£73.62	3.79%
Tonbridge & Malling	£1,936.49		£79.33	4.10%
Tunbridge Wells	£1,902.39		£113.43	5.96%

3.6 Table 7 shows the maximum band D council tax charge up to referendum limit for new three unitary configuration and increases on the current charge in each predecessor area.

Table 7 – Referendum increase for three unitary configuration

Three Unitary	Combined 2025-26 Band D Rate	Maximum Permitted New Unitary Charge within Referendum Limits	Increase	
Canterbury	£1,938.24	£2,034.27	£96.03	4.95%
Dover	£1,911.96		£122.31	6.40%
Thanet	£1,962.24		£72.03	3.67%
Ashford	£1,884.77		£149.50	7.93%
Folkestone & Hythe	£1,996.00		£38.27	1.92%
Swale	£1,897.83	£1,966.41	£68.58	3.61%
Medway	£1,834.27		£132.14	7.20%
Gravesham	£1,929.15		£37.26	1.93%
Dartford	£1,879.83		£86.58	4.61%
Maidstone	£1,992.87	£2,044.80	£51.93	2.61%
Sevenoaks	£1,942.20		£102.60	5.28%
Tonbridge & Malling	£1,936.49		£108.31	5.59%
Tunbridge Wells	£1,902.39		£142.41	7.49%

3.7 Table 8 shows the maximum band D council tax charge up to referendum limit for new four unitary configuration and increases on the current charge in each predecessor area.

Table 8 – Referendum increase for four unitary configuration

Four Unitary	Combined 2025-26 Band D Rate	Maximum Permitted New Unitary Charge within Referendu m Limits	Increase	
Canterbury	£1,938.24	£2,035.44	£97.20	5.01%
Dover	£1,911.96		£123.48	6.46%
Thanet	£1,962.24		£73.20	3.73%
Ashford	£1,884.77	£2,018.07	£133.30	7.07%
Folkestone & Hythe	£1,996.00		£22.07	1.11%
Swale	£1,897.83		£120.24	6.34%
Medway	£1,834.27	£1,958.58	£124.31	6.78%
Gravesham	£1,929.15		£29.43	1.53%
Dartford	£1,879.83		£78.75	4.19%
Maidstone	£1,992.87	£2,044.80	£51.93	2.61%
Sevenoaks	£1,942.20		£102.60	5.28%
Tonbridge & Malling	£1,936.49		£108.31	5.59%
Tunbridge Wells	£1,902.39		£142.41	7.49%

3.9 As demonstrated the current requirements to set a single band D council tax rate across an entire local authority area and the limitations imposed by council tax referendum requirements mean that differences in council tax rates could remain between new unitary authorities and the harmonising of council tax rates will mean that charges in some predecessor areas will rise by more than other predecessor areas.

4. Distribution of Social Care Clients

4.1 The responsibility for adult social care clients in new unitary areas will be determined according to ordinary residence principles. These are a long-established principles and apply to all adults whose care is commissioned in an area that is different from where they hold ordinary residence, including those whose services are governed by the Mental Health Act.

4.2 Where an individual is 'ordinarily resident' determines, which local authority is required to meet their eligible care and support needs under the Care Act. A local authority's duty to meet eligible needs also applies to those who are present in the area but are of no settled residence.

4.3 The concept of ordinary residence is not new or unique to the Care Act, nor indeed its predecessor the National Assistance Act 1948. The concept is not defined in the Care Act, although chapter 19 and annex H of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance 2014

(‘the statutory guidance’) are dedicated to the subject and there is a significant body of legal case law and Secretary of State determinations that are relevant to this issue.

4.4 In most cases, it will be obvious where an individual is ordinarily resident – and consequently which local authority is responsible for meeting the eligible social care needs of that individual. The issue of where an individual is ordinarily resident will usually arise when a person is moving or has moved from one geographical area to another.

4.5 Where there is a dispute about which authority is responsible – due to disagreement over where the individual is ordinarily resident – the end point is resolution by the Secretary of State for Health and Social Care. Regulations set out detailed guidance of the steps that a local authority must take in order to make such a referral. However, a formal referral to the Secretary of State should be the last resort

4.6 The majority of adult social care in Kent is managed across 24 community teams. These teams are co-terminus with district boundaries with either 1, 2 or 3 teams covering a district area. To give an indication of the impact of ordinary residence the 2024-25 spend across these community teams is shown as a % of the total spend in each district area in table 9. This is not a precise measure of ordinary residence but provides a good indication.

