

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 28 October 2021.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier, Miss S J Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford and Mrs S Prendergast

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

**17. Mrs Ann Allen, MBE**

*(Item )*

Members stood to observe a moment of silence in memory of Mrs Allen.

**18. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 1)*

Apologies were received from Mrs Bell.

**19. Cabinet Member Updates**

*(Item 3)*

1) The Leader read Mrs Bell's update:

Informed by a range of engagement events and co-production workshops earlier in the year, formal consultation on the new Adult Social Care Strategy 2022 - 2027 ran between 13 October and 24 October. The person-centred strategy summarises how it was planned to make changes over the coming years, focussed on putting the person first, improving and innovating across services, and measuring what matters. Contributions to the consultation were being evaluated and reviewed. A report on the feedback and the updated strategy was to be discussed at the Adult Social Care Cabinet Committee on 1 December.

Sunday 10 October was World Mental Health Day and to mark the occasion this year, KCC's Public Health team launched the Kent and Medway Listens project. The project aimed to uncover and explore the issues that were impacting on the mental health and wellbeing of communities across Kent and to create a multi-agency action plan. Contributions to the project could be made at [www.kent.gov.uk/kentandmedwaylistens](http://www.kent.gov.uk/kentandmedwaylistens)

Congratulations were given to the KCC Public Health team whose suicide prevention programme won the Suicide Prevention Services category at the recent National Mental Health Awards. This was a remarkable achievement and was testimony to the approach adopted in Kent which highlights initiatives to encourage multi-agency working.

Mrs Bell was delighted by the success of the Rethink Partners organisation who gained national recognition at the HealthTech Awards in September by winning the Major Project Go Live category. Rethink Partners together with Alcove delivered a £1.5million digital care project “Kara” on behalf of the council last year. By the end of July 2020, they had successfully equipped over 1,700 vulnerable and digitally disadvantaged adults in Kent with video ‘carephones’, so that they could talk to friends, family, carers and other professionals, via video, when they were unable to meet due to COVID-19 restrictions.

Princess Christian’s Farm in Hildenborough was to stay open under new management. A new provider, KASBAH (Kent Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus), had been awarded the contract to provide services to disabled people at the farm and they were to take over management of the service on 1 November. Thanks were given to those using the farm and their families. KCC had gone through the process of engaging a new provider and it was acknowledged it had been a worrying and unsettling time for many people. It was felt that Princess Christian's would go from strength to strength under its new management and Mrs Bell was looking forward to visiting the farm in the near future.

2) Mrs Chandler said that earlier in October, KCC had provided oral evidence to the Work and Pensions Committees inquiry into Children in Poverty: No Recourse to Public Funds, giving an account of Kent’s experience of assisting children and families subject to NRPF conditions, particularly those who were born in the UK. Kent’s evidence was presented by the Assistant Director for Integrated Children’s Services. The key areas addressed included discretionary welfare payments, the Household Support Fund and the challenges presented on how KCC would support NRPF through this fund. The burden placed on KCC’s Care Leavers was also addressed. Thanks were given to Penny Ademuyiwa, Assistant Director, for representing Kent County Council at the Select Committee and Mrs Chandler was looking forward to the seeing the outcome of that piece of work carried out by the Work and Pensions Committee.

It was National Carers Week and there were posts on KNet and on KCC’s social media pages which shared the views and experiences of our apprentices within the 18+ Care Leavers Service. A survey had been sent out to all the young adults KCC supported, to get feedback on their experiences. KCC needed to ensure that the utmost was being done to support young people in achieving the best possible outcomes as they move into independence.

On 1 November, it was the Regional Adoption Agency’s 1st Birthday. Adoption Partnership South East (APSE) was committed to timely decisions regarding ‘matching’ and securing permanence for children and during the last 12 months a significant number of adoptive homes for children within the South East had been secured, meaning children were kept close by and offered support directly both before and after the adoption order was granted. Adoption Partnership South East was supporting over 500 adopted children and their families either directly or indirectly and thanks were given to all teams involved, particularly the Participation & Engagement Team whose commitment to this work had been paramount.

