

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

DECISION NO:

26/00016

For publication

Key decision:

Yes, it affects more than 2 electoral divisions, involving significant changes in the way that service is delivered County-wide.

Subject Matter: Deployment of the Crisis Resilience Fund delivery plan for 2026-2029

Decision:

That the Leader agree to:

- a) **APPROVE** the Crisis Resilience Fund Delivery Plan for 2026-2029
- b) **APPROVE** the proposed use of the CRF across (a) Crisis Payments (after careful assessment cash first by default unless inappropriate), (b) Housing Payments replacing Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) within CRF scope (year 3), (c) Resilience Services (e.g. income maximisation, debt advice, digital inclusion), (d) Community Coordination, and (e) any additional provision funded by government as a top-up to CRF targeting defined local need, in line with CRF guidance.
- c) **DELEGATE** authority to the Senior Responsible Officer (Director of Public Health), in consultation with the Leader, to assess the suitability of cash, vouchers or goods and take all necessary actions to implement the decision, including but not limited to, entering into contractual arrangements, legal agreements, making grant awards, and making any consequential changes to ensure compliance to CRF guidance, grant determination and reporting requirements, and ensuring spend within the funding period. Judging which method of delivery i.e. cash, vouchers or goods is most appropriate on a case by case basis.
- d) **DELEGATE** authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, where relevant, to implement operational arrangements with internal services and partners to support the implementation of the CRF.
- e) **AUTHORISE** officers to undertake any ancillary activities required to meet CRF funding rules, including procurement, data sharing arrangements, and engagement with district councils, VCS partners and suppliers.

Reason(s) for decision:

To deploy the Crisis Resilience Fund (CRF) to provide crisis support to low-income households facing exceptional financial shocks, and to invest in services that build financial resilience and strengthen local support networks. This decision is required to establish the policy approach and delivery arrangements for the CRF over the next three years, including the allocation of funding in accordance with the grant guidance and conditions.

Within the Spending Review in June 2025, the Chancellor announced the introduction of the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) from April 2026 to local authorities in England to support low-income households who encounter an exceptional financial shock and to support activity that builds individual and community financial resilience.

The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) is introducing the CRF replacing the Household Support Fund (HSF) and incorporating Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP). The fund provides KCC with a multiyear, consolidated grant, enabling a more stable and preventive approach to supporting vulnerable residents.

The funding covers the period of 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 inclusive. This includes specified funding for housing support in the third and final year of delivery. From Year 3, District Councils will no longer receive an allocation for The Fund. Instead, all the CRF funding will be distributed to Unitary Authorities.

By approving the deployment of the Crisis Resilience Fund, the decision will allow the Council to progress with delivery of the four CRF components consisting of:

1. **Crisis Payments,**
2. **Housing Payments,**
3. **Resilience Services,** and
4. **Community Coordination.**

Financial Implications

Deployment of the Crisis Resilience Fund is expected to be cost neutral, with implementation delivered using funds provided by the Government. The purpose of the fund is to support low-income households across Kent who encounter unexpected or exceptional financial shock, providing crisis support and resilience services.

The grant funding covers the period of 1 April 2026 to 31 March 2029 inclusive, with a total of £60.5m (£19.2m in year 1, £19.2m in year 2, and £22.1m in year 3). This includes an estimated £2.8m for the consolidated contribution previously distributed to District and Borough Councils for Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) in the third and final year of delivery.

The fund will be tracked and reported regularly to the Government in line with their published guidance which sets out management information return deadlines.

Legal Implications

The Crisis Resilience Fund will be used in accordance with the guidance set by Government, and the published terms and conditions of the grant. KCC will apply appropriate legal mechanisms as part of issuing or deploying any grant monies to ensure any partners or third parties in receipt of grant funding remain compliant.

Equalities Implications

An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed. No significant adverse impacts have been identified.

Deployment of the Crisis Resilience Fund supports low-income households across Kent who encounter an unexpected or exceptional financial shock together with supporting activity that builds both individual and community resilience. Inclusive procurement practices will help to ensure equitable access to opportunities and broader community benefits. It will be delivered in such a way to build on supporting recipients' personal resilience and sound future decision making.

Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision will be considered by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 6 May 2026.

Any alternatives considered and rejected:

A range of alternative options were considered to determine the most effective way to deploy the Crisis Resilience Fund. These included:

1. The first option was to decline or defer acceptance of CRF – this was rejected due to loss of funding for Kent residents and inability to meet statutory and strategic objectives.
2. The second option was to limit scope to Crisis Payments only – this was rejected as it would not secure long-term resilience outcomes and would risk repeat demand, including demand on statutory services. This would also not meet all of the four objectives set out by the DWP.
3. The third option was to deliver the CRF wholly in-house without partners – this was rejected as it would constrain reach and capacity; and partnership working is strongly recommended in the guidance.

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

None.

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signed

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date