

From: Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport
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To: Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 17 July 2025

Subject: Kent County Council – Introduction to Highways and Transport Division

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: n/a

Future Pathway of report: n/a

Electoral Division: All Divisions

Summary: The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview and introduction to the Highways and Transport division, one of three divisions in Kent County Council's Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate. The Highways and Transport service manages, operates, upgrades, modifies and builds local roads which represent the most extensive and valuable asset group at KCC. Alongside this, it undertakes work to facilitate provision of vital public transport services – particularly concerning bus services and schools transport which directly serves a customer base of over 250,000 people.

Recommendation(s): The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Highways and Transport (H&T) division manages the third largest local road network in Britain (behind only Norfolk and Devon, both of which have half the population of Kent), consisting of over 5,400 miles of highway. It provides the backbone for movement in the county. Numbers of specific highway assets run into the hundreds of thousands – over 240,000 drains, 125,000 streetlights, 196,400 unlit road signs, amongst many others. The total asset base is valued at £25bn. Safety is at the core of the division's activities to operate, maintain and improve the network.
- 1.2 KCC's responsibilities under the Highways Act 1980 give it a range of powers to influence journeys on the network. KCC must also work to fulfil a Network Management Duty set out in the Traffic Management Act 2004, with the objective of securing the expeditious movement of traffic on its road network whilst also facilitating this on the networks managed by neighbouring highway authorities (Medway, East Sussex, etc. and also the motorway and trunk road network managed by the government owned company, National Highways).

- 1.3 Alongside its responsibilities as a Local Highway Authority, the division is responsible for carrying out the Council's role as the Local Transport Authority. This means the division is responsible for considering how it can improve all parts of the transport mix aside from managing its highway assets. The service therefore has dedicated functions concerning bus services and officer expertise concerning rail. The government ensures that Local Transport Authorities set out their plans within a statutory Local Transport Plan under the Transport Act 2000 and later amended by the Local Transport Act 2008. KCC developed a new Local Transport Plan, called [*Striking the Balance*](#), in 2023-2024 and adopted it in December 2024.
- 1.4 An All-Member Induction briefing was delivered on 23 May 2025 about the H&T division's group of services. Members are recommended to read the H&T Operational Delivery Plan for 2025-26, which details the actions and specific areas of focus for the service this year and beyond. The focuses for the service are:
- Enhanced asset management
 - Sustainable and active travel promotion
 - Improving connectivity and accessibility
 - Safety and security
 - Resilience and adaptation
- 1.5 The diverse and extensive statutory functions that the H&T division manages day-to-day means that this Committee receives a wide range of reports, from commercial / contractual procurement to capital project approvals, policy decisions, service operations and more.
- 1.6 H&T comprises four service groups and each is introduced further in the remaining sections of this paper:
- Highways Asset Management
 - Transportation
 - Public Transport
 - Business Performance and Systems Services
- 1.7 It is important to note that whilst the Public Rights of Way network provides an essential network connecting with the KCC highway network, the Public Rights of Way network is managed within the Growth and Communities division.
- 1.8 The H&T division also has interfaces with other services across the Growth, Environment and Transport directorate, such as the Strategic Planning and Infrastructure function on responding to strategic planning applications, the Public Rights of Way teams concerning improving the walking and cycling network, with the Environment team on aspects such as drainage and electrification/charging infrastructure for the vehicle fleet, and with Economic Development on maximising economic growth through transport infrastructure projects.