The nominations for 2021’s Try Angle awards were open and were to close on 5 November. The Try Angle Awards recognised the outstanding efforts and

achievements of young people and groups who really tried their best whether at school, work, college, in business or in their wider community across Kent. Nominations could be made at the Try Angle Awards website.

Mrs Chandler attended the Kent Fostering, Foster Carer Award ceremony which was held on 13 October at Detling Showground which celebrated the achievements of foster carers and KCC staff for their outstanding contribution to the lives of our children and young people in care. Children, social workers, and other foster carers had put forward a record number of 204 nominations to a panel of judges who presented a total of 41 awards, including outstanding care of children, care of disabled children, keeping brothers and sisters together and permanency. Mrs Chandler expressed her gratitude for all our wonderful foster carers in Kent, and her pleasure in attending the awards to meet them and hear their stories.

Tribute was paid to Ann Allen who also attended the event. Ann worked tirelessly and selflessly as a corporate parent on behalf of Kent's most vulnerable children for many years and would be missed enormously.

3) Mrs Prendergast said that KCC had welcomed newly appointed headteachers - a first face-to-face meeting of this type since the lockdown. Mrs Chandler and Mrs Prendergast met just under 40 headteachers to talk about their roles and share their appreciation of the vital role head teachers play in the education of our children and young people. As part of a yearlong induction programme for new headteachers, Matt Dunkley – our Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education – the Directors of Education and other key staff shared some useful information about Kent, the education directorate structures, the key services and the wide range of support on offer to schools. The feedback from the headteachers was very positive.

A number of schools had expressed concern that defunding the International Baccalaureate Career Related Programme and the individual subjects would have a devastating impact on the provision of post-16 pathways and progression opportunities in schools offering these qualifications. Flexibility and a variety of pathways were considered important elements for post-16 education in the public sector - the implementation of the Careers Pathway and Diploma subject courses had been a model of collaboration between the County, schools, teachers and the awarding organisation - which was at risk if funding was removed from these programmes.

A joint letter had been sent to the Secretary of State, Nadim Zahawi, stating that whilst it was understood that government policy was to encourage the uptake of T-Levels, it was KCC's view that a more flexible pathway was still necessary for students who were uncertain of their future intentions at the age of 15/16 and were looking for programmes of study covering multiple pathways.

KCC had continued to offer support to schools around Covid measures to help mitigate the risk of children missing education. As schools returned following half term and in the runup to Christmas, KCC was to provide through various channels, guidance to Headteachers, reminding them about the DfE guidance and encouraging them to continue carrying out their own risk assessments to protect the school community.

4) Mr Brazier said that a Key Decision was to be enacted on 29 October regarding the publication and submission of a pre-settlement funding for Kent's bus services improvement plan to the Department for Transport (DfT). The Plan described in detail how bus services were to work, how they could be improved and what funding would be required. The funding that was sought was in excess of £200 million and it was not certain when the DfT's decision would be expected. It would have been convenient if this was before the draft budget was agreed, as the cost of the Kent Travel Saver and Supported buses had been included.

Public Transport has successfully bid to the DfT for £9.5 million funding For Zebra (Zero Emissions Buses Regional Areas) Programme to provide electric buses on the Thameside and future Dover fast-track bus networks.

The Kent Rail Summit was chaired by Mr Brazier on 20 October 2021 which was held online. At the Summit, there were updates on the Southeastern services, a presentation of Southeastern and Network Rail's improvements to stations in Kent including the new booking offices at Maidstone East and at Swanley. There was also a presentation by C2E, a campaign to extend the Crossrail line from its truncated terminus at Abbey Wood to Dartford, Ebbsfleet and ultimately to Gravesend. The intention was to open up substantial areas of the London Borough of Bexley and north west Kent to growth. There was a presentation from the Kent Community Rail Partnership regarding work underway to improve services and grow patronage on the lesser used lines in Kent.

Mr Brazier, Mr Murphy and Simon Jones were meeting with district councils, including Tunbridge Wells, Swale and Sevenoaks regarding cooperation, growth and partnership working.

Mr Brazier had visited the Sevington Inland Border Facility to meet Lord Agnew from the Cabinet Office and leaders of the various organisations; HMRC, Border Force, the Department for Transport and DEFRA.

