

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader
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To: **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee, 23 March 2026**

Subject: **KCC Service Preparation for Local Government Reorganisation - Service Complexity Assessments**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper provides an overview of the Service Complexity Assessment (SCA) process that has been developed to support Kent County Council's internal preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). SCAs will provide KCC with a comprehensive understanding of each service or function and the information provided will be used to inform an assessment of its likely complexity in transitioning to new unitary council(s) through the process of LGR. The report outlines the SCA process and purpose, and the timetable aligned to Government's expected decision point in July 2026.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

1) Note and comment on the work underway to deliver Service Complexity Assessments.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) represents a significant structural change for Kent and Medway. As set out in KCC's Strategic Business Case for LGR that has been submitted to Government, one of the greatest sources of risk in the LGR process will be potential disruption to the countywide services that Kent County Council (KCC) currently provides for the people of Kent, particularly if this involves the disaggregation of KCC services into multiple unitaries.
- 1.2. Therefore, in preparation for implementation - irrespective of the model that Government may choose - it is essential that KCC has a clear understanding of the potential complexities and areas of risk within its services and functions of implementing LGR.
- 1.3. This will ensure that KCC goes into the implementation phase with our partners with an evidence-based position on the issues that need to guide design of new council operating models and service delivery arrangements. It will also support effective planning and prioritisation of the implementation

work that needs to happen over the coming years to ensure safe and legal delivery of council services on vesting day for the new unitary/unitaries.

- 1.4. The SCA process has been developed to undertake the task of collating and assessing information about KCC's services and functions in a consistent and comprehensive manner.
- 1.5. The SCA process will run in parallel with and be complementary to the Enhanced Discovery Phase work led by the Kent Local Authority Chief Executives on the cross-cutting priority activities (outlined in a separate paper on this meeting's agenda). Both play an important role in informing the development of the future operating model(s) for the new unitary or unitaries.

2. Overview of the Service Complexity Assessment process

- 2.1. The SCA process will be led by the Strategy and Policy Team in collaboration with service leads across KCC's services and with input from relevant corporate services including HR and Finance. Whilst it will be delivered within existing resource constraints, given the scale of the activity, additional capacity may be sourced in order to meet the challenging timetable.
- 2.2. The SCA process aims to cover all of KCC's services and functions and works from a starting point that everything KCC currently provides will need to be transferred (at least initially) to the new council(s). A service list has been collated to identify the services and functions to be assessed. The list has been cross-referenced with HR structures and the Budget Book and checked with the relevant services for accuracy. Initially, the focus will be on assessing all services and functions in ASCH, CYPE and GET, and any services within CED/DCED that are delivered directly to people. These areas have been prioritised because they hold the greatest potential risk to service delivery to Kent residents. Corporate support functions will be assessed at a later stage, with the methodology adapted as necessary to complement and build on the Enhanced Discovery Phase which is coordinating preparation work in enabling functions.
- 2.3. During the SCA process, a consistent set of information about each service or function will be collated to inform an assessment of its likely complexity to transition to new unitary council(s) through the process of LGR. Each SCA will capture proportionate information in the following categories:
 - service demand profile
 - delivery model and operational dependencies with other services and partners
 - budget profile
 - staffing and workforce requirements
 - essential (specific) assets and systems
 - relevant legislative requirements.

- 2.4 The information collated will be used to assess the level of complexity. Assessments will include, for example, whether there are any significant geographical disparities in demand and spend, whether budgets, contracts and resources can be divided or duplicated and any specific legislative factors that will need to shape the design of future service delivery.
- 2.5 A request for information has been developed to collect the required information. Strategy and Policy officers will initially undertake desktop activity to collate corporately held information on service profiles, including information on budget and FTE. The form will then be shared with the relevant service leads, who will work with the Strategy and Policy team to populate the remaining sections and will be asked to provide their professional view on the risks and opportunities that LGR poses, recognising that they are the service experts.
- 2.6 A communications plan is being developed with CMT to ensure that staff are aware of the process and the requirement to engage with it. Service Leads will be supported by a dedicated Strategy and Policy Officer, who will help guide them through the process and work with them to collect the relevant information.
- 2.7 Once all of the SCAs have been completed, Strategy and Policy will develop summary scorecards based on the information collected. The scorecards will provide a comprehensive picture of each service / function, a judgement on level of complexity in each category and flag any significant complexities or risks.
- 2.8 The final stage of the SCA process will be to review the scorecards and provide an initial recommended pathway for each service or function. It is expected that in most cases, the assessment will find that the transfer of KCC services to new unitary/unitaries has no expected service-specific complexities, provided that proper implementation planning is undertaken and enabling corporate support functions are in place. In other cases, the assessment will flag high complexity and therefore recommendations will be made on how this could be managed. This could include identifying where specific implementation actions need to be taken to prepare the service for LGR, or where (by exception) shared service arrangements or temporary arrangements to maintain countywide delivery could be proposed if a decision is made to create multiple unitaries.
- 2.9 It is important to note that only the new unitary council(s), from when they are formed as shadow authorities following the elections, can make decisions about how the new unitary/unitaries and individual services will operate. Therefore, any recommendations made by KCC and partners through the preparation and implementation periods are for the purposes of supporting the shadow unitary/unitaries in their decision-making, especially considering that they will have less than one year to set up the new arrangements between elections and vesting day.

3. Timetable and next steps

- 3.1. The aim is to have all SCAs completed for front-facing services by July ready for the expected government decision point. The transition/implementation phase will need to begin quickly after the decision including discussions about future operating models and service design, so it is important that KCC uses this standstill period to undertake as much preparatory work as possible, so it is ready for this.

Milestone	Date
Development of methodology and pilot SCA process with nominated services	March 2026
SCA rollout across ASCH, CYPE, GET and relevant CED/DCED services	April/May 2026
Analysis and synthesis	June 2026
Completion of SCAs and initial recommendations	July 2026

- 3.2. Updates on progress and key findings will be shared with this Committee at its future meetings.

4. Conclusion

- 4.1. The SCA process is a critical preparatory step for KCC as the LGR process progresses. It will ensure that KCC has a robust, comprehensive and defensible understanding of its services, enabling informed decision-making, mitigating transition risk, and positioning the Council to respond effectively to whichever LGR model Government selects.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

- 1) **Note and comment on the work underway to deliver Service Complexity Assessments.**
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Background documents:

Papers to Cabinet, 19 November 2025, available at

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=115&MId=9789>

Papers to County Council, 06 November 2025, available at

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=113&MId=9799>

Papers to Devolution and LGR Cabinet Committee, 30 September 2025, available at

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=979&MId=9845>

Paper to Devolution and LGR Cabinet Committee, 28 July 2025, available at

<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=979&MId=9870&Ver%20=4>

KCC webpage for Local Government Reorganisation and devolution, containing letters to and from KCC and government and further information regarding LGR and devolution, available at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/local-government-reorganisation-and-devolution>

English Devolution White Paper, Power and partnerships: Foundations for growth, Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government, 16 December 2024

available at <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/english-devolution-white-paper-power-and-partnership-foundations-for-growth>

English Devolution and Community Empowerment Bill, July 2025, available at

<https://publications.parliament.uk/pa/bills/cbill/59-01/0283/240283.pdf>