

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GROWTH, ENVIRONMENT & TRANSPORT CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 10 March 2026.

PRESENT: Mr A Brady, Mr J Defriend (Chairman), Mr B Fryer, Mr M A J Hood, Mrs. S Hudson, Mr T Mallon (Vice-Chair), Mr M Paul, Mrs. B Porter, Mr T Prater, Mr R Waters, Mr D Sian and Mr A Thorp.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr Paul King (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects) , Mr David Wimble (Cabinet Member for Economic Developments and Special Projects) , Mr Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) , Mr Spencer Dixon (Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) , and Mrs Mary Lawes (Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities).

IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport), Stephanie Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Steve Samson (Head of Economy), Tom Marchant (Head of Strategic Development and Place), Andrew Loosemore (Interim Director of Highways and Transport) , Matthew Smyth (Director of Environment and Waste) , Matthew Wagner (Chief Analyst), Colin Finch(Strategic Programme Manager for Infrastructure) Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy), Mike Hand (Risk and Delivery Assurance Officer) , Mark Scrivener (Head of Risk & Delivery Assurance) , Tim Middleton (Network Innovations Manager), Chris Drake (Nature Recovery Partnership Officer), Shafick Peerbux (Head of Community Safety) ,Mark Rolfe (Head of Community Protection), Lis Dyson (Heritage Conservation Manager) ,Elizabeth Milne (Head of Environment) and James Willis (Democratic Service Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

61. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

No Apologies were received.

62. Declarations of Interest

(Item 3)

A Member declared an interest in *Item 17 – 26/00011 Cliff Collapse – Road of Remembrance, Folkestone*, on the grounds that the report referenced financial support from Folkestone and Hythe District Council and that the Member was a Cabinet Member for the discussed district authority. The interest was noted.

63. Minutes of the meeting held on 13.01.2026

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held 13 January 2026 were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

**64. Decision taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings - 26/0003
Concessionary Travel Cards - Contract Extension
(Item 5)**

Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) and Andrew Loosemore (Interim Director of Highways and Transport) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Cabinet Member explained the following:

- a) The existing contract had been delivered through a framework agreement which had required a confirmation of the extension by the 20th of March 2026. As there had been no suitable alternative frameworks available and insufficient time to procure a new contract the Cabinet Member had taken the decision between meetings.
- b) It was discussed that this action had prevented the risk of a statutory service failure and potential impacts to approximately 280,000 service users.

2. Members asked the following questions:

- a) Queried why the decision had not come to the previous (January) Cabinet Committee.
- b) In response the officers explained that there had been an unfortunate oversight but confirmed that 12 months remained still on the framework and that the implemented extension would allow sufficient time to procure a new contract.

RESOLVED to note that that decision 26/00003 Concessionary Travel Cards Contract Extension had been taken between meetings in accordance with the Constitution.

**65. Verbal Updates
(Item 6)**

Mary Lawes (for Mr Webb) (Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities), Paul King (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects), David Wimble (Cabinet Member for Economic Developments and Special Projects), Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) Provided an update on the Following:

1. Mr Osborne, delivered his verbal update:

- a) Thanked frontline teams in highways and transport for keeping core highway services operating safely and reliably during a period of exceptionally poor weather. The Cabinet Member reported an increase in customer demand, particularly regarding potholes, drainage and street lighting, following the heavy rainfall and cold spells.
- b) Reported progress on the on-street electric vehicle (EV) charging programme. A long-term partnership had been agreed with Urban Fox to support the delivery of up to 10,000 on-street charging sockets across Kent. Focus would target residents without off-street parking, and it was highlighted that this required no council tax funding. (See item 11)
- c) Advised that a contractor had been appointed for the Bean Road underpass, with preparatory work underway and construction planned to begin in Summer 2026. A revised design at Badsell Road, Paddock Wood, would look to mitigate flood risk and improve junction capacity. These works were to be fully funded by developers.
- d) Highlighted a proposal elsewhere on the agenda (Item 17) to fund works at the Road of Remembrance located in Folkestone. The discussed works would look to enable the safe reopening of the iconic and historically significant route after a notable cliff collapse had occurred.
- e) Discussed that the public transport and Fast Track networks in Kent Thameside and Dover had remained on track to transition to fully electric operations by Summer 2026. This date also marked 20 years of the Fastrack service.
- f) Road safety and active travel continued with the strong delivery of Bikeability training that had included almost 1,000 Year 6 pupils and adults undertaking successful half-term cycle training at Cyclopark. Grants for local businesses, and ongoing enforcement activity including safety cameras and targeted speed campaigns rounded out the Cabinet Members update.

2. Mr King, Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special projects gave the following portfolio update:

- a) Reported that KCC had again been recommended for continuation of the ISO 14001 environmental management certification following a four-day assessment, which highlighted ongoing excellence in compliance and the management of environmental responsibilities.
- b) Strong progress on tree planting under the Plan Tree strategy had seen nearly 12,000 trees planted during the Winter period. These included disease-resistant elms at multiple sites with additional work at a former landfill site underway to improve habitat and biodiversity at the location.
- c) Highlighted waste and recycling initiatives, including the Shake It Out campaigns bid to improve recycling quality, in addition a pilot mattress recycling scheme had collected over 1,800 mattresses (about 32 tonnes of material), and had resulted in approximately 60% of material recycled.

