

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TAKEN BY

Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration

DECISION NO:

25/00084

For publication

Key decision: Yes

Subject: Reinstate a Visitor Economy and Inward Investment Service for Kent & Medway

Decision:

As the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Coastal Regeneration I agree to:

- (a) APPROVE the establishment of a new in-house provision model to deliver Brand Kent (visitor economy and inward investment) services, following the cessation of previous external arrangements.
- (b) APPROVE the redirection of the Kent County Council (KCC) budget remaining for the 2024–25 visitor economy and inward investment contracts (approximately £162,000) to support the implementation of the new in-house provision.
- (c) APPROVE the planned allocation of £405,000 (with total service funding dependant on level of partner contributions) from the 2026–27 budget, subject to full approval at County Council in February 2026, to sustain and expand the in-house service model.
- (d) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration, to design and implement the final service delivery model, including recruitment and integration of services within existing council structures and manage and determine future funding allocations within the parameters set by the County Council, to ensure its ongoing development and sustainability.
- (e) DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth & Communities to take all necessary actions, including finalising terms and entering into required contracts or legal agreements, to implement the decision

Reason(s) for decision:

Visit Kent and Locate in Kent ceased trading in September 2025. Kent County Council (KCC) & Medway Council are proposing a new delivery model consisting of a single in house team supported by commissioned activities where required to deliver critical services to support the local visitor economy and attract inward investment to the county. The new services will ensure that the county does not get left behind and lose out to neighbouring areas in the run up to Local Government Reorganisation while preparing a model that aligns with future Devolution arrangements.

Reason for Urgency

Following the commencement of the liquidation process for both organisations in Kent, it has become clear that the tourism industry, key businesses, partners and stakeholders are looking to

KCC, and Medway Council, to take a lead on finding a practical solution to support ongoing service delivery in Kent & Medway. Swift restoration of the service is critical to ensure that the county does not get left behind in this important area of work. Following discussions which have considered industry insight, this urgent decision will ensure that a level of 'Destination Management Organisation' service and Inward Investment activity can continue in Kent & Medway.

Given financial pressures facing both authorities, immediate work must focus on considering what provision is essential for the area making use of budgets that were previously allocated to the contracts with Visit and Locate in Kent.

Financial Implications

The KCC budget remaining for the 2024-26 visitor economy and inward investment contracts (approximately £162,000) will be used for the purposes of bringing the service in-house with the planned 26-27 budget planned (£405,000) for the contracts to be instead used for the in-house service.

The cost of delivering the in-house service will not put additional financial burden on the Council but rather will make use of planned resource for the new delivery model. KCC will also work closely with the private sector to lever in additional funding from key industry partners to enhance the service to meet the needs of the visitor economy sector.

An in-house model is a lean solution, providing good value for money. With contracts, a proportion of funding is required to cover the overheads and support services of external organisations. An in-house solution brings economies of scale for operational costs (ICT, finance etc.) given that KCC's internal services can provide this support at a proportionally lower cost.

Legal Implications

There are no foreseen legal implications relating the creation of a new in-house service. All contractual arrangements for new staff will be supported by KCC's HR team and any contracts for commissioned services will make use of existing procurement procedures within KCC. Advice has been sought from HR regarding TUPE which may apply for elements of certain roles to be recruited.

Equalities implications

While the job application process will be ringfenced (initially) to staff made redundant by Visit Kent and Locate in Kent, all recruitment activity will align with KCC's existing policies around equality and diversity in recruitment

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

No, Cabinet Committee consideration was possible due to the urgency process.

Any alternatives considered:

Other options which were considered but discounted included completely ceasing financial support for these services, re-procuring these services, or creating separate services at a smaller geographical level.

Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:



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signed

Date: **24.10.2025**