2. Highways Asset Management

- 2.1 The purpose of the Highways Asset Management service is to inspect, repair, and maintain KCC's highways to keep them safe and provide the best highway service it can to Kent's residents, visitors, and businesses. The service co-ordinates activities on the highway to minimise disruption to road users whilst facilitating the work needed by utility companies to both repair their assets and provide new connections to new development. The service balances asset management principles, local operational needs, and available resource. It is a large undertaking given the size of Kent, and so the service works by area when necessary and also by key asset groups e.g. Streetworks West, Canterbury Highway Manager, Street Lighting Planned Works, etc.
- 2.2 **Highways and Streetworks:** Highways and Streetworks, split between west and east Kent teams, manages highway maintenance including pothole repairs, winter services (e.g. gritting), business continuity and out-of-hours response, and coordinates works on the highway network by KCC and third parties. It oversees asset maintenance (signs, lines, dropped kerbs), inspects and enforces street works by third parties (e.g. utilities), handles road closures, traffic management permits and roadworks coordination. Highway Stewards support these activities on-site across the local network.
- 2.3 **Street Lighting:** Manages the maintenance and upgrade of over 122,500 existing streetlights. The team works to ensure that streetlights assets are protected when other works take place around them (given their safety critical role for all road users). They manage the approvals and adoptions process for street lighting where it is delivered by third parties e.g. by developers.
- 2.4 **Structures:** Manages a diverse range of structures from medieval bridges to modern tunnels, including 1,100 bridges / viaducts, two tunnels and an underpass, 570 large culverts, along with other smaller structures. The team plans and commissions maintenance and renewals, and undertakes inspections to monitor the condition of the asset. The team ensures the assets are protected during works by KCC or third parties, including on adjacent land. An important safety critical role is the monitoring of tunnels, such as fire and ventilation systems.
- 2.5 **Drainage:** The team manages over 275,000 drains, 41,250 chambers / manholes, 3,850 miles of gullies, 8,500 soakaways, 250 attenuation ponds and lagoons, 15 pumping stations and 346 small culverts. As with other asset management teams, the Drainage team plans and commissions the maintenance and renewals activity, inspects and monitors their condition over time and ensures that the assets are protected from third party works on the highway. They also approve the design and delivery of new drainage assets whether by KCC or others.
- 2.6 **Soft Landscape:** Due to Kent's extensive and largely rural road network, KCC Highways manages a vast soft landscape estate, including over 3.2 million m² of urban grass verges and 572,000 m² of conservation verges – together equivalent to over 500 Wembley pitches, along with 4,600 km of rural verges. The network also includes more than 500,000 trees. The team works to protect these assets when works occur around the highway. These green assets

support biodiversity, enhance street environments, and help protect roads from extreme weather.

- 2.7 **Strategic Asset Management:** This team leads the Highways Asset Maintenance Plan (HAMP), which defines maintenance priorities and long-term goals, and are custodian of the Resilient Road Network (routes critical to keeping Kent moving during disruptions). This aids maintenance programming and prioritisation. The team maintains the definitive inventory of KCC highway assets and manages the Highway Gazetteer (the official list of adopted and unadopted roads, footways and cycle routes in the county). The team manages the ongoing programme of road and footway renewal and preservation work (such as resurfacing or surface dressings), leads on resolving highway collapses, and also conducts safety inspections and handles insurance claims. It manages the Technical Approval Process (TAP), which provides consistent structured processes for asset managers to ensure that designs for changed or new assets, by both KCC and third parties, are designed to KCC standards.
- 2.8 **Highways Commercial Operations, Contract Commissioning:** Managing such an extensive local road network and all its assets means managing a diverse range of commercial contracts for commissioning services and works to the highway. This function oversees the procurement and commissioning of these contracts (e.g. the Highways Term Maintenance Contract, the Traffic Systems Asset Maintenance Contract, the Highways Condition Services contract etc.), including the day-to-day systems used by officers in their roles. The function also supports officers across other parts of Highways and Transport associated with supplier support such as through the Professional Services Contract.
- 2.9 The Highways Asset Management service works closely with officers across the other functions of H&T, given many projects arise from Transportation and Public Transport that require implementation of changed or new assets on the local road network.