- d) KCC had secured funding for the Pathways to Resilience project and supported the long-term planning for water management, flood risk and climate resilience.
- e) Updated the Committee on the No Use Empty programme which continued to bring empty homes and commercial units back into use and support future regeneration initiatives.

3. Mr Wimble, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects provided an update on the following:

- a) Reported on the Kent and Medway Health, Employment and Skills Summit, which had brought together public, health, education and business partners to strengthen collaboration on the Get Kent and Medway Working plan.
- b) Updated Members on the Skills Bootcamps, which had seen strong learner attendance, high satisfaction and a positive progression into employment. Preparation for Wave 7 (April 2026–March 2027), this had included exploring a potential new provision in the agricultural sector.
- c) Discussed that the Connect to Work programme was now supporting over 700 residents with more than 100 having reported their first earnings after securing employment. Additional providers would be added to expand the provision.
- d) Briefed the Committee on work to develop the Kent and Medway Local Growth Plan, focusing on four key sectors; agrifood/agritech, ports and logistics, digital technologies and energy, and on activity by the Kent and Medway Growth Hub, Kent and Medway Business Fund, and Visit Kent / Invest Kent to support businesses, inward investment and tourism.
- e) Ongoing work related to nuclear energy at Dungeness was discussed, this included discussions on future power generation and a potential nuclear decommissioning skills centre. Further research on an environmental freight levy for foreign lorries and vans using Kent's roads were also being explored.

4. Mrs Lawes, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities updated Members on the respective portfolio:

- a) Recent developments within the library and registration services had encompassed the recent success of the Amelia building in Tunbridge Wells as a combined library, cultural and heritage venue. Continued progress with co-location library projects at multiple sites was also well underway.
- b) Dover Library's success in reaching the regional stage of the Library of the Year awards was a notable recent highlight. The ongoing digital improvements in the registration service and work to roll out technology-enabled care demonstrations in libraries were also raised as significant milestones.
- c) Referred to activities around World Book Day. These included the distribution of books and held events in libraries with collaborative projects with various arts organisations.

- d) An update was given on archive work with local partners, including progress on the definitive map of public rights of way and consultation on proposed changes. Work also continued on the King Charles III England Coastal Path, and Active Kent initiatives that supported walking, cycling and wider physical activities.
- e) Reported on Gypsy and Roma work including a forthcoming conference on unauthorised encampments and best practice on management. Recent Trading Standards activities had included a vape action scheme roll out in Maidstone and work had continued on targeting unsafe vapes in partnership with Kent Fire & Rescue and ports and the borders teams.

5. In response to comments and questions from Members, the discussion covered the following:

- a) Members discussed current tree-planting aftercare, survival rates and engagement with local volunteer groups. Officers confirmed that annual inspections were carried out to assess tree conditions and that all new planting schemes were encompassed within funded maintenance.
- b) The committee queried on the current geographic coverage of Skills Bootcamps and asked where future rollouts locales could be most effective and impactful. It was agreed that future reports would include information on bootcamps by location and sector.
- c) Questions on the ongoing work with Kent Fire & Rescue and Trading Standards regarding vapes and associated fire risks and product safety were raised. Officers discussed that a planned joint campaign on vape disposal with Kent Fire & Rescue was planned.
- d) Concerns on the current state of Kents highways, pothole reporting volumes and repair quality were all levied. Officers acknowledged that the current pothole volumes had been exacerbated by the impact of recent inclement weather events. The Cabinet Members for Highways assured Members that the new maintenance support contracts and associated quality assurances would look to mitigate some of the impacts and concerns that had been raised.
- e) Discussed the current status of major infrastructure schemes such as Galley Hill and the Bean underpass. It was indicated that Members would be briefed on the respective schemes at a future date.
- f) Additional Support for high street business and the provision of business information packs were suggested by Members. Officers confirmed that further development of these packs were underway and that the option of workshops for high street businesses were being explored.
- g) Members highlighted the lack of attendance of highways officers at district-level planning committees recently. In response it was explained that that officers (planning in this example) were bound to follow the National Planning Policy Framework. Officers would provide as a statutory consultee advice to the local planning authority to aid if a plan were acceptable or had notable concerns.

- h) In addition, Officers would provide written advice and act in the same capacity as any other statutory consultee. Officers noted the example raised and the Members concerns and would look to address any received correspondence on the matter.
- i) Members raised questions about the outstanding Kent Highways works costs of £625 million. The Corporate Director explained that an operational backlog and rising costs over the past 18 months had contributed to the total. Factors included inflation, labour shortages and increased bitumen prices, partly driven by the ongoing war in Ukraine.

