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**From:** Paul Webb, KCC Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 March 2026

**Subject:** An update on the KCC Community Warden Service and its impact

**Key decision:** No

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Electoral Division:** All

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**Summary:** This report provides an update on the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS), detailing its evolution, current operating model (including the Geographical Allocation Policy), and the impacts of recent changes on service delivery. The scope also discusses the variety of work undertaken by the service and the positive outcomes it generates, particularly in maintaining community safety and supporting vulnerable residents.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and provide comments on the impact of the service and the update provided.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 For over two decades, the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) has been a cornerstone of community safety and wellbeing across the county. While its remit and staffing levels have had to adapt in response to financial pressures, the service's reputation and value have remained unequivocal. Partners, parish councils and residents consistently highlight the vital role wardens play in strengthening communities and supporting vulnerable people. This report sets out the current position of the service, the difference it continues to make, and the opportunities ahead to further enhance its impact.

## 2. Background

2.1 The Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) was established in 2002. It is a proactive, uniformed and highly visible service that supports the council in meeting statutory responsibilities relating to the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 (amended by the Police and Justice Act 2006), and the Care Act 2014.

2.2 In February 2023, the County Council approved the 2023/24 planned budget which took account of the challenging financial circumstances KCC was

operating within. One of the services identified to make savings was KCWS and a £1m budget reduction for the service was agreed.

- 2.3 Following the [public consultation \(July - October 2023\)](#), the Council committed to redesigning the service in a way that preserved its core strengths: a wide remit supporting residents and communities, early identification of issues, and a proactive, community-based approach that remains highly valued.
- 2.4 The redesigned model saw a reduction in staffing by almost half but ensured a continued presence across all 12 districts with six teams covering two districts each and a minimum staffing level set to maintain consistent delivery.
- 2.5 To maximise impact, [team sizes](#) (see page 10 of linked report) were enhanced in districts with higher evidenced need, ensuring proportionate coverage within the overall warden limit. Wardens are now allocated to specific wards at a ratio of roughly 1 per 6,000–12,000 residents, enabling focused, targeted work rather than attempting full district coverage.
- 2.6 A [Geographical Allocation Policy](#) (GAP) underpins these changes, using a range of data and indicators of need, agreed through public consultation and debated at the [January 2024 Cabinet Committee](#), to identify districts requiring enhanced teams, and then, with partner insight, prioritising the highest-need wards for warden deployment. This ensures resources are directed where they can deliver the greatest benefit. The GAP was finalised and rolled out in late 2024, with transitions to new deployment areas completed by early 2025.

### **3. Reforming Kent 2025-2028**

- 3.1 The new [strategic statement](#) for KCC sets out key aims, with many aspects directly and indirectly relevant to KCWS.
- 3.2 Support for rural areas is part of Aim 1. Prioritisation of areas for warden coverage includes how rural it is, with the GAP including a score for 'rurality'<sup>1</sup>. Some of the most rural areas covered are the wards Rolvenden & Tenterden West and Upper Weald in Ashford district, and East Downs in Swale. Wardens help farmers with problems like fly tipping and rural crime, and also work closely with Kent Police's Rural Task Force.
- 3.3 The service has contributed to Aim 2 by supporting KCC's financial sustainability, delivering £1 million in savings over the past two years. The majority of the KCWS budget provides warden salaries, and this saving of almost half required significant reductions in staffing. Numbers were decreased from 70 to 38 uniformed wardens<sup>2</sup>. Management and administrative functions were streamlined to protect frontline delivery<sup>3</sup>. Feedback from stakeholders, partners and evaluation activity consistently shows that where KCWS operates, it provides strong value for money and ensures resources are used effectively. Alongside these efficiencies, the service continues to actively explore opportunities to enhance financial resilience including sponsorship

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<sup>1</sup> [Urban Rural Areas in Kent & Medway](#)

<sup>2</sup> Includes six operational team leaders (TL).

<sup>3</sup> Reduced from three managers to one (an Operational Manager); and one Business Coordinator.

arrangements and partnership-funded posts to further extend its reach within current budget constraints.