3. **Transportation**

- 3.1 The purpose of the Transportation service is to plan and improve KCC's highway network to help the Kent economy to grow and to ensure that it is as safe and efficient as possible. This means the service has both some important day-to-day operational responsibilities but also has a critical role to play in longer term management and performance of the road network. For example, this includes large scale improvements, such as major new roads, that may take several years to plan, design and deliver. Many of the functions bid for funding from government or other sources when opportunities arise, for both revenue and capital funding.
- 3.2 **Traffic Operations and Technology:** This team manages the design, operation, and maintenance of 360 signalised junctions, 420 pedestrian crossings, 400 electronic signs, and 190 CCTV units. They also run the Kent Highways Network Control Centre, coordinating real-time responses to incidents and liaising with National Highways. It keeps the public informed via Variable Message Signs and the KCC Highways social media feed, followed by 83,000 users. To improve traffic flow and reduce delays to support KCC fulfil its Network Management Duty, the team leads signal optimisation projects across the network.

- 3.3 **Traffic Management:** This team fulfils KCC's statutory duties under the Traffic Management Act 2004, setting policy and guidance for using legal powers to manage and enforce highway rules, as outlined in the Network Management Plan. It oversees enforcement of Moving Traffic Violations (e.g. yellow boxes, bus gates), manages appeals, and supports district-led parking enforcement. It also maintains the Kent Transport Model for assessing network performance and future planning. The Network Innovations part of the wider team leads delivery of Electric Vehicle (EV) charging infrastructure using government funding.
- 3.4 **Major Capital Programmes (MCP):** This team develops and delivers high value projects (typically above £3m in value) to change the highway or deliver new roads and other transport infrastructure. This includes the whole process from initial feasibility, through detailed design, seeking planning consent, preparing Compulsory Purchase Orders (where necessary) to procuring contractors and overseeing delivery. Examples of major schemes that currently in progress are the upgrade to the A229 Blue Bell Hill, the North Thanet Link road scheme, the A249 Grovehurst junction improvements, and Dover Fastrack, amongst others. The function also works with and assures third party transport infrastructure proposals, and bids for funding when KCC is involved due to a need for public funding (e.g. government grants) via the Local Transport Authority.
- 3.5 **Transport Strategy:** Sitting within the MCP, the team prepares the statutory Local Transport Plan (LTP) and forms the pipeline of major projects to support the MCP, including bidding for external funding. The team provides the interface with the planning and development functions at National Highways, and Network Rail and Southeastern Trains, and with the Department for Transport (e.g. concerning international rail). The team represents KCC on transport Nationally Significant Infrastructure Projects (such as Lower Thames Crossing, Gatwick Northern Runway, etc.) and makes representations on behalf of KCC concerning policy and proposal consultations by government or neighbouring authorities (e.g. the Mayor of London). The function represents KCC at an officer level on the region's sub-national transport body, Transport for the South East.
- 3.6 **Road Safety and Active Travel Group:** This large team covers a broad range of services using the Local Transport Grant funding received from government. This includes the delivery of smaller highway improvement schemes, crash remedial measures for sites performing badly for road safety, and also active travel schemes.
- 3.6.1 **Highways Improvements:** This is split into East and West teams to align with the Highways and Streetworks and Development Planning services. It delivers sub-£3m capital road network changes such as safety schemes, crossings, roundabouts, and new layouts. It also manages capital delivery of walking and cycling (Active Travel) projects funded by government. The team works with Parish Councils concerning their development of Highways Improvement Plans (HIPs). This provide Parishes with the opportunity to propose evidence-based local changes, such as speed limits and traffic calming.

3.6.2 Active Travel Kent: This team plans and designs walking and cycling schemes, working with district councils through Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) and delivering cross-district routes via the county-wide Kent Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan (KCWIP). As the Local Transport and Highway Authority, KCC secures funding and implements schemes. The team also supports Parish-led Highways Improvement Plans (HIPs), runs school crossing patrols, and delivers training for cyclists and pedestrians.