RESOLVED to note the Verbal Updates

66. Performance Dashboard

(Item 7)

Matthew Wagner, (Chief Analyst); and Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport) were in attendance for this item

1. Matthew Wagner introduced the report. The report covered the periods up to December 2025 and also encompassed the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and targets for 2026–27.

- a) Reported that of the KPIs encompassed within the report, 38 were rated green, 5 amber and 1 red. The red KPI had related to the (EC16) *number of new people receiving entrepreneurship mentoring support from the Kent Foundation*. Performance had dipped below the floor standard in December but had improved in January and was expected to exceed its target by year end.
- b) Amber indicators had encompassed: (EC10) *the number of people supported into employment by the Connect to Work programme* (with performance expected to improve in quarter 4).
- c) Turnaround times in (KSS02) *Kent Scientific Services where partner laboratory testing sometimes extended timescales*. The team had now developed an in-house method for avoiding extended timescales. The expected improvement had already been evident within the December performance.
- d) The proportion of public rights of way faults reported online, response times for (HT02) highways and transportation enquiries; and municipal waste recycling and composting rates, which were expected to benefit from forthcoming “simpler recycling” requirements rounded out the five amber KPIs for the reporting period.

- e) The officer discussed the combined KPIs that had been encompassed from a predecessor committee (GED CC) and the current iteration (GET CC) into a single, larger set of KPIs and activity indicators.
- f) The Officer closed out by discussing the inclusion of the proposed KPIs for 2026–27. All services reporting to the committee carried out a thorough review and this had resulted in several changes to the existing KPIs. Most notably, the Highways and Transportation Division has expanded its KPI set to better reflect the full range of services it would deliver.

2. Members asked the following KPI related questions:

- a) Queried if additional KPIs could be used to monitor tree survival and tree establishment success following planting. Officers acknowledged the query and that additional reporting on tree establishment and success rates would be explored, subject to robust data.
- b) Members asked what rationale was used for keeping or removing certain public rights of way online reporting indicators. In response it was suggested that some online reporting KPIs had reached their practical limits given residents' varying contact preferences.
- c) Additional concerns were raised on KPIs relating to the percentage of public rights of way reports submitted online, currently showing an amber RAG rating. A Member raised a specific issue that had impacted Dartford regarding long-standing flooding and queried the use of the KPI from a safety perspective. Officers acknowledged the concern and would look to address the Members local issue outside of the Committee.
- d) Clarification was sought on the recent changes to KPI HT01B and referred to officers being able to address issues relating to road conditions. The Cabinet Member responded to the KPI query and indicated that it had reflected the immediate ability to respond to events and was likely governed by demand and availability.
- e) The interpretation of waste-related indicators and the implications of extended producer responsibility and emissions trading scheme risks were discussed.
- f) Asked if data on greenhouse gas emissions (EEW2) and monitoring would continue even when targets were not set. In response it was discussed that that greenhouse gas emissions data would continue to be monitored as a performance indicator.
- g) Members highlighted the performance of highways defect response times and the operational context. Officer noted the concerns and suggested that the operational pressures, current market costs and general inflation had impacted highways backlogs and recovery costs.

RESOLVED to note the Performance Dashboard.

67. Strategic Risk Register

(Item 8)

Mike Hand (Risk and Delivery Assurance Officer) and Mark Scrivener (Head of Risk & Delivery Assurance) were in attendance for the item.

1. Mike Hand introduced the report on strategic risks on KCC's Corporate Risk Register relevant to the Committee and summarised the link with directorate risks for Growth, Environment and Transport.

2. The cover report provided a summary of each risk with brief, up-to-date commentary, while the appendix contained the full details. The report included a summary of relevant risks from the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate Register. These risks related to issues discussed throughout the year at committee, with the report bringing all key risks together in one place.

- a) Current risk ratings reflected residual risk after current controls. The target ratings had indicated the level considered achievable with further mitigation and recognised that many external factors were outside the Council's direct control.
- b) Mark Scrivener added that work was underway corporately to identify and focus on key controls and to streamline how control effectiveness was captured and reported, given the high volume of risks and controls across the organisation.

3. Members sought clarification on the following questions:

- a) Asked how the effectiveness of individual controls was assessed and reflected in the risk ratings. Officers elaborated that that additional modelling had refined estimates of potential emissions trading scheme liabilities.
- b) Discussed the risks related to recruitment and retention for key roles, including the impact of pay and workforce arrangements. In response officers responded that the directorate leadership teams were committed to workforce engagement and the recognition to support staff retention.
- c) Queried on the modelling of potential costs arising from the UK Emissions Trading Scheme and the use of extended producer responsibility funding. Officers explained that the extended producer responsibility funding had been spent on packaging-related work in accordance with government requirements, with some reserve funding set aside for future improvement projects.
- d) Members questioned if emerging risks such as water supply constraints and extreme weather impacts were adequately reflected in climate-related risks. It

was discussed that new information and data from water authorities and any climate-related impacts would be considered in the next review of relevant risks and target ratings.

