

From: Clair Bell, KCC Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 22 January 2025

Subject: Update on the implementation of the New Operating Model and Geographical Allocation Policy for the Community Warden Service

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Summary: The Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) delivered a planned reduction in base budget of £1m over 2023-24 and 2024-25. A public consultation in latter half of 2023 focussed on how best to redesign the service under these reductions. The service transformation is now near completion: staffing levels have been reduced to allow the savings target to be met; and the service has refocused and targeted its limited resources across Kent.

Recommendation(s): The Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and COMMENT on the progress made in implementing the new service model and geographical allocation policy, and delivering the savings required.

1. Background

- 1.1 As part of the Securing Kent's Future strategy and the Council's commitment to delivering the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) delivered a planned reduction in base budget of £1m over 2023-24 and 2024-25. A proposed model for the service to achieve the savings, and an Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) were subject to public consultation in the latter half of 2023.
- 1.2 The findings from the consultation were discussed by Members of the [Growth, Economic Development and Communities\(External link\)](#) (GEDC) Cabinet Committee on 18 January 2024 and at [Scrutiny Committee\(External link\)](#) on 7 February 2024. Following these meetings, the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services took the decision to implement a new service model and geographical allocation policy for the Kent Community Warden Service. Implementation has been taking place across 2024

2. Introduction

- 2.1 Prior to the new operating model and geographical allocation policy, KCWS had teams that covered all 12 districts in Kent, with wardens based in particular communities but also able to respond to wider need, enabling whole county coverage. The service was due a review of which communities wardens were

based in, which became of greater significance due to the reductions in budget and therefore size of the service.

2.2 The public consultation in 2023 focussed on how best to redesign the service under these reductions. It was subsequently agreed, and a commitment was made to:

- Retain the service's wide remit (variety of ways it supports residents and communities), providing a proactive service which enables prevention and early identification of issues.
- Retain its community-based proactive approach which is a key strength and highly valued aspect of the service¹.
- Retain a presence in all 12 districts that:
 - Reduces the number of uniformed wardens (70 to 38) and management posts (3 to 1), and retains the Business Coordinator².
 - Sets a minimum team size for each of six teams, that will each cover two districts.
 - Enhances team size (within the limit of 38 wardens overall) and thereby district coverage for districts with higher evidenced need, compared to other districts under and within the new model.
 - Allocates wardens to specific wards (ratio of 1 warden to 6000-12000 population) in each district where they will focus/target their work. Coverage of a whole district will no longer be possible.)
- Adopt a Geographical Allocation Policy (GAP) which will use data and indicators of need to identify:
 - Districts with higher need, informing which teams will be enhanced beyond the minimum of one Team Leader and three wardens.
 - Then, balanced by contextual/partner information, identify wards with highest need in each district to be prioritised for warden allocation.

3. Progress following February 2024's key decision

3.1 **New Operating Model** – In order to deliver the required savings, the KCWS was reduced from 70 wardens (CW) to 38 (including six operational team leaders (TL)); from three managers to one (an Operational Manager); and one Business Coordinator.

3.2 A staff consultation was required to allow the reduction in service size which ran from mid-February 2024 to mid-March 2024. Following feedback and amendments, a diminution exercise was undertaken with the subsequent notice periods running through into the summer of 2024.

3.3 **Team sizes** – The above enabled the new team sizes to be established and are now in place as follows:

¹ 87% of consultation respondents agreed with retaining the service remit, and 93% agreed with wardens being community based. ([Consultation report.](#))

² Retaining the Business Coordinator post allows efficient centralisation of administrative tasks, provides consistency, removes risk of duplication of efforts, and reduces administrative burdens upon frontline staff.