3.6.3 Safer Roads, Intelligence and Behaviour Change: This sub-group of teams leads KCC's road safety strategy (called Vision Zero) and delivery of the Crash Remedial Measures programme that delivers c. 400 new highway improvements each year due to the personal injury collisions that are taking place. They manage road safety and behaviour change programmes, such as safer driving for fleets and large vehicles. The function engages with communities using publicity and media campaigns, targeting their work on particular vulnerable or higher risk groups such as school age children, young adults, etc. They manage driver education training (commonly known as the Speed Awareness course). They use data collection and analytics to drive innovation, trialling new ways of diagnosing and treating road safety risks.

3.7 Development and Transport Planning: This team is split into East and West and delivers a statutory service to review over 4,000 planning applications annually. Their remit is to focus on impacts to the local highway network and connectivity via sustainable transport. They incorporate input from across the H&T service, including bus and rail. The advice given is as a consultee to the Local Planning Authority (the district and borough councils across Kent), who ultimately decide on whether to grant consent or not (in some instances, KCC is the Planning Authority – such as with new schools – or it may be a government decision if Nationally Significant Infrastructure – such as the Lower Thames Crossing – or a strategic planning application called in by the Secretary of State). The team helps to shape district Local Plans by advising the Local Planning Authorities on required transport assessments to establish mitigations for inclusion in development site planning policies. The team ensures transport assessments are robust and publishes guidance to support this. They also contribute evidence to planning inquiries related to both Local Plans and applications.

3.8 Development Agreements: This team deals with developers once they have received planning permission. New developments frequently need to undertake works to connect to or improve the local road due obligations and conditions in their planning permission. Developers can enter into contract with KCC to carry out works to the road network using an instrument within the Highways Act 1980 called a section 278 agreement. These agreements remove the burden of delivery from the KCC, whilst also securing commitments to ensure works are delivered to KCC's standards before adoption as public highway. Similarly, the team manages section 38 agreements, which are specific to adoption of entirely new roads constructed by developers.

4. Public Transport

- 4.1 The purpose of this service is to help enable access to education, health and community services for diverse users across Kent, through the planning, procurement and management of public transport services. Its functions arise from both KCC's role as the Local Transport Authority, which gives it responsibilities in respect of local bus services, and from KCC's role as a provider of education and social care services which have a need for the safe transport of their customers.
- 4.2 KCC does not run any bus services directly but has an important role to play with respect to a number of public transport issues. This includes school transport, concessionary fares, bus stop infrastructure and working with private operators to support the commercial network as far as possible for the benefit of Kent's residents (e.g. by extending services into the evening or supporting services on part of a route).
- 4.3 As the Local Transport Authority, KCC has been in receipt of government funding to administer the Bus Service Operators Grant, which is used to support local bus services, along with funding to deliver its Bus Service Improvement Plan, which was a requirement of the government's National Bus Strategy.
- 4.4 Like some other authorities in the country, KCC also manages some specific transport services and the commercial contracting of these to private sector operators. In Kent this has included both parts of the local bus network (e.g. Fastrack) and, previously, ferry services (e.g. Gravesend to Tilbury).
- 4.5 **Public Transport Planning and Operations:** This team manages the Bus Service Improvement Plan (BSIP), which KCC receives government revenue and capital grants for. They work closely with bus operators in the county through Enhanced Bus Partnerships, which are agreements between KCC and the bus operators in a particular area (currently East, West and Thameside area in Kent). These partnerships set out how working together will deliver the objectives of the BSIP. The team commissions other H&T services, such as the Network Management Team or Major Capital Programme Team, to deliver bus priority schemes and enforcement of bus priority measures, such as bus gates. The team manages supported services and Bus Services Operators Grant (BSOG) and also issues c. 275,000 concessionary bus passes annually for school pupils, elderly and disabled residents. The function is also responsible for ferry service support, supports the Community Transport sector and manages KCC's own Community Transport service called Kent Karrier.
- 4.6 **Fastrack Development Management:** This team manages the two Kent Fastrack network contracts, one in the north Kent Thameside area (between Dartford and Gravesend) and the other in Dover, operated by companies Go-Ahead and Stagecoach. This includes monitoring performance, understanding user concerns and suggestions for the network, and working with stakeholders to understand how the service needs to grow and adapt to meet the needs of users. The team also explores how the Fastrack networks can continue to be improved in terms of the highways infrastructure so that services can remain reliable and fast.
- 4.7 **Client Transport Operations and Planning:** This team address the needs of customers in travelling to schools and colleges. If a child is a certain distance