RESOLVED to note the Strategic Risk Register

68. KMEF-Ambition 4 Economic Opportunities

(Item 9)

David Wimble (Cabinet Member for Economic Developments and Special Projects) and Steve Samson (Head of Economy) were in attendance for the item.

1. Mr Wimble introduced the item with Steve Samson providing an overview of the progress under ambition 4.
2. Steve Samson highlighted further that the ambition focused on placing economic opportunity at the heart of community wellbeing and prosperity. Key areas included boosting employment, tackling economic inactivity due to ill-health, and ensuring that regeneration across the County delivers clear benefits for local communities.
 - a) The report focused on placing economic opportunity at the centre of community wellbeing and prosperity with programmes such as Connect to Work delivering employment support. Connect to Work had seen 834 enrolments with 121 participants now having reported first earning through the system.
 - b) The work of the Strategic Partnership for Health and Economy (Action area 14) was highlighted which had been in place for 18 months. In addition, the Get Kent and Medway Working plan had been published and work was continuing on its implementation including recently publishing employer-facing resources around inclusive employment and workforce wellbeing on the Kent & Medway Growth Hub website.
 - c) Work underway to maximise the links between major investments, anchor institutions, and community opportunities was underway to embed economic opportunity within local regeneration, including via the following programmes: No Use Empty, Visit Kent, Skills Bootcamps, Invest Kent and the Kent and Medway Business Fund.

2. Members asked the following:

- a) In response to Members requests for a local business representation of the scheme to attend committee it was suggested that a video be circulated that was showcased at the Skills, Employment and Health Summit two weeks ago showcasing the Skills Bootcamps programme ([see Skills for Life Video](#)). The video highlighted construction training courses in Herne Bay and the positive

impacts on local residents. It was also noted that two years had passed since the E-economic Framework had been finalised and officers were preparing a report that would summarise activity since then. The inclusion of videos or contributions from businesses in future reports would be considered and shared with Members.

- b) Members queried if the Skills Bootcamp initiative would be expanded into other areas. Officers discussed the challenges faced in regard to a reduction of funding from the Department of Education (DfE) and how this impacted future planned works.
- c) Officers added that the approach would be to replicate the current year's programme, especially in areas with high demand was present and the scheme has had to turn people away due to limited capacity. Officers would look to share a report showing where courses have been delivered this year and the potential locations planned for next year at a future date.
- d) Members welcomed the breadth of work and suggested that future reports might include case studies or direct input from beneficiaries, such as businesses or Skills Bootcamp participants.

RESOLVED to note the KMEF- Ambition 4 Economic Opportunities Report

69. Kent Biodiversity Report

(Item 10)

Paul King (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects) and Chris Drake (Nature Recovery Partnership Officer) were in attendance for the item.

1. Mr King introduced the Item by prefacing that the report highlighted KCC's integrated approach to biodiversity across services and set out commitments for the period 2026–31.

2. Chris Drake presented the main elements of the report, which covered the reporting period January 2020 to December 2025 and looked forward to 2026–31. He summarised key achievements, including:

- a) The delivery of significant tree planting under Plan Tree and the Tree Establishment Strategy.
- b) Habitat improvement through highway verge management, natural flood management schemes and SUDS. Innovative approaches such as the Miyawaki method had also been introduced.
- c) Environmental projects delivered through the Kent Downs National Landscape team and country park land managed for nature and visitor engagement.

- d) Highlighted that 1.25 million people had engaged with nature at KCC parks in 2024-25.
- e) Pond (360) creation and restoration through district level licensing and the recent publication of the Kent and Medway Local Nature Recovery Strategy (LNRS) following two years of development had occurred.
- f) Additional future priorities would include the embedding of the LNRS and reviewing the Plan Tree and Plan Bee within that context. Development of Plan Sea for marine and coastal habitats were underway as was a progressing water resource strategy for Kent with a publication target of 2027 was underway.
- g) The officer highlighted that there is scope to use current format to produce a light-touch annual report, which would make compiling the larger report easier in future and help maintain the authority's focus on biodiversity.

3. Members made comments and asked questions on:

- a) Members urged the importance of integrating urban tree planting at the design stage of town centre and regeneration schemes.
- b) Discussed the quality and biodiversity function of SUDs installations and the need for clear, measurable indicators of biodiversity outcomes and timing of monitoring with clarity in the report around visitor data (visits versus unique visitors) to country parks.
- c) Officers responded that the monitoring of biodiversity outcomes was being developed and would include defining what "recovered nature" looks like and establishing site monitoring for pollinator-friendly management.
- d) Confirmed that data on tree establishment was being collected and that wording in the report regarding visitor numbers would be reviewed to ensure accurate reference to visits and engagement with nature was captured.

RESOLVED to note the Kent Biodiversity Report

70. EV Charging Report

(Item 11)

Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) and Tim Middleton (Network Innovations Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, Peter Osborne, summarised that KCC had entered into a long-term partnership with Urban Fox (part of the Balfour

Beatty group) to deliver up to 10,000 on-street EV charging points across Kent over a 20-year concession contract. The programme was focused on residents without off-street parking and required no council tax funding.