5) Miss Carey said the Kent Downs and Heritage Coast had been selected as the fourth best region in the world to visit in 2022 by Lonely Planet, in their 'Best in Travel 2022 Guide'.

6) Mr Murphy said that on 15 October, the Broadband Team had given a briefing to Members and 44 Members had attended, with another 5 watching the recording after the event.

The Department of International Trade had announced 8 Kent business leaders and firms as 'export champions' as part of a national peer-to-peer network for companies looking to export. The firms were Fudge Kitchen, Kent Crisps, Beck & Pollitzer, TPS Global Logistics, the Great Outdoors Gym Company, AbBaltis and Tenterden Old Dairy Brewery.

The Kent Developers Contributions Team at KCC along with Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council and the company, Panattoni had finished Section 106 contribution negotiations which was to allow Panattoni to build up to 1.9 million square million feet of high-quality warehousing and distribution space on the vacant Aylesford newsprint site. Panattoni would also be funding the construction of a £7 million road link. They would also be assisting KCC to upgrade the local bus service for a further 5 years

and there would also be a contribution to a cycle scheme. Low and zero carbon technology was to be installed on the site.

The government had announced Levelling Up funding for: Ashford, Thanet and Medway which was total of £48.9 million.

7) Mr Hill said KCC's Country Parks team was celebrating the news that eight of its parks, one more than previously, had been recognised with the prestigious Green Flag Award. Parks and green spaces across the country were to raise their Green Flag Award with pride in a year when millions of people had seen the value of having great quality green spaces on their doorstep. The Country Parks were Shorne Woods, Lullingstone, Trosley, Teston, Manor Park, Brockhill, Pegwell Bay Country Parks and, new for this year, Grove Ferry Country Park, near Canterbury.

The Green Flag Award scheme, managed by environmental charity Keep Britain Tidy under licence from the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, recognised and rewarded well-managed parks and green spaces, setting the benchmark standard for their management across the United Kingdom and around the world. The eight Kent Country Parks were among the more than 2,000 sites across the country to collect the award for 2021.

The official opening of the Shorne Woods Changing Places Facility was on 14 October 2021. A similar facility was to be opened at Lullingstone and work was being done on getting another facility at a third Country Park.

7) Mr Sweetland said the Communications teams at KCC had been working on a campaign to highlight the 'twin' Public Health threats of Covid-19, Flu and other respiratory viruses and bugs.

Residents, staff, and vulnerable groups and individuals would be provided with information and advice on how to avoid Covid-19 and the other respiratory viruses and bugs that were common in cold weather.

KCC had worked with partners, including district councils, Kent Resilience forum and Kent Police to develop an information campaign which could be used to deliver simple, clear messages about what could be done to help stop the spread of Covid-19 and other diseases. If simple steps were taken, this would significantly reduce the strain on the care and health systems in Kent and Medway over the winter period.

Residents were to be encouraged to wear face coverings when inside public places. Although this was not mandated, it was known that masks helped to protect people from the transmission of airborne disease. KCC staff were required to wear face coverings when moving around the offices and public buildings as part of KCC's efforts to keep staff well, ensuring they could continue to deliver services to the public.

The KCC website was to be regularly updated with the latest information on how to stay safe. It was suggested that people meet up outdoors (or opened windows) when joining friends or family to celebrate Halloween, Fireworks Night or other events.

The information campaign was also to highlight the importance of communities working together – wearing face coverings, washing hands regularly, etc – to stop the spread of Covid-19 and protect key workers such as teachers and transport operators.

KCC was taking a number of steps to support Kent residents deal with the pandemic and its aftermath. Vulnerable people who needed access to support were advised to contact the Kent Together helpline on 03000 419292 or to visit the Kent Together page on the KCC website.

8) Mr Oakford said the announcements from the Spending Review had given better news than was expected but it was short of what was needed to offset the current budget pressures within KCC. It was estimated that an additional £20-30 million would come to KCC but there were additional pressures, for example, through the National Insurance increase and the increase in the National Living Wage. The referendum limit for council tax had not been increased. Further work was required to look at the detail of the various government department announcements.