from their nearest age and ability appropriate school, they can receive free transport. Services are also provided for Special Educational Needs (SEN) students, those eligible (c. 850 customers) in children and adult social care and c. 1,500 unaccompanied asylum seeking children. This team commissions the large number of public transport supplier contracts to provide these statutory entitlements to customers. Approximately 14,000 students receive these services.

- 4.8 **Public Transport Business Management:** Given the volume of customers receiving public transport support, there are a large number of public transport supplier contracts that need to be managed and monitored once established to meet customer needs. This team is responsible for ensuring compliance with contracts, undertaking inspections of providers, working with customers to address non-compliance and service provision issues. This team ensure that customers' needs are met day-to-day by the service providers KCC has contracted.

5. Business Performance and Systems

- 5.1 The purpose of this service is to provide support to staff across H&T so that they can best fulfil their roles and meet the business plan targets within the annual budget. It has a specific focus on business continuity and resilience given how critical the local road network is for KCC's wider services and the county as a whole.
- 5.2 **Business performance and systems:** Supporting data and digital development across the division to enable effective financial monitoring, contract compliance, and supply chain management. It handles business risk, continuity planning, and staff development to ensure teams have the skills and tools needed. It also manages the systems / platforms for KCC's highways definition database and Gazetteer and works closely with Highways Commercial Operations and Commissioning.
- 5.3 **Strategic Resilience:** This team is focused on operational resilience of the KCC local road network. Its expertise particularly concerns the management of international road traffic associated with the Channel crossing terminals at Dover and Folkestone (Eurotunnel). The team leads KCC work within the Kent Resilience Forum, which responds to disruptive events including implementation of traffic controls across the M20 / A20 and A2 corridors from Maidstone to Dover such as Operation Brock. The team has specialist knowledge associated with haulage industry and its management and routing of fleets through the county and the consequences of that on the local road network and its communities. This includes managing lorry parking surveys and working with truck stop operators to improve capacity and facilities to reduce overnight lorry parking on local roads. The team also leads on other resilience issues, such as working with the Major Capital Programme team to address the closure of Galley Hill Road in Swanscombe due to a landslide.

6. Key documents, plans and strategies

- 6.1 The H&T service is working to implement delivery of a number of key documents, plans and strategies – many of which are referred to above concerning the different functions. These documents, listed below, also provide more detail about its work.

- [Local Transport Plan](#)
- [Vision Zero Road Safety Strategy](#)
- [Network Management Plan](#)
- [Highways Asset Management Plan](#)
- [Local Highways Maintenance Transparency Report 2025](#)
- [Map](#) and [definition](#) of the Resilient Route Network
- [Bus Service Improvement Plan](#)
- [Freight Action Plan](#)
- [Parking Standards](#)
- [Active Travel Strategy](#) and [Kent Cycling Walking Infrastructure Plan](#)
- [Developer Contributions Guide](#)
- [Kent Design Guide](#)
- [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#)
- [Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#)

7. Finance

7.1 For 25/26, the H&T service has a revenue budget of c. £78.9m and a capital budget of £138.5m, which comprises of both a rolling programme of asset management/maintenance (Highways) as well as one-off junction/road improvement projects (Transportation).

7.2 Whilst the net revenue budget is £78.9m, the gross spend within this service area is £115.7m with the balance reflecting the significant income from sales fees and charges, and specific grant funding in this area.