2. Tim Middleton explained that contracts had been signed in February and that residents and Members were being encouraged to suggest potential locations via an online form, which was being used to inform the first phase of rollout and outlined:

- a) That data collated would directly inform planning work and help identify where new locations were required. As mobilisation began within the period in the first year, the focus would be on identifying quick-win locations, with activities increasing over time. Ongoing use of the website would be essential, as the initiative actively relied on that data submitted.
- b) The designated operator would fund and operate the network and would receive the majority of any charging revenue raised.
- c) KCC had included contractual mechanisms to ensure fair pricing, and this had included a margin cap.
- d) The first-year rollout was expected to be approximately 150 locations (around 300 sockets), with numbers increasing in subsequent years.
- e) The network approach would allow for a balance between more and less commercially viable locations, including rural areas.

3. Members asked questions and raised issues about:

- a) Queried if provisions for rural communities and parish hall car parks were included. Officers confirmed that rural provision would be captured and be supported by parish hall projects and network-wide planning initiatives.
- b) Members sought clarification on the operator's expected payback period and if any protection for residents from excessively high tariffs was in place. In response officers highlighted that tariff fairness was addressed through the contract design and overall market competition. Members were assured that KCC would monitor pricing to ensure continued clarity on pricing.
- c) Requested an updated status and safety of cable gullies and the need to await industry guidance on electrical safety before progressing trials. Concerns were noted by Officers who responded that cable gully options would be reconsidered after receiving updated guidance from the Institution of Engineering and Technology (IET).
- d) Greater clarity was requested by Members on the year one location map and requested that a detailed list of proposed sites be made available to Members. Officers confirmed that year one locations were still being finalised with district parking officers and would be shared once confirmed, with all sites subject to Traffic Regulation Orders. (TRO)

- e) Contractual safeguards such as minimum delivery levels and mitigating arrangements if the operator failed to deliver or withdrew rounded out the concerns raised by Members. Senior officers explained that contracts had included robust performance measures, minimum delivery expectations and options for a transfer of assets and re-procurement in the event of any failures.

RESOLVED to note the EV Charging Report

71. Kent Community Wardens Impact Report

(Item 12)

Mary Lawes (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) and Shafick Peerbux (Head of Community Safety) and Mark Rolfe (Head of Community Protection) were in attendance for the item.

1. Mrs Lawes introduced the report, praising the dedication and creativity of the community wardens and the supporting management team, further highlighting their work across wide geographical areas to support vulnerable residents.

2. Shafick Peerbux, Head of Service for Community Safety, presented the report and explained the evolution of the service. The service had encompassed the implementation of a new operating model that had delivered £1m savings while maintaining coverage in all districts through targeted deployment guided by a geographical allocation policy.

- a) Reported that over a two-year period, community wardens had undertaken more than 9,000 tasks focused on a proactive and preventative support to individuals, with high levels (69%) of reported improvement in feelings of safety and access to services.
- b) It was illustrated to Members the positive impacts of wardens via a case study of a vulnerable adult whose situation had improved significantly through coordinated intervention by the warden and partner agencies.
- c) Discussed the service's contribution to be tackling anti-social behaviour and to community-level initiatives, these had included supporting clubs and activities to reduce isolation. In addition, meaningful engagement with children and young people were highlighted as current areas of positive progression.
- d) Outlined the development of a parish sponsorship model. This would allow parish councils to fund dedicated warden time for their areas. The officer advised that a pilot scheme on funding with a commercial transport provider was also being explored.

3. Members welcomed the report and raised issues including:

- a) Discussed the distribution of warden coverage within districts and the need for a clear mapping of warden areas. Officers acknowledged the concerns and

highlighted that work was underway with Digital Services to improve public information regarding warden coverage.

- b) Members urged the value of a recognisable, trusted local presence compared to telephone-based support. Officers in response discussed that wardens could and did work flexibly across their allocated areas and beyond where and when needed.
- c) Highlighted the challenges wardens experienced when other agencies were slow to respond or adequately resource specialised interventions when required. A Member explained in detail a recent individual who had been impacted by delayed intervention and ultimately had died before any resolutions were in place. Officers lamented the issues the individual had faced and acknowledged the wider concerns raised.
- d) Members asked for clarification on the equity of parish-funded arrangements in areas with no parish councils or limited resources. It was confirmed that the commercial sponsorship pilot would ensure that any potential sponsors were appropriate and that the model implemented was operationally sound.
- e) In response to Members questions on geographical locales of wardens and areas that may be in shortfall, The Officer explained that the new operating model allocated community wardens based on a range of indicators while avoiding duplication with other local services.
- f) The model would ensure coverage in every district and borough. It was discussed that a purely data-led approach would have placed most wardens in the east of the county, so a more balanced method would look to prevent this. Wardens would be kept in place long-term to maintain and build trusted relationships; allocations would be reviewed as population data and new housing developments emerged to better aid distribution in the future.
- g) In addition, wardens that had defined areas would also at times support residents outside their geographical range, assist in taking referrals and support people who are lonely, isolated or in need.

