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To: **Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee, 14 May 2026**

Subject: **Service Complexity Assessments progress update**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

This paper provides an update on the Service Complexity Assessment process that is being delivered to support Kent County Council's (KCC) internal preparation for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). SCAs will provide KCC with a comprehensive understanding of each service or function and identify likely complexities in transitioning to new unitary council(s). This will support implementation planning and future decision-making. The paper sets out progress so far, some overall findings from early work on SCAs, and next steps.

Recommendations

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

1) Note and comment on the progress and next steps in delivering the Service Complexity Assessment process.

1. Introduction

- 1.1. A paper to the March meeting of this Committee introduced the Service Complexity Assessment (SCA) process as a first step in supporting KCC's internal preparation for LGR.
- 1.2. The aim of the SCA process is to establish a clear understanding of the issues and risks for each of KCC's services associated with transitioning to unitary council(s) through LGR, particularly if it is necessary for KCC's services to disaggregate into multiple new unitaries. Having this clear understanding will ensure that KCC goes into the implementation phase 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.
- 1.3. The SCA process is being led by the Strategy & Policy team. It provides a consistent process for collecting and analysing information about services under the following categories:

- service demand across the county and any highly specialised needs being met
- current delivery model and operational dependencies with other services and partners
- budget profile
- staffing numbers, any workforce or skills shortages and specialist roles
- essential (specific) assets and systems
- relevant legislative requirements and any upcoming government policy change
- key risks and opportunities related to LGR identified by the service lead.

- 1.4 The information collated will be used to assess the level of complexity in each category. Assessments will consider, 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.
- 1.5 The information collected is not intended to be exhaustive; there will be further requirements for more detailed information about KCC's services across a range of topics to inform the joint LGR implementation programme and later internal preparation. This process aims to collect enough information to start to understand and identify the implications of LGR for each service and issues that will need to be managed.
- 1.6 The SCA process will cover all of KCC's services, with all services in the Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH), Children, Young People & Education (CYPE), and Growth, Environment & Transport (GET) Directorates and a small number of public-facing corporate services being covered in the first phase, which aims to finish in July, ahead of the expected Government decision. The remaining corporate services will be completed between July and September, and will align with work undertaken by the joint Enhanced Discovery Phase being led by Local Authority Chiefs on enabling functions such as finance, workforce etc.
- 1.7 The breadth and depth of the SCA process and the rapid pace at which this work needs to be delivered to inform implementation following a government decision in July means that additional capacity has been required. PricewaterhouseCoopers (PwC) has been appointed as an external partner and is working with the Strategy & Policy team to develop and deliver the SCA process. PwC colleagues are supporting other county councils with preparation for LGR so are also able to bring experience and advice to enhance KCC's approach. The value of the contract is £440,000 (exc. VAT) and runs until September. Due to the importance of the disaggregation of countywide services in managing LGR implementation in Kent and Medway, it has been agreed that a proportion of the remaining first tranche of joint LGR funding from MHCLG will be used to support the SCA process.

2. Progress update

2.1 Since the last Committee meeting, the preparation stage of the SCA process has been completed, some pilot assessments have been carried out, and the first phase of the process has been launched.

2.2 Preparation

This stage involved developing the process for collecting information from the services and identifying corporately-held information that could enhance understanding of complexity in areas like assets and contracts – this will be incorporated alongside information collected from the services.

2.3 During the preparation phase, each Directorate Management Team worked with the Strategy & Policy team to agree the list of services / functions in the Directorate and the right level at which the assessments should be