Teams	Recommended future staffing (Community Warden Full Time Equivalent posts - split between districts)
Ashford and Swale	1 Operational TL **, 6 CW (2.5 Ashford, 3.5 Swale)
Canterbury and Thanet*	1 Operational TL **, 7 CW (3.5 Canterbury, 3.5 Thanet)
Dartford and Gravesham	1 Operational TL **, 3 CW (1.5 Dartford, 1.5 Gravesham)
Dover and Folkestone & Hythe	1 Operational TL **, 8 CW (4 Dover, 4 Folkestone & Hythe)
Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling	1 Operational TL **, 5 CW (3.5 Maidstone, 1.5 Tonbridge & Malling)
Sevenoaks and Tunbridge Wells	1 Operational TL **, 3 CW (1.5 Sevenoaks, 1.5 Tunbridge Wells)
Total	38

*Teams with vacant posts at time of this paper. Recruitment is underway.

**TLs (Team Leaders) and wardens are on the same tier within KCC's reporting structure. All 38 formally report to the new, single Operational Service Manager post, with TLs having delegated duties to enable them to provide support and guidance to these remote teams and be a knowledgeable SPoC (single point of contact) for two districts.

- 3.4 **Adoption of GAP** – Following the key decision, the GAP, with its [indicators and information](#) was adopted and adjusted based on the public consultation feedback. Greater emphasis was placed on the indicators relating to the vulnerable and elderly, and rurality also factored in.
- 3.5 **Ward allocations** – Following the setting of the team sizes, final ward allocations utilising the GAP were established. The available warden resource within each district was allocated to areas where the need for the service was highest and where there was the potential to make the greatest difference, whilst remaining within the stated warden to population ratio. A series of communication activities then took place across the autumn of 2024 to inform affected Members, staff, parish and town councils, district and borough councils, and partners. Communications have been provided to give notice that warden coverage is either being withdrawn, maintained, or introduced.
- 3.6 **Transition to new areas** – The transition period for the service began in October 2024 following the communications mentioned above. A considered period of time was given to allow gradual moves of wardens from one area to another. The intention was to provide time for strategies to be developed and any handovers to be made with local partners where alternatives are required for any community activities and service users, alongside a gradual introduction and familiarisation with new areas. Activities during the transition period have included:

- linking residents into remaining support services where possible. Although KCWS is unique in its broad remit and community based approach, there may be services and facilities remaining which can each support certain aspects previously addressed by wardens. Such options are: community groups, GP surgeries, police officers from the rural police taskforce, parish councils, community/voluntary services, and Kent Fire and Rescue service.
- addressing issues to point of completion before the warden departs.
- supporting residents to access grants from District and Borough Councils.
- establishing bases, networks and priorities for any new areas.

The aim is for these transitions to have completed this month.

3.7 The final list of allocations can be found in Appendix A.

3.8 **Alternative funding** – At GEDCCC previously, a strong view was made by Members that they would not wish for the service to be reduced. The Committee recognised the value of KCWS alongside the financial challenges. It was asked if alternative funding could be found. Various avenues (such as the Police, Public Health, Parishes, Adult Social Care) were explored and presented at the time, however no viable options that would significantly offset the savings required within the timescales needed were found.

3.9 The new model for the service was designed to be scalable so that, if resources became available, the council could look again at its provision. During the course of the work to allocate wardens to teams and communities, it became apparent that some parish and local councils would welcome the opportunity to explore the possibility of retaining, or introducing a Community Warden in their area using their own funding sources to resource this. This led to the service developing two potential models for those councils to consider; a direct employment model and a sponsorship type model. The Group Head of Community Protection along with the Head of Community Safety has been actively liaising with local councils, KALC, and KCC Members to raise awareness, share further details and consider practicalities of these models for specific areas/scenarios. An event for all KALC members is being planned for January 2025 to further promote the opportunity and answer any questions about the models. To date, 23 parish and town councils have enquired after these models and several discussions are ongoing.