- 3.4 Additionally, KCWS receives referrals from KCC Adult Social Care (ASC), with 471 being received across 2024 and 2025. These referrals are often requests for a warden to undertake a welfare check, advise on potential care needs, or facilitate engagement where social services have struggled. Referrers note that they would need to undertake this work themselves otherwise, and therefore KCWS is contributing to mitigations for ASC's demand and financial pressures.
- 3.5 Reforming Kent's third aim focuses on supporting residents who need help, a commitment that aligns closely with the core preventative and early-intervention role of the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS). Wardens work proactively to identify vulnerabilities early, equip residents to improve their circumstances, and help them to build the confidence they need so that they are empowered to take personal responsibility. They provide tailored support to those experiencing issues such as loneliness, financial pressure or wider wellbeing challenges. Many of the people they help are older or vulnerable, with over half being pension-age, and 12% having caring responsibilities. This area of support was something respondents of the public consultation showed strong support for, with 28% stating they would seek support from KCC ASC if they were to no longer have a warden<sup>4</sup>. As a result, additional weighting was applied to these indicators in the GAP.
- 3.6 Community Wardens also support children and young people through schools and youth groups, modelling [pro-social behaviour](#). Each year, they help deliver [Safety in Action](#), giving Year 6 pupils important safety messages to prepare them for school transition. KCWS teams undertake other projects, like the Dartford and Gravesham Team's [Duke of Cornwall awards](#), which help young people become safe, caring and resilient members of their communities.
- 3.7 Reforming Kent's fourth aim is to build better communities, and this links directly to KCWS's founding purpose of community safety. The service helps address low-level crime and Anti-Social Behaviour (ASB) through deterrence, prevention and by working with partners including Trading Standards and Kent Police. The GAP included data on anti-social behaviour, domestic abuse, and scams to assist prioritisation, alongside information from partners and their focus areas, to make the best use of public resources.
- 3.8 Wardens also support communities during challenging times, such as emergencies and severe weather. They run projects that bring people together and improve wellbeing for all ages. KCWS targets support in several coastal areas, enabled by the GAP which led to bigger team sizes in districts with higher need, meaning more wardens in the east of the county.

#### 4. Service Activity, Data and Impact

##### Delivering High-Impact, Targeted Support Across Kent

- 4.1 The Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) continues to deliver **significant preventative and early intervention impact** despite reduced resources. The

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<sup>4</sup> [010d0e58634ce0f62a53d0c5547d0d20\\_Appendix\\_1\\_-\\_Consultation\\_Report.pdf](#)

implementation of the new case management system (CMS) in early 2024 has transformed how the service records, understands and demonstrates its value.

- 4.2 Across 2024 and 2025, the CMS captured **over 1,300 partner referrals**, with the largest proportions coming from Adult Social Care (34%), health partners (19%) and district, parish and community safety teams (10%). These referrals combined with the wardens' proactive work translated into **nearly 4,900 tasks in 2024 and around 4,200 tasks in 2025**, all focussed on individual resident support. (see below for breakdown). Although the 2025 total reflects the reduced staffing levels following the 2023/24 and 2024/25 budget reduction, the overall drop in activity (around 15%) is **significantly smaller than the reduction in workforce capacity**. This suggests the redesigned model including the GAP is enabling wardens to **spend more time delivering frontline support where it matters most**.

### **Providing meaningful, Personalised Support**

- 4.3 The CMS data shows the breadth and depth of support KCWS provides:
- **45%** of tasks involved practical, hands on support<sup>5</sup>
  - **56%** included reassurance and welfare checks
  - **27%** involved personalised advice or signposting
  - **28%** supported access to public or community services

- 4.4 Across more than **9,000 tasks**, only **1,366 onward referrals** were required. This shows that KCWS can spot problems early and support people before they need help from adult social care, police, health services, local councils or other services.

### **Delivering Measurable Outcomes for Residents**

- 4.5 Survey feedback demonstrates the tangible difference wardens make:
- **69%** of residents felt safer
  - **53%** felt more confident going out locally
  - **77%** accessed services they previously didn't know about<sup>6</sup>
  - **80%** were supported to access services they had struggled to reach
- 4.6 This addresses a well understood national issue<sup>7</sup>: many vulnerable people miss out on essential support due to lack of awareness or difficulty navigating systems. Wardens help to bridge that gap by giving residents access to the information and support they need to address issues themselves, empowering them to take action and to improve their quality of life.

### **Reducing Loneliness and Improving Wellbeing**

- 4.7 KCWS has long been recognised as a key contributor to reducing loneliness and social isolation<sup>8</sup> which can have a significant negative impact on health, increasing pressures on public services<sup>9</sup>. Following the Interreg<sup>10</sup> pilot (2020–

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<sup>5</sup> E.g. Arranging for food parcels, providing/fitting doorstep crime deterrents.

<sup>6</sup> E.g. This can include identifying eligibility to certain benefits and grants, housing, and local voluntary organisations such as foodbanks and support groups.