RESOLVED to note the Kent Community Wardens Impact Report.

72. Kent Design Guide (Item 13)

David Wimble (Cabinet Member for Economic Developments and Special Projects and Colin Finch (Strategic Programme Manager for Infrastructure) and Tom Marchant (Head of Strategic Development & Place) were in attendance for the item.

1. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Mr Wimble, explained that the existing guide dated from 2005. The refreshed guide would be a digital, interactive resource and be far easier to update when regulations change with minimal cost

incurred as opposed to previous paper copies. The guide would also be developed jointly with district and borough partners.

2. Colin Finch, from the Development Investment Team, presented the proposed structure of the new online guide, which would set out shared design principles and expectations for new homes and neighbourhoods. This would look to align with recent changes to the National Planning Policy Framework. He advised that the guide would:

- a) Provide a single, shared online resource outlining quality standards for new homes and neighbourhoods in Kent and focus on design and planning. The design guide would encompass an interactive public website and would be accessed by KCC officers, planning authorities, designers, architects, landowners, developers and housebuilders, offering clear, consistent and accessible design and placemaking guidance.
- b) The current PDF guide had been difficult to navigate and not very intuitive which had restricted the limits of its use. Although still referenced, its main purpose was to save officers and developers time by avoiding repeated discussions over standards.
- c) To improve the guide, three stakeholder workshops were held with stakeholders investing significant time in shaping the proposed solution. This had resulted in a stakeholder-led proposal for a web-based interactive design guide that could be updated almost instantly.
- d) Aspects captured would provide clear, accessible design guidance under five principles (including “of Kent”, “people first”, health and wellbeing, active Kent and resilient places).
- e) It was explained how officers and developers would both use the guide. Planning officers would have confidence in their decisions and in turn be able to reassure developers that their applications align with expected standards.
- f) For developers the guide would clearly set out Kent’s design expectations and assist them to construct to agreed standards and contribute to better-quality homes and neighbourhoods.
- g) The Officer presented a draft prototype of the website to Members and discussed further the future stakeholder workshops and design amendments likely to occur.
- h) Linked to working examples and case studies and explained at depth the desire to support both planning officers and developers to reduce negotiation time and improve the overall quality of developments.

3. Members asked questions about:

- a) Clarification was sought on the relationship between the design guide and car parking standards guidance. Officers elaborated that the parking standards had been recently updated separately by KCC.

- b) Members asked how officers ensured that the guide responded to different local vernaculars and environmental factors. Officers confirmed the guide would allow local adaptation and would not prescribe to a single uniform palette.
- c) It was raised on how design guidance would address scale and layout on larger developments. Officers noted that the principles could be applied across sites of different scales, with examples of mixed character areas within large developments.

RESOLVED to note The Kent Design guide report

73. 26/00007 - Heritage Conservation Strategy Amendment
(Item 14)

Paul King (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects) and Lis Dyson (Heritage Conservation Manager) and Elizabeth Milne (Head of Environment) were in attendance for the item.

1. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Mr King, explained that the main change was a new objective to seek to divest KCC's eight historic windmills in a way that ensured their sustainable future as community assets. He also highlighted the need to update references to climate policy and to the historic environment record in line with the Levelling Up and Regeneration Act 2023 and the National Planning Policy Framework.

2. Lis Dyson set out the specific amendments to the objectives relating to windmills, strengthening engagement with windmill groups and other interested parties, and aligning the strategy with the adopted policy position on divestment.

3. Members asked questions about:

- a) Concerns were raised on why it was considered inappropriate for KCC to set up a trust with regard to coordinating and managing windmills. The Member highlighted the good work that had been taken out by KCC as custodian of Kent windmills.
- b) The Member proposed a recommendation to 3.4 (Page 179), at the start of the objective relating to windmill groups, the strategy consideration suggested by the Member was: *"The Council commits to setting up a Kent Windmills Trust to coordinate the future management of Kent's windmills and to support current and future volunteer groups intending to own or manage Kent windmills."*
- c) This recommendation to consider was a response to the current 3.4 as stated in the Heritage Strategy Report which read: *"It is not considered appropriate*

for KCC itself to set up a trust to own and manage the windmills so the original objective to explore alternative funding mechanisms for the windmills, including setting up a charitable Trust. is removed.”