Table 9 – Proportion of Adult Social Care spend by District Area

	Share of OP (commissioned & staffing)	Share of YA (commissioned & staffing)
Ashford	7.87%	6.58%
Canterbury	9.94%	10.88%
Dartford	6.22%	3.47%
Dover	9.51%	11.39%
Folkestone & Hythe	8.42%	15.81%
Gravesham	4.14%	5.39%
Maidstone	10.46%	8.91%
Sevenoaks	7.35%	7.37%
Swale	8.64%	7.89%
Thanet	11.13%	9.10%
Tonbridge & Malling	7.86%	6.81%
Tunbridge Wells	8.46%	6.39%

4.7 To convert these to the unitary configurations these %s have been applied to the total KCC spend included in the Revenue Outturn (RO) return to central government with the equivalent RO spend for Medway added in. The resultant amount for new unitary configurations in table 10 have been shown as an amount per head of population and amount per band d equivalent tax base. These amounts are indicative to demonstrate disproportionate distribution of adult social care clients and costs.

Table 10 – Indicative Distribution of Adult Social Care

	Adult Social Care Spend per Head	Adult Social Care Spend Council Tax
1 Unitary	£392.96	£1,109.69
3 Unitary		
East Kent (5 districts)	£496.38	£1,436.11
North Kent (3 districts + Medway)	£315.27	£969.24
West Kent (4 districts)	£362.53	£908.65
4 Unitary (E,M,N,W)		
East (C, Do, Th)	£480.59	£1,431.30
Mid (A, F&H, Sw)	£452.38	£1,303.02
North (Da, G, My)	£307.92	£944.73
West (Ma, Se, T&M, TW)	£362.53	£908.65

4.8 Responsibility for children's services is not subject to the same principles of ordinary residence. For children's social care the authority where a child's family lives has the statutory responsibility for social care interventions. Thus, another local authority placing a child in care into the county is responsible for the social work case management and costs of social care for that child. The same principle would apply in under a reorganised area and the new unitary authority would be responsible for social care case management and care provision based on where their family lives. The education provision for looked after children with special needs is subject to separate "Belonging Regulations" and is not covered in the analysis in this report.

4.9 Table 11 shows the proportion of KCC spend on care and staffing for Kent children in each district area (this excludes spending to support unaccompanied asylum seeking children).

Table 11 – Proportion of Children’s Social Care Spend by District Area

	Share of Childrens (care & staffing)
Ashford	8.25%
Canterbury	9.58%
Dartford	7.12%
Dover	6.98%
Folkestone & Hythe	10.17%
Gravesham	7.88%
Maidstone	7.54%
Sevenoaks	4.05%
Swale	13.77%
Thanet	14.82%
Tonbridge & Malling	5.79%
Tunbridge Wells	4.06%

4.10 Following the same principles as adult social care to convert these to the unitary configurations these %s have been applied to the total KCC spend included in the Revenue Outturn (RO) return to central government with the equivalent RO spend for Medway added in. The resultant amount for new unitary configurations in table 12 have been shown as an amount per head of population and amount per band d equivalent tax base. These amounts are indicative to demonstrate disproportionate distribution of children’s social care.

Table 12 - Indicative Distribution of Children’s Social Care

	Childrens Social Care Spend per Head	Childrens Social Care Spend Council Tax
1 Unitary	£149.80	£423.03
3 Unitary		
East Kent (5 districts)	£163.30	£472.45
North Kent (3 districts + Medway)	£190.83	£586.66
West Kent (4 districts)	£84.25	£211.17
4 Unitary (E,M,N,W)		
East (C, Do, Th)	£164.10	£488.72
Mid (A, F&H, Sw)	£174.10	£501.46
North (Da, G, My)	£190.02	£582.98
West (Ma, Se, T&M, TW)	£84.25	£211.17

5. 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

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Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee 2025/26 Work Programme

3 NOVEMBER 2025	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Draft KCC LGR Business Case – for comment ahead of Key Decision	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• LGR technical process post-Business Case submission	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Work Programme	Standing Item