<sup>7</sup> [Vulnerable people missing out on benefits due to online tool, charity claims - BBC News](#)

<sup>8</sup> [https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf\\_file/0007/215269/Loneliness-and-social-isolation-select-committee-report-March-2019.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/data/assets/pdf_file/0007/215269/Loneliness-and-social-isolation-select-committee-report-March-2019.pdf) (para.3.2.6)

<sup>9</sup> <https://www.socialfinance.org.uk/evidence/investing-to-tackle-loneliness-a-discussion-paper>

<sup>10</sup> An EU funding programme.

22)<sup>11</sup>, where a 'Community Connector' role was successfully demonstrated and fulfilled by wardens, the 'Positive Wellbeing' (PW) model enabled structured one to one support, social prescribing, and [measurable outcomes](#). Evaluations have noted KCWS being particularly effective due to their unique role, proactive approach, and community presence creating a trust and rapport that can overcome barriers to engagement. Between January and October 2025:

- 74 referrals were received
- 25 residents completed the PW journey
- Participants reported a **46% reduction in loneliness, 58% improvement in life satisfaction**, and **68% increase in the number of people they feel close to or can depend on**.

4.8 These results demonstrate how KCWS uniquely combines **local presence, trusted relationships and a preventative approach** to support people in ways statutory services cannot easily replicate.

### **Strengthening Community Safety and Resilience**

4.9 KCWS also contributes significantly to wider community safety and resilience at a local community level. In 2024/25, wardens recorded:

- **2,569 activities related to ASB** (from being a visible deterrent, to gathering intelligence, partnership working or supporting schools and families to address challenging behaviours).
- **Over 1,000 activities relating to road safety**

4.10 In late 2025, enhancements to the CMS expanded data capture to community-level issues using the [OSARA](#) problem solving model delivered with Kent Police. In Q3 2025 alone, **more than 1,500 community-level tasks** were recorded, reaching an estimated **20,000 residents**. These included visible patrols, scam awareness sessions, multi-agency events, and actions to address low level crime and ASB.

### **Preventative Value and Social Return on Investment (SROI)**

4.11 Quantifying preventative impact is inherently complex and even more so for a service like the community wardens, with their broad but desirable skillset. Nevertheless KCWS has continued to pursue repeated attempts at evaluation. A 2023 Social Return on Investment (SROI) study demonstrated a return of £3.14–£3.34 for every £1 invested<sup>12</sup>, using outcomes such as feeling happier, safer and less worried. While SROIs do not equate directly to financial savings, they provide strong evidence of the wider societal value the service creates.

4.12 This aligns with the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), which highlights both the challenges in evidencing prevention and the importance of community based services particularly those providing good information, safer neighbourhoods, and interventions addressing loneliness and isolation<sup>13, 14</sup>.

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<sup>11</sup>

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/documents/s115772/Community%20Wardens%20and%20Positive%20Wellbeing%20Report.pdf> (para 3.8, 3.9)

<sup>12</sup> A cautious interpretation of the SROI was recommended due to limitations of the approach and the data used.

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.scie.org.uk/integrated-care/prevention-in-social-care/>

<sup>14</sup> [Marczak, J, et al. 2019. Evaluating Social Care Prevention in England: Challenges and Opportunities. Journal of Long-Term Care, \(2019\), pp. 206–217.](#)

KCWS directly delivers in each of these areas. Evaluation attempts have highlighted that in services such as the wardens, qualitative data and case studies are an important tool.

### **Case Studies and Real-Life Examples**

4.13 The KCWS has a wide variety of ways it supports residents and communities, with each team and warden drawing flexibly upon their broad skillset in response to their communities' and residents' specific needs. Below are some examples of the type of work happening across all the teams.

#### **Fostering community connections and wellbeing:**

4.14 In our Maidstone and Tonbridge & Malling team, a group was set up to help carers meet others and build support networks. One attendee said it was "really important" because it helped with loneliness and encouraged them to get out after losing their partner. More stories from the group can be seen in the video in the background documents section.

- As previously mentioned, by early 2025 the KCWS moved to new areas based on the GAP priorities. Some places kept their wardens due to evidenced need, but others like Fant in Maidstone, had a warden for the first time. The warden had to build new relationships and trust from scratch. Over the year, these links have grown stronger, and Fant is now seeing real benefits, from one-to-one support to new walking and games groups. One resident said, "your support and active help... has been a godsend."