## **20. Spending Review - Verbal Update**

*(Item 4)*

*Dave Shipton, Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy was in attendance for this item.*

1) Mr Shipton said that the government had announced the settlement for local government within the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities. KCC was to receive an additional un-ringfenced grant that could be used towards general budget spending pressures. The grant was to amount to £1.6 billion nationally in each of the next 3 years, £4.8 billion in total over the period. It was estimated that KCC's share of the grant would be £20-30 million per year but it had not yet been announced how the grant would be allocated. The grant could be built into the general budget and could be used towards closing the budget gap. It was noted that it would be the same amount in each of the 3 years and would not be increased to take account of further spending growth in 2023-24 and 2024-25.

Information was not yet available to clarify whether the grant would have to be used to fund spending increases or income losses imposed by other measures from within the Spending Review. For example, the measures included freezing the inflationary uplift on business rates for all businesses. Normally, local authorities retained 50% of the increase in business rates coming through the uplift and this went towards funding KCC's and Kent's district budgets. In usual circumstances, KCC would be compensated and it had been announced that authorities would be compensated but it was not clear if it was within the grant or on top of it.

It was anticipated that there would be a further announcement in the next few weeks about the grant allocation and what would need to be funded from the grant.

2) Mr Shipton said that the second announcement from the government was about additional funding for social care reforms. KCC was to receive a separate allocation from the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities towards social care reforms. In total, this was to amount to £3.6 billion over 3 years, nationally. Unlike the

un-ringfenced grant, this would be increased in incremental amounts: £0.2 billion in 2022-23, a further £1.2 billion in 2023-24 (taking the total to £1.4 billion) and a further £0.6 billion in 2024-25 (taking the total to £2.0 billion) and this was principally to do with the timings of the cap on the care costs for individuals due to come into force in October 2023, part-way through the 2023-24 financial year.

It had been estimated that KCC's share of the social care reform grant in the first year of allocation would be £4-5 million, reflecting that most of the costs in the first year would be preparation costs. It was estimated that this would then rise to £30-33 million in 2023-24 and then £42-47 million in 2024-25. These were estimated numbers as it had not been announced how grants would be distributed but the grant would need to fund the cost of the reforms, including the cost of limiting individual client contributions and the additional workplace pressures needed to implement the reforms. KCC was not able to forecast the full cost of reforms as more information was needed. Further government consultation was expected on the reforms in the coming months.

3) As part of the Department of Health and Social Care departmental funding settlement, a ringfenced grant was anticipated. A further £1.7 billion was to be made available to improve the wider social care system including the quality and integration of care. When the Social Care reforms had been announced, it had been indicated that £5.4 billion was to be made available to fund the reforms out of the National Insurance increase. The vast majority of the remainder of the National Insurance increase was to fund the backlogs in health services. £3.6 billion of the total £5.4 billion was to go into 'Levelling Up' and the remainder was to be a ringfenced grant for social care.

It had been outlined that at least £500 million of the grant would be used to improve qualifications, skills and wellbeing across the adult social care workforce.

It had been indicated that the general referendum threshold for Council Tax looked to be 2%. The adult social care precept was to allow a further 1% meaning a 3% increase in total. Confirmation of details would be in the provisional local government finance settlement.

The local government spending power document produced by central government indicated what would be in KCC's net budget and for local government as a whole, there would be annual increases in spending power. The local government spending power nationally in 2019-20 was £46.2 billion, which was raised to £49.1 billion in 2020-21 and £50.4 billion in 2021-22. In 2022-23, it was expected to increase to £53.7 billion.

The focus of the update was the core settlement but the department announcements were yet to be made and would give detail of any additional grants. It was unclear if spending demands would be met even though the settlement from government was better than expected. However, KCC's ability to raise funds through council tax was less than had been assumed. The challenge for 2022-23 would be to find savings or find ways to reduce spending pressures to close the budget gap.

Further to questions and comments, it was noted:

- The underlying settlement was similar to previous years but with more coming from grants and less from council tax. There were additional costs and pressures associated with the adult social care reforms. It was felt that the government had recognised that there were spending pressures for local authorities that were outside of their control.
- Concerns were raised that other areas in Kent would have benefited from funding in addition to the areas that had engaged in the competitive process and were awarded 'Levelling Up' funding.