3.10 **Securing Kent's Future** - In 2023, Cabinet considered 'Securing Kent's Future (SKF) – Budget Recovery Strategy'³. This report set out the Council's strategy for achieving both in-year and future year savings to achieve a more sustainable financial position for the Authority and set out new strategic objectives focused on putting the Council on a financially sustainable footing. This included making one of the four objectives set out within Framing Kent's Future⁴ a priority: delivering New Models of Care and Support

³ [Securing Kents Future - Budget Recovery Strategy.pdf](#)

⁴ [Framing Kent's Future - Our Council Strategy 2022-2026](#)

- 3.11 Delivering the £1m saving through implementation of the new KCWS service model supports SKF Objective 1: Bringing the budget back into balance. The new service model also supports Objective 2 which includes opportunity areas to reduce future costs. Those relevant to KCWS work are ASCH social care prevention, as the service receives referrals from ASCH (302 referrals from ASCH were received by KCWS in FY 23/24) and is placed in communities to enable early identification of needs. Further detail of KCWS work relating to ASCH is detailed in 7.2. The second relevant opportunity area is the hospital discharge pathway as KCWS receives referrals to support those recently discharged from hospital (In FY 23/24 KCWS received 163 referrals from the Health Sector including hospitals and GPs).
- 3.12 The new KCWS service model also supports the prioritised New Models of Care and Support objective which includes the commitment to “work within the system to ensure a strong focus on preventative community services”. The other three objectives of Framing Kent’s Future, though not prioritised by SKF, are identified as remaining important and are areas where work should continue where possible. This includes ‘Infrastructure for Communities’ and the commitment to “Work with civil society and other partners to find ways to tackle social isolation and loneliness, including ‘social prescribing’ to community groups and activities that help people connect with others, building upon the successes of the Connected Communities project and through our Community Wardens, targeting them where they are most needed.”
- 3.13 It is important to note that the service undertakes front-line activity which supports other council duties (community safety, emergencies, severe weather etc) and council services as outlined in section 7 of this paper. The new service model therefore allows this work to continue, albeit on a smaller scale, targeting areas of greatest need. The council also has the ability to build upon the service with potential income or investment in the future.
- 3.14 In addition to the contribution KCWS makes to these local strategies through its uniquely broad remit and community place-based approach, the wardens service also aligns to Government’s priorities described in their [Plan for Change](#). The service’s focus on prevention and early intervention supports the aims relating to the NHS, and the significant focus the service has on community safety supports the Safer Streets priority. KCWS recorded 3,726 crime prevention, anti-social behaviour and environment related tasks (31% of all KCWS work) for the FY 23/24.

4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The £1m saving was originally agreed as part of the 2023-24 budget in February 2023 and saw the base budget reduced by £500k in 2023/24 and a further £500k reduction in 2024-25. Initially, and as a result of the 12 week consultation period, the new structure was delivered a little later than planned but existing vacancies, as well as new vacancies arising from resignations once the review of the service was announced, meant that the 23/24 £500k was still delivered but clearly this was unsustainable and the fundamental change in the operating model as outlined in 2.2 was required.

- 4.2 The agreed approach has allowed the service to deliver £1.06m of gross savings in a timescale which accounted for consultation and governance requirements as well as pension obligations of approximately £161k.
- 4.3 The pension obligations which have been smoothed utilising the general KCC reserve, will enable the service to account for the costs over the next three financial years when the full £1.06m will be realised. Redundancy costs totalling just over £58k have been met by the central KCC Workforce Reduction Fund.