- d) The recommendation was duly seconded. Officers did note however that a key decision had already been taken for KCC to divest itself of the windmills whilst retaining them as community assets.
- e) Members referred to previous decisions on divestment and the need to protect the long-term maintenance and conservation of the windmills. Officers responded that the paper before the Committee focused only on aligning the Heritage Conservation Strategy with that decision.
- f) Sought clarification on the relationship between the existing key decision on divestment, any potential trust, and the recommendations now proposed to the strategy. Officers responded that establishing a charitable trust owned and controlled by KCC might not satisfy the aim of divestment because risk and liability could remain with the authority and any proposals to take on windmills would be carefully assessed against criteria ensuring community access and sustainable maintenance, and KCC would not be obliged to accept proposals that did not meet these tests.
- g) The Cabinet Member invited Members to attend a forthcoming meeting with windmill volunteers and local groups where the process for divestment and options for future governance would be discussed in more detail.
- h) The Chair put the recommendation to the vote, the suggested recommendation passed with 6 For, 4 Against and 2 abstain. The recommendation to the Cabinet Member for consideration passed.
- i) It was recommended that the Cabinet Member for Environment consider the Committee’s agreed recommendations to section 3.4 when taking the key decision.
- j) The Chair then invited the Committee to consider the recommendations in the report, with a note on the recommendations raised to section 3.4 raised had been raised for consideration to the respective Cabinet Member.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

- (a) The Cabinet Committee is asked to agree to the proposed amendments to the Heritage Conservation Strategy and delegate authority to review, refresh and/or make revisions to the strategy on an annual basis where changes do not require additional governance, to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, or another Officer as required by the Corporate Director.

74. 26/00008 - Kent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy
(Item 15)

Paul King (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Special Projects) and Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy) were in attendance for the item.

1. The Cabinet Member for Environment, Mr Paul King, explained that the existing strategy was out of date and needed replacement. He emphasised that KCC as waste disposal authority had borne significant costs (2024-25 £53 million) to dispose of residual waste collected by district and borough councils and that by reducing residual waste (-10%) and increasing recycling could deliver substantial savings. (est over £ 6 million)

2. Helen Shulver, Strategic Lead for the Kent Resource Partnership, outlined the partnership's role and the four strategic aims of the strategy, including:

- a) The desire to reduce waste and increase recycling by delivering efficient, effective and aligned collections.
- b) Engaging with and informing residents to support behavioural changes and look to manage littering and fly-tipping in a coordinated way.
- c) Highlighted the examples of the joint Feed Your Foodie food waste behaviour change project, which had increased food waste capture in participating areas by over 20% and had repaid its investment within a year through cost avoidance and had continued delivering ongoing savings.

3. Members discussed:

- a) The prevention of contamination of recycling at source and the balance between positive engagement and enforcement. It was suggested that behaviour change approaches focused primarily on positive reinforcement, with enforcement seeing targeted used only where necessary.
- b) The need of consistent communications across Kent. Officers responded by discussing current branding and campaigns such as Shake It Out. In addition, KRP commissions research was discussed and how shares best practice was shared with other partnerships and bodies such as Waste and Resource Action programme (WRAP) and ReLondon, who had developed and assisted in targeted campaigns.
- c) Members raised concerns on continued ongoing fly-tipping issues. These had included large-scale incidents involving organised crime and Members discussed the current preventative roles of partner agencies such as the Environment Agency, Kent Police and local authorities were to play. Officers discussed the concerns raised and responded that an intelligence analyst funded by KRP would support coordinated action against fly-tipping.
- d) Asked if there were any current engagement and involvement with schools and young people in education about waste and recycling. The work that current contractors and school waste providers had undertaken encompassed educational work with schools and were identified as the level of current joint engagement.

- e) Questioned the differences in collection systems and performance between districts and the impact of new national “simpler recycling” requirements.
- f) New national requirements for the collection of additional materials and food waste were addressed by officers. The new requirements had created opportunities for step changes in performance and proposals for future financial arrangements with districts to incentivise higher capture of recyclables would be brought to the Committee in due course.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

The Cabinet Member for Coastal Regeneration, Environment & Special Projects agrees to:

- (a) Adopt the Kent Joint Municipal Waste Management Strategy 2026 – 2031 as KCC’s formal commitment to the partnership approach, subject to formal endorsement by all other partner authorities through their governance processes
- (b) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport or other officer as required by the Corporate Director to review the Strategy on an annual basis and revise the strategy where changes do not require additional governance.
- (c) Delegate authority to the Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member Coastal Regeneration, Environment and Special Projects, to take the actions required to support the Kent Resource Partnership with the implementation of the strategy, subject to the Councils decision-making process.

75. 26/00010 - Kent & Medway Business Fund 2026 - Revised Loan Offer
(Item 16)

David Wimble (Cabinet Member for Economic Developments and Special Projects) and Susan Berdo (Strategic Programme Manager) were in attendance for the Item.