4) Mr Oakford said that the headline news was good and the additional money through grants was welcomed but the 1% lower than anticipated from the social care precept would have to be covered from the grant as would the NI increase. There would be spending pressures within the directorates and these would need to be looked at very closely.

5) The update was noted.

## **21. Supporting Kent Residents Through the Covid-19 Pandemic and Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) - Support for Residents and Businesses (Item 5)**

*Lucy Alesbrook, Helping Hands Programme Manager was in attendance for this item.*

1) The Leader introduced the report and proposed that Agenda Items 5 and 6 be presented together. In the extraordinary circumstances created by the pandemic, one-off grants were given to KCC and work had been done to consider how to best use those grants to build a legacy and resilience for the future.

There had been various sources of funding and what started as the Winter Fund later became the Covid Local Support Grant and the latest incarnation was the Household Support Grant.

There had been £95 million Covid-19 grants in various tranches which covered a range of different support. KCC had launched the Helping Hands initiative which covered various areas but there had been four points of particular focus: low-income households and those in financial distress, business and the self-employed, digital poverty and exclusion and match-funding for crowdfunding of local projects. Close work had been undertaken with Kent Support and Assistance Service (KSAS), district and borough councils and the voluntary sector.

There was also the Contain Outbreak Management Fund which made an important contribution across a number of areas.

The Household Support Grant had to be spent by the end of the 2021-22 financial year and was worth £11 million to Kent. A quick decision was made as an officer decision under delegated authority regarding free school meals over October half term to ensure this was deliverable. Future arrangements through to spring of 2022 were forthcoming as part of an urgent decision.



The Leader had asked the Monitoring Officer to write to government regarding the timing of grant announcements and the way in which local government decision making processes are impacted in order to make full use of the grants.

2) Ms Alesbrook outlined the reports and presented the attached slides.

3) Members asked questions and the following points were noted:

- Work had been done by KCC with energy and water companies around poverty. It was hoped that there would be a change to energy provision and how services were delivered.
- Congratulations and thanks were given to Ms Alesbrook and others working on support for Kent residents. Local government at all levels had been successful at delivering at speed and ensuring funding reached families and businesses.

4) RESOLVED to note the reports, endorse the current and future programme of work for supporting Kent residents through the Covid-19 pandemic, endorse the proposed future use of the remaining grant and for Cabinet to receive updates as to how it is spent.

## **22. Kent County Council COP26 Environment Paper** (Item 7)

*Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director for Growth and Communities was in attendance for this item.*

1) Miss Carey introduced the report. KCC had aligned its work with the 4 key goals of COP26. The 26<sup>th</sup> Conference of Parties was to be held in Glasgow and had raised the profile of the environmental agenda. It was hoped that by aligning with the goals, significant progress could be made for Kent and for the planet.

2) Ms Holt-Castle said that work had been done to align and look at what areas KCC were taking forward in line with the 4 key objectives of COP26. Goal 1 of COP26 was focussed on the Net Zero agenda which had been discussed at the meeting of Cabinet in September 2021. Goal 2 of COP26 was around adaptation; KCC was a national leader in this area and had been shortlisted by the Local Government Chronicle (LGC) National Awards on Climate Response.

KCC had been invited to present to the government's Climate Change Committee – Adaptations Sub-Committee. KCC had made practical adaptations in response to the challenge of climate change and had engaged partners and public. There were 3 key areas of adaptation: methodology and analysis; application on the ground and different tools that partners could use - maximising the ability of everyone to look at adaptation.

The 3-pronged approach included Plan Bee – pollinator plan; Plan Tree and Natural Solutions to Climate Change. KCC was pioneering in having a Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment in 2019 as one of the first local authorities in England to have this assessment. The Climate Change Risk and Impact Assessment had been refreshed. It was thought that for Kent, climate change would result in warmer, wetter winters and hotter, drier summers. It was expected that extreme weather events would occur more frequently. As well as challenging impacts to Kent and Medway,

there would also be opportunities. There would be challenges in terms of the impact to agricultural land, changes to some of the crops, overheating in public buildings, habitat loss, flooding and disruption to travel. In terms of opportunities, it was expected that there would be decreased excess winter mortality amongst the elderly, reduced energy in buildings, longer growing seasons, increased soft fruit production and viticulture.