#### **Community safety**

- - KCWS teams work with the police, communities, businesses, schools, and parish councils to address low-level crime and anti-social behaviour. Their visible, uniformed presence helps deter problems, and their strong local knowledge supports intelligence gathering. For example, a warden in Sevenoaks worked closely with local businesses and schools, collating incidents and descriptions of those involved. Through her local knowledge and school relationships, she was able to speak on the topic in a school assembly, direct support and put in place action to deter future issues .
- During Halloween, wardens in Swale worked with Kent Police to keep people safe. They helped make sure everyone who wanted to celebrate could do so, and those who didn't could stay undisturbed by giving out "no trick-or-treat" posters. If any concerns were raised, wardens passed this information to police officers, who were then able to act quickly.

#### **Helping residents and communities be more resilient:**

4.18 KCWS connects residents to useful services, information, and support. This includes giving talks on how to spot scams, avoid rogue traders, and stay safe. In August 2025, wardens in the Canterbury and Thanet team organised a multi-agency event in Birchington so residents could meet different services all in one place. The event was a huge success and benefit to both agencies and residents, with an estimated 100-120 residents in attendance. Wardens also help younger people learn important life skills, such as through the Dartford and Gravesham team's work on the [Water Smart Project](#) to improve water safety awareness amongst children and young people in the area.

- Additionally, support is provided to communities during emergencies. For example, during recent water supply problems in west Kent, wardens from Sevenoaks, Tunbridge Wells, Dartford and Gravesham worked with Kent Fire and Rescue Service and other partners. They delivered bottled water and carried out welfare checks on vulnerable residents in a number of areas. Wardens in Ashford also supported those affected by recent flood water.

**Supporting the vulnerable:**

- A warden from the Folkestone and Hythe team supported a resident who was struggling to access benefits and get onto the housing list. With some guidance, he joined the local library, used the computers there, contacted the DWP, and applied for housing near his dad. The warden also referred him to the Kent Enablement Team, where he completed a 12-week programme that helped build his confidence and independence. He then joined a craft workshop at the library, made great progress, and stayed involved in the community. He now goes to coffee mornings, has a case worker for extra support, and is excited to join another craft group.

## 5 Extending the Service's reach and Innovation

5.1 The new operating model for the service was consciously designed to be scalable so that, if resources became available, the council could look again at its provision. This prompted enquires from local parish and town councils as to how they may fund a warden to retain the service in their area. Work followed with Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) and parish councils to explore the feasibility, and the commercial and legal arrangements required were established.

5.2 A sponsorship programme was developed allowing partners to fund a warden (from one day per week to a full time post), and this was promoted with the support of KALC during 2025. This is allowing the service to reach more residents and communities within KCC's current financial limitations. Several parish councils are now actively funding wardens in their areas, which has enabled us to expand our coverage and increase our capacity. Further enquiries from other parishes and partners are in discussion for 2026/27. The early feedback has been encouraging:

*"We really really do appreciate the service and are happy in principle to pay for it."*

*"We buy in the service three days a week, [our warden] is employed by KCC... and that works extremely well."* David Hall, Bearsted Parish Council.

5.3 In addition to the above parish council sponsorship, the service is currently working with a commercial transport provider and looking opportunities to collaborate. Discussions are at an advanced stage.

5.4 Furthermore in spite of the challenging circumstances surrounding grant provision, the service continues to explore opportunities to bolster the service and increase the reach of the community wardens.

## 6 Financial Implications

- 6.1 Following the changes and associated staffing reductions in 2024/25 to realise the £1 million saving from KCWS's budget, the resultant redundancies led to pension liabilities in the region of £160k. These liabilities have been smoothed utilising the general KCC reserve, enabling the service to account for the costs over the three financial years from 2024/25 to 2026/27. In 2027/28, the pension liability transfers to the Kent Pension Fund and as such, a remaining £57k is listed within the MTFP for removal from the service's budget.

## 7 Legal implications

- 7.1 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.

- 7.2 KCWS's role in communities beyond crime and disorder supports KCC in delivering its statutory duties under the Care Act 2014. [Section 1 Promoting individual well-being](#) places the general duty on a local authority to promote individual well-being. Additionally, [Section 2 Preventing needs for care and support](#) 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).

## 8 Equalities implications

- 8.1 Previous [Equality Impact Assessment](#) (EqIA) for the service show that key demographics represented in the client base include; the elderly; females; people with a disability or long-term impairment; and those with carer's responsibilities. The GAP included indicators to mitigate the impact of the last change to the service.

## 9 Data Protection Implications

- 9.1 A data protection impact assessment (DPIA) was undertaken as part of the case management system project and was in place prior to its development and implementation. The relating [privacy notice](#) is available on kent.gov.

## 10 Other corporate implications

- 10.1 KCWS proactively supports the work of:
- Trading Standards by engaging with and supporting scam victims on the service's behalf.