7.3 The total H&T budget is £217.4m.

Group	Revenue budget	Capital budget	Total
Highways Asset Management	£40.4m	£65.8m	£106.2m
Transportation	£6.7m	£70.3m	£77.0m
Public Transport	£27.5m	£2.4m	£29.9m
Divisional management & business services costs	£4.3m	£0	£4.3m
Totals	£78.9	£138.5	£217.4m

7.4 The Highways Asset Management service has the largest budget, totalling £106.2m, which reflects the breadth and complexity of maintaining and operating the highways network, not just roads and footways but also including streetlights, bridges/structures, winter service (salt spreading/gritting) and drainage to name but just a few.

- 7.5 The revenue budget is predominantly funded from KCC base budget (the service's share of Council Tax, Business Rates and general grants) as well as from income raised specifically within the service. The capital funding comprises a mix of Department for Transport (DfT) grant and KCC borrowing. In addition to the amount noted above, which come from the 25/26 Budget Book, there is a £14.3m Local Highways Maintenance Fund allocation for 25/26 that was communicated after the Budget was approved and is currently funding the Pothole Recovery Strategy across the county.
- 7.6 The Transportation service has the largest capital budget reflecting that a significant part of its activity concerns delivery of small and large scale changes to the road network. These are broadly funded from government grants as well as Section 106 developer contributions which are collected to enable services to respond to changes in housing growth/development and the obvious need for enabling road infrastructure that could not be covered by the service's share of Council Tax alone.
- 7.7 The Public Transport service has a significantly higher revenue budget than capital reflecting the three key operational services within this area which are: English National Concessionary Transport Scheme (ENCTS) (a national bus travel scheme for elderly and disabled residents), the Kent Travel Saver Scheme (a scheme for you people 11-16 to assist them getting to school which may not be their nearest school) and the Socially Necessary Bus service which provides subsidies on certain routes that are socially necessary but are not commercially viable and therefore KCC pays a contribution to keep them operational. The ENCTS and Subsidised Bus services are largely funded from KCC base budget, with Kent Travel Saver a mix of KCC base budget and income from users of the pass. For 25/26 the service also received significant grant (both revenue and capital) from the Bus Services Improvement Plan (BSIP), which is not reflected in the numbers above as this was communicated once the budget was approved.
- 7.8 Changes to the Budget between 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 (note figures have been rounded to one decimal place) are summarised below:
- 7.8.1 The H&T division is aiming to achieve £3.64m of savings for 25/26. The majority of these savings are associated with the Kent Travel Saver Scheme and government grant covering supported bus service costs offsetting costs to KCC.
- 7.8.2 The H&T budget provides £4.5m to address new spending pressures for 25/26, comprised of price inflation, increased service demands from customers, improvements or changes required by government and legislative factors.
- 7.9 Full details of the revenue budget (page 73), savings and spending pressures (pages 33-53), as well as the capital budget (pages 11-18) can be found in the [Kent County Council Budget Book 2025-26](#), with further detail on the H&T service within the Operational Delivery Plan for 2025-26.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 The H&T service works in line with our corporate equality objectives, complying with the Equality Act, publishing Equality Impact Assessments in support of Council Key Decisions concerning its services.

9. Conclusion

- 9.1 The H&T division has a large and diverse undertaking, which has a significant impact every day on the lives of residents, businesses and visitors in Kent. It balances its work with a day-to-day operational focus on safety, resilience, maintenance, journey reliability and satisfaction for customers. The division fulfils the Network Management Duty, is a statutory consultee in the planning process, liaises with other transport service providers, and lobbies government for change. Alongside these roles, the H&T division is active in planning for upgrades, modifications or delivery of new highways assets, as it aims to support economic growth, healthier lifestyles, cleaner lower emission transport and a better quality of life for residents.
- 9.2 H&T is a facilitator for all other services in Kent – getting children to school, enabling commuters to get to work, lobbying for international rail services to come back to the county and, above all, ensuring our road network flows.

10. Recommendation

Recommendation:

The Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

11. Contact details

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