1. The Cabinet Member for Economic Development, Mr David Wimble, noted the significant contribution of the fund to business growth and job creation and invited the officer to present further details.
2. Susan Berdo, Programme Manager, reminded Members that the KMBF utilises recycled Regional Growth Fund monies to provide repayable loans to businesses to support growth, productivity and job creation. The officer outlined the existing KMBF standard and small business boost offers and the proposed changes following an annual review by the Investment Advisory Board (IAB). The main aspects discussed were:

- a) Current KMBF standard offered Loans from £100k to 600K with 0% interest and required a 50% match funding with security being provided to the full value at least to the value of the loan and commensurate with risk.
- b) The Small Business Boost had provided 0% loans between £26k and £99k, with businesses contributing 20–30% match funding. Although initial guidance suggested security might only sometimes be required, experience since launching in November 2023 had showed that security was now often applied to help protect and sustain the fund for long-term recycling.
- c) The officer discussed the Increased upper limit of KMBF Standard loans from £600k to £750k.
- d) Allowing start-ups to apply where they can demonstrate contracts, experience, security and financial viability and allow extension of repayment periods for loans from £600k with an adjusted administration fee. Loans from £100k to £600k would pay a 10% admin fee. Above £600k would be subject to a 15% fee.
- e) Standardising match funding requirements in the small business boost to 25% and removing franchises from the list of excluded sectors. The focus was to be growth, higher productivity and job creation, supported by desirable outcomes such as innovation, stronger supply chains, environmental benefits and improved skills. The attached paper confirmed the changes that had been recommended by the IAB.

3. Members raised the following questions:

- a) Discussed sustainability of the fund, including interest arrangements and future projected burn rates. Officers elaborated that the fund was expected to operate until at least 2032 with an agreed profile of annual lending. Additionally, it was explained that the programme was income generating with administration fees covering delivery costs and any interest gained would be retained within the fund.
- b) Queried the distribution of loans across districts and how gaps in take up were identified and addressed. Officers discussed that promotion was undertaken through the Growth Hub, planned roadshows in each district and close working partnerships with district economic development teams would also target potential district gaps. Details of loan distribution and historic funds would be provided in the regular biannual monitoring reported to the Committee.
- c) Members asked for assurances on an even and fair distribution of loans throughout Kent, and if there were any concerns on the default rate of loans and where any interest garnered from loans is redistributed.
- d) Officers responded to distribution questions by expanding on the close working with district economic development teams and run joint promotional events with EDO colleagues. It was explained that the promotion of the work was captured through a dedicated website, KCC pages and Growth Hub social

media campaigns. The use of promotional videos and case studies to highlight success stories were also discussed.

- e) It was confirmed that KCC could provide loan funding for businesses in Kent and Medway until 2032, with an agreed annual delivery of around £3.5 million. Funds currently held would be distributed, while repayments would continually be recycled back into the programme. Any interest earned must also return to the fund and be used solely for this purpose. The presenting officer would look to request data from the finance team, as the Investment Advisory Board reviews this information annually.
- f) Suggestions were acknowledged that a list of the distribution of loans be provided to Members, officers agreed that any lists provided could aid in identifying any gaps and help in understanding why some areas were less reached than others. Officers would look to send the last biannual report to Members and provide a snapshot of activities for the current financial year.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

That the Cabinet Member for Economic Development & Special Projects agree to:

- (a) Accept the improvements and changes to the loan terms of the Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF), to take effect from 1 April 2026. This includes adopting a revised loan offer, updated terms, and refreshed eligibility criteria for businesses within Kent and Medway
- (b) Endorse the current scheme governance and administration processes

76. 26/00011 - Cliff Collapse - Road of Remembrance, Folkestone
(Item 17)

Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) and Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth, Environment & Transport) were in attendance for the item.

1. The Cabinet Member for Highways & Transport, Mr Osborne, explained that the report sought approval to proceed with engineering works to stabilise the cliff and enable the historic route to be safely reopened. He advised that Option 3 was the preferred option.

2. The Committee was advised that legal advice had concluded that KCC would likely to be held liable in respect of any further future collapse(s) affecting the Road of Remembrance and that there was a theoretical risk of a corporate manslaughter prosecution in the event of a fatal incident if appropriate action was not taken.

3. Members strongly welcomed the proposal to progress works and acknowledged the symbolic and practical importance of the Road of Remembrance to the local community of Folkestone. Members also queried the following:

- a) Contributions from Folkestone and Hythe District Council, including the use of on-street parking funds. Officers responded that discussions with the district council regarding financial contributions would be concluded following the Committee's consideration.
- b) Clarification on the land ownership were raised as well as the possibility of any cost recovery. It was highlighted that the original registered landowner had died without a will and tracing inheritors had proved to be a complex endeavour. KCC would place a charge on the land to enable any possible future cost recovery, although this was considered unlikely at this stage.
- c) Members asked whether a contingency was in place given the complexity and risk of cost escalation. Officers confirmed that some contingency had been built into the estimated costs. They added that any pressures arising once works began could affect the wider capital programme but would be carefully managed.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

That the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport agree to:

- (a) Give approval to progress the construction of the embankment stabilisation and associated works utilising KCC capital funding as identified in the 26/27 H&T capital budget.
- (b) Accept a contribution from Folkestone and Hythe District Council to contribute towards funding the works.
- (c) Deliver the works via the Road Asset Renewal Contract that has provision and financial capacity to accommodate these works.
- (d) Approval for any other further decisions required to allow the scheme to proceed through to construction to be taken by the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment & Transport under the Officer Scheme of Delegations following prior consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport.

77. Work Programme (Item 18)

RESOLVED that the work programme was noted.