5. Legal Implications

- 5.1 KCWS was set up as part of the County Council's response to the statutory responsibilities under the **Crime and Disorder Act 1998** (amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006). Section 6 of the 1998 Act requires the responsible authorities (commonly referred to collectively as a Community Safety Partnership (CSP)) in a local government area to work together in formulating and implementing strategies to tackle local crime and disorder in the area. Additionally, [Section 17](#) places a duty on local authorities to consider crime and disorder implications for all their functions and decisions. To achieve all that can be reasonably expected with a reduced KCWS we incorporated partner information such as that from policing partners, within the KCWS GAP. Final allocations have also been shared with partners such as police and districts. This is to support making the best use of our resources and continuation of partnership working.
- 5.2 Under the **Care Act 2014** KCWS's broader role in communities contributes to delivering KCC's duties under [Section 1 Promoting individual well-being](#) (which places the general duty on a local authority to promote individual well-being), and [Section 2 Preventing needs for care and support](#) which states that a local authority must have regard to;

2 a - the importance of identifying services, facilities and resources already available in the authority's area and the extent to which the authority could involve or make use of them in performing that duty.

2 b – the importance of identifying adults in the authority's area with needs for care and support which are not being met (by the authority or otherwise).

Additionally, KCWS contributes to duties under [Section 42 Enquiry by local authority](#) - Although KCWS may not be part of a formal enquiry, they are often asked by ASCH (and others) to engage with adults for whom there are concerns. KCWS are then able to either a) quell concerns (putting in prevention measures where appropriate) or b) confirm concerns, supporting ASCH in their triaging and resource allocation. 6,139 tasks were recorded as relating to safeguarding of vulnerable people between April 2023 and mid-January 2024 (full FY data not currently available due to system changes).

The service's work in relation to safeguarding has been recognised at a national level. [National Safeguarding Adults Board Excellence Awards](#) were won in 2023, and a further two in November 2024, recognising the excellent and valuable work of the team.

To achieve all that can be reasonably expected with a reduced KCWS, the service worked with KCC partners to inform the KCWS GAP. Specifically the indicators were discussed with ASCH Assistant Directors and Area Managers and the new allocations for wardens have been shared with ASCH to support the continuation of the referral pathway between ASCH and KCWS. Further detail of KCWS work relating to ASCH is detailed in 7.3

6. Equality Implications

- 6.1 Four groups; the elderly; females; people with a disability or long-term impairment; and those with carer's responsibilities were identified as being more adversely impacted by the changes of the final recommended service model as they represent the majority of the wardens' current service users. The [impact assessment](#) was previously published.
- 6.2 Our plans to take into account information from key partners as part of the GAP contributes to mitigating cumulative adverse impacts.
- 6.3 Mitigations are described in the EqIA. Whilst the service will seek to minimise the adverse impacts of the changes, they cannot be eliminated.

7. Other corporate implications

- 7.1 **Community Safety** – The KCWS provides an operational response to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 in working in partnership to address the causes of Crime, Disorder and Anti-Social Behaviour. KCWS recorded 3,726 crime prevention, anti-social behaviour and environment related tasks (31% of all KCWS work) for the FY 23/24. In addition to this, the KCWS proactively supports the work of Children, Young People and Education through work with schools, colleges, youth groups and the younger residents in the communities served. Wardens deter anti-social behaviour and provide prosocial modelling for adolescents⁵.
- 7.2 **Trading Standards (TS)** – In 22-23 the wardens carried out 867 visits, engaging with scam victims. This is significant work, as victims require at least 2 visits, with follow up work through Social Services and other support networks. The time taken to deal with these victims is estimated at over 5,000 hours or 140 weeks. TS relies on additional capacity from the KCWS to deal with this large number of visits which helps prevent the elderly population becoming or continuing to fall victim to financial abuse. During 23-24, TS adjusted processes in light of the significant period of change and reductions to KCWS, reducing demand by requesting warden visits for only one of the two categories of scam victims who used to be referred on to KCWS. In response TS has had to increase their resource in this area, and switched to contact by letter rather than visits in some cases. Unfortunately this has been necessary due to the limitations being worked within. The consequences of people being defrauded

⁵ <https://www.scie-socialcareonline.org.uk/transforming-behaviour-pro-social-modelling-in-practice/r/a11G00000017zZ5IAI>

in their own homes are that they are 2.5 times more likely to either die or go into residential care within a year⁶.