- Adult Social Care and Health through taking direct work requests for welfare visits, engagement with hard-to-reach residents and supporting residents to live safely and independently. Additionally, supporting the aims of the [ASC Prevention Framework](#) and its approach to preventative support, promoting wellbeing and working with partners. This is now particularly important due to the September 2025 decision of [savings being made within ASC Wellbeing commissioning](#), with [funding being ceased or reduced for community navigation and community services](#). KCWS are working closely with ASC to mitigate the impact of these changes.
- Public Health through their contribution to the GET Integrated Care System (ICS) delivery plan to improve health and wellbeing with the commitment/measure of 'facilitating residents' access to community resources, activities and services that improve personal wellbeing'. Also by delivering the Positive Wellbeing model which addresses wider determinants of health i.e. loneliness and social isolation.
- Emergency Planning; as part of the Council's response to emergency situations such as flooding, during the Covid 19 pandemic, and the recent water outages.
- 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 model [pro-social behaviour](#) for adolescents.

## 11 Conclusions

- 11.1 Despite sustained financial pressures and significant changes to its operating model, the Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) continues to deliver unique preventative value for Kent's communities. Its deep local presence, trusted relationships, and ability to work seamlessly across agencies enable it to address vulnerabilities early, reduce demand on frontline services, and strengthen community resilience.
- 11.2 KCWS demonstrates measurable impact across Kent's strategic priorities and is well-positioned to play an even greater role with regards to the renewed focus on community safety, and in supporting KCC's long-term transformation and financial sustainability. The service's strong preventative foundations, proven adaptability, and growing opportunities such as sponsorship and expanded partnership working provide a platform for continued innovation and extended reach.

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### Recommendation(s):

The Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and provide comments on the impact of the service and the update provided.

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## 12 Appendices

**Appendix-A:** Supporting evidence of KCWS's impact.

**13 Contact details**

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## Appendix-A

### Supporting evidence of KCWS's impact

[Video of a KCWS community wellbeing project - Carers Group](#)

[Video of a KCWS led multi-agency - community resilience project](#)

[Video for the Positive Wellbeing intervention delivered by KCWS](#)

[KCWS Sponsorship promotional video](#)

#### Examples of feedback from the 2023 public consultation:

“A community warden is so important as a way to help people to get help and support they need a friendly face that they know they can talk to.” (Representative of a local community group or residents' association)

“They help people feel safe. They explain how worries can be helped by explaining the help available and who to contact. Being prepared to listen no rush they really do care.”

“The warden service is a lifeline for many residents. With the reduction in other services; social services, mental health support, social care services, the wardens very much fill the gap. They support the vulnerable and isolated, foster community cohesion and wellbeing, help residents access other public services, and deliver community safety and resilience.” (Parish / Town / Borough / District Council representative)

“The community warden is available for any issues in the local area. Is aware of any anti-social behaviour or criminal activity. Also a contact for the lonely or isolated. He works closely with our local police officer and PCSO who cover much larger area.”

#### Examples of recent feedback from referring agencies (2025/26):

##### **Referrer:**

1. KCC Adult social care
2. NHS Dementia coordinator
3. Local voluntary group

##### **How did KCWS assist your agency on this occasion?**

1. Assisted us in engaging with hard-to-reach-residents.
2. Provided one-to-one support to our clients which we believe KCWS are best placed to provide.
3. Provided one-to-one support to our clients which we believe KCWS are best placed to provide.

**How satisfied were you with the work undertaken by KCWS in response to your referral?**

1. Very satisfied
2. Very satisfied
3. Very satisfied

**If KCWS were unable to accept this referral, what would your alternatives have been?**

1. A welfare visit would need to have been undertaken by Adult Social Care Connect.
2. We have tried other's, and no one has been able to offer the support you have.
3. We would have continued to support and we still will do that, however the input of KCWS was us asking for help in an area we are not experienced in. (*N.B. Conflict with neighbour, including an assault.*)

**Please include any other comments or additional explanation of previous answers you would like to make here:**

1. The Community Warden service is invaluable. The outcome is that Adult Social Care Connect were able to get a quick response on the situation and will update ASCC should needs be identified in the future. This has saved a lot of time for ASCC who would normally have had to undertake a welfare check and the person may not have been at home and then had to re-visit.
2. Can not thank you enough, this gentleman is such a worry, and without intervention, and support, I don't believe their [sic] would be a positive outcome for him.
3. I have had previous interactions with KCWS and always, without exception found them willing and helpful. This was no exception. The speed of returning my calls and the meeting with client was amazing service, thank you so much.