There was an adaptation programme across 7 key sectors: agriculture, natural environment, people and the built environment, local government, transport, industry and utility. A report was being taken to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee on 3 November 2021 and there would be a consultation in 2022.

The government had announced funding which would support work on climate change: sustainable transport, support for businesses to adopt low carbon technologies, decarbonisation of public buildings, grants for housing including social housing amongst other funding streams.

Work was being done with finance colleagues to understand the impact of the budget announcements on existing capital and revenue plans for meeting Net Zero and for climate change.

Partnership working was important for meeting the challenges of climate change. KCC worked with partners in the Kent and Medway Environment Group, which was chaired by Canterbury City Council.

Kent Green Action was KCC's public-facing campaign, which took all the strategies, analysis and tools and translated these for Kent individuals and communities so that they would feel inspired and empowered to play their part.

3) Members asked questions and the following points were noted:

- Concerns were raised that some of the most serious 'polluters' were not engaged and involved with COP26. Global impacts are driven by others but it was important for KCC to do everything possible to achieve Net Zero.
- Concerns were raised that not enough funding was forthcoming for school adaptations but it was noted that work helping schools to lower emissions had already been undertaken and had delivered good results.
- It was also noted that there were environmental champions whose role had been updated, work had been undertaken with developers and Kent Developers' Group and on the Kent Design Guide.
- Plan Bee and the Plant a Tree scheme had caught people's imaginations and had been very successful. There were challenges in assisting individuals to know how they were able to contribute and it was important to embed these concepts across the organisation.
- Further work around flood resilience was to be taken forward and it was noted there were implications for the KCC estate
- KCC had undertaken extensive work to reduce carbon emissions by 73% in the previous 10 years and was to be reduced by a further 40% by March 2022.

4) RESOLVED to note the report.



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# Cabinet

## 28 October 2021

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Strategic & Corporate Services –  
Strategy, Policy, Relationships and  
Corporate Assurance