7.3 Adult Social Care and Health – Various partners noted the importance of wardens being a frontline service, and that their client facing approach allows early identification, a quick response and development of trust. District councils particularly value the wardens being able to link into social care for their residents. Wardens are often called upon to support ASCH through welfare visits and engagement with hard-to-reach residents. In FY22/23, KCWS undertook 602 tasks originating from ASCH. 61% of these were dealt with by KCWS with no onward referral required. KCWS also made 255 referrals to ASCH that year from identifying issues within the community or from other agency interactions, supporting the duty in Section 2, 2b of the Care Act 2014.

7.4 Public Health – Wider determinants of health such as loneliness and social isolation are of importance to Public Health. In 2018, KCC launched a select committee on loneliness and social isolation. They recognised that Community Wardens were already addressing this issue. Following the height of the pandemic, ‘Positive Wellbeing’, a social prescribing service was launched and a pilot delivered by a small cohort of Community Wardens as part of the EU funded Connected Communities project. An evaluation undertaken by the University of Essex found that there were statistically significant reductions in loneliness and aspects of isolation, along with statistically significant improvements in aspects of wellbeing and feelings of trust for participants that the Community Wardens worked with^{7,8}. The Positive Wellbeing model is now embedded across the wider service with wardens continuing to support residents through the structured intervention to increase their social connections, allowing this impact of the service to be measured. The service is also linked in to support Public Health’s recent Stop Smoking campaign which aims to increase the numbers of residents making the commitment to quit.

7.5 Emergency Planning – Wardens have been called upon to be part of the response to various circumstances over the years and across the county. Floods, water outages, severe weather, landslides, road incidents, the pandemic. They have provided both practical support such as carrying out Covid-19 variant surge testing, as well as humanitarian support, reaching out to manage concerns, provide reassurance and make sure the most vulnerable are informed and able to access available support.

8. Governance

8.1 The Director of Growth and Communities to continue to inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation.

8.2 County Council agreed to reducing the base budget by £1m in February 2023. A Cabinet Member key decision was required, and taken in February 2024, to

⁶ https://www.ageuk.org.uk/globalassets/age-uk/documents/reports-and-publications/reports-and-briefings/safe-at-home/rb_oct17_scams_party_conference_paper_nocrops.pdf

⁷ <https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/documents/s121610/Positive%20Wellbeing%20Pilot%20Service%20Report.pdf>

⁸ [UoEPWEvaluationKentFinal.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/media/121610/UoEPWEvaluationKentFinal.pdf)

enact the service transformation given the impact was over 1m and affects more than two electoral divisions.

9. Conclusions

- 9.1 KCC's financial circumstances have resulted in planned budget reductions to KCWS. These could only be implemented following public and staff consultations on the proposed changes and full equality impact analysis.
- 9.2 The service transformation is now near completion: staffing levels have been reduced to allow the savings target to be met; and the service has refocused and targeted its limited resources across Kent in a fair and consistent manner. Transitions under the geographical allocation policy are being completed, and there now needs to be a period of time for the service to fully establish itself into any new areas. The new service operating model and GAP implementation has not been without its difficulties and the service is all too aware that this has had and will have an impact on our staff, partner agencies and some communities across Kent. It is clear that the service is highly valued by partners and communities alike and as a result, the service has been responding to a number of communications from a wide variety of sources on the matter. However we are confident that the GAP as described at para 3.4 and consulted upon as described at para 2.2 remains a strong and impactful delivery model within the resource envelope available, and one that, as described at 3.9 can be readily scaled up.
- 9.3 GEDCCC is asked to consider and comment on the progress made in implementing the new service model and geographical allocation policy, and delivering the savings required.

10. Recommendation(s):

- 10.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and COMMENT on the progress made in implementing the new service model and geographical allocation policy, and delivering the savings required.

11. Contact details

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