Minute Item 21

# Impact of COVID-19

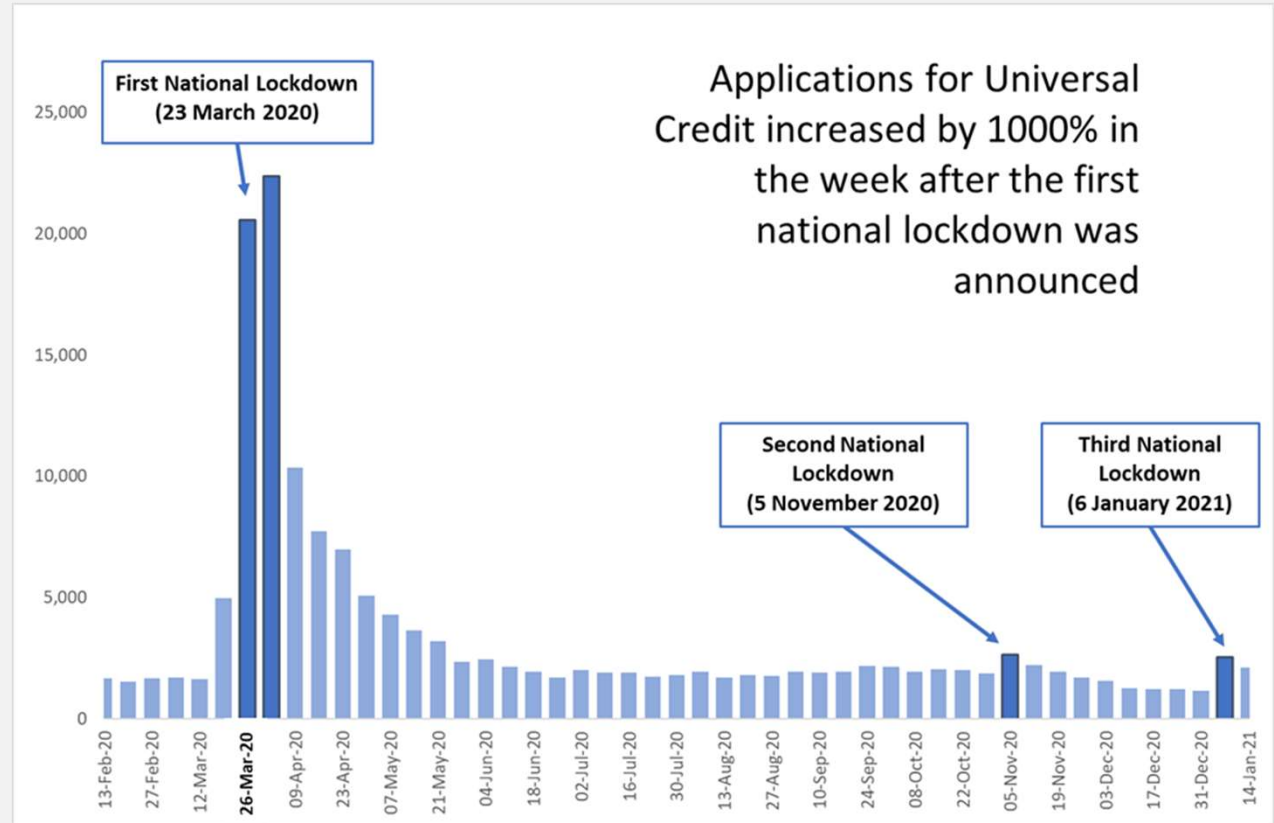


At the peak, more than 132,000 households in Kent relied on Universal Credit.

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Claimant rates are still double pre-pandemic levels.



- Kent Together is a helpline, **available 24/7 online or by phone**, that provides a single, convenient point of contact for Kent residents in urgent need of help during the pandemic.
- Launched on the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020, Kent Together has received over **6,300** referrals to date.

**Kent Together HELPLINE**  
**kent.gov.uk/kenttogether 03000 41 92 92**



- **In partnership with the local district hubs**, support offered at launch included food deliveries, collecting prescriptions, dog walking or a friendly chat for anyone feeling lonely.
- As the pandemic evolved the helpline provided additional areas of support including **financial and mental health and wellbeing advice**.
- Kent Together has been **promoted across Kent** through organic channels as well as print, radio, social media and a targeted leaflet drop.

Kent Together has received **6,300 referrals** for over **8,600 requests for support**.

Requests received by type from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2020 to 10 October 2021:

Support Requested	Total Requests	% of Total Requests
Basic tasks	600	7%
Energy	192	2%
Food	5,265	61%
Loneliness	531	6%
Prescriptions	1,859	22%
Something else	161	2%

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# Winter Grant Fund and Local Support Grant

## Winter Grant Fund

- Support for Families with Children - £4.9m
- Support for Families without children and individuals - £0.79m

**Estimated Number of people helped through Winter Grant Fund – 178,181 in Kent**

People helped through partnership work with utility companies – 3,720

## Local Covid Support Grant

- Support for Families with Children - £5.8m
- Support for Families without children and individuals - £0.26m

**Estimated Number of people helped through Local Covid Support Grant – 103,461**

## Free School Meals

- Through all grant funding received, approximately £2.9m has been spent on Free School Meals

# Current Climate

There are some key factors impacting financial hardship this Autumn:

- A higher **energy price cap** came into force from 1 October, with about 15 million households facing a 12% rise in energy bills
- The **Universal Credit uplift** (£20 per week) implemented during COVID-19 ended 6 October 2021
- **Furlough Schemes** came to an end 30 September 2021
- General increase in cost of living e.g food, fuel



# Helping Hands & Financial Hardship

**Residential**  
£4m

**Digital**  
£5m  
(£2.5m + £2.5m COMF)

**Business**  
£3m  
Economic  
Development

**Referrals**  
£28k (COMF)

**Data**  
£0.4m (COMF)

**#DigitalKent**  
Together improving digital inclusion and capabilities

**Crowd  
Funding**  
£0.5m

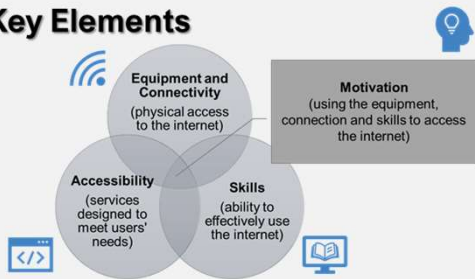
**ReferKent**  
Together delivering cohesive support

- Provided an additional **£50 reduction** for working age households already in receipt of discounts under Local Council Tax Reduction Schemes (in total £3.6m)
- **£2.4m** provided to increase local hardship funds to enable districts to help other households facing financial difficulty and struggling to pay council tax bills

# Helping Hands: Digital Inclusion & Capability



## Key Elements



## Key Barriers



## Key Principles



## Key Projects/Schemes



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# Helping Hands: Residential Schemes

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## Fuel Poverty

- Crisis Support Payments
  - Debt Advice
  - Training
- One-off item support

## Water Poverty

Work with providers to identify people in water poverty and provide support and access to services.

## Debt Advice

Linking residents to Debt Advice agencies to help provide support on managing debt.

## Underwritten Loan Scheme

Working with Citizens Advice Bureau and Kent Savers to provide underwritten loans to residents in high interest debt.

# Helping Hands: Referrals

- When the COVID-19 pandemic hit, many individuals were furloughed, lost their job or had to stay at home resulting in an increase in pressure on finances.
- Many organisations were sign-posting individuals to support – however, this is entirely reliant on the individual making onward contact.
- The referral workstream aims to strengthen referrals across Kent.

## Referrals Outputs



### Refernet

A robust online system that is safe and secure to send referrals through, replacing the need to sign-post.

### STP Website

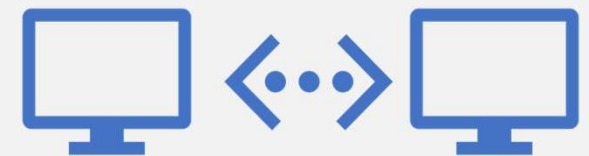
An online county-wide repository of information.

### MAN

The Money Advice Network service will link in with Refernet to offer financial support through advisors at no cost.

# Helping Hands: Data Sharing

- At both County and District level, support services often struggle to identify those at most risk before they enter into crisis.
- There is a need to understand individual financial circumstances and debt in a more complete way, as well as what social risks they may be vulnerable to because of this.
- Combining data from organisations enables Local Authorities to better refer and sign-post people, engage with residents in a more sensitive way, and intervene with targeted supported before people reach crisis.



# Support to Residents and Businesses via COMF



## Contain Outbreak Management Fund (COMF) Context

Prevent or contain the spread of COVID-19 and/or support those disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.

Total Funding £48.1m

Example initiatives that have been funded under the Contain Outbreak Management that have supported residents and businesses in Kent

### Support for Residents

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- 1,659 assistive technology devices distributed to enable vulnerable individuals to enable them to continue to connect with the world.
- £2.5m of funding to support residents with rent arrears that are in private rented accommodation and are at risk of eviction
  - 82,000 learning opportunities delivered through the Reconnect Programme
- Funding to districts to enable funding to be directed to foodbanks and to house their homeless communities.

### Support for Businesses

- Free COVID-19 Safe Training for Kent Businesses - 60 organisations trained. Opportunity for a further 975 organisations between now and 31<sup>st</sup> March 2022.
- 100 grants of up to £5k to the Creative, Cultural and Voluntary sector to adapt business models to support safe/alternative delivery.
- Funding to VisitKent to support the promotion and uptake of the 'We're Good to Go' mark
- Funding to Districts to support local efforts such as increased wardens to support businesses in enforcing COVID-19 legislation



# Next Steps

- We will use the Helping Hands scheme and Contain Outbreak Management Fund to continue supporting residents experiencing financial hardship and those disproportionately affected by Covid-19
- Subject to the formal key decision, we will maximise the use of the Household Support Fund to continue funding free school meals for eligible children in the school holidays, through to Easter and to help residents over the coming winter
- We will continue to work to deliver effective support to residents in financial hardship and build a sustainable legacy of community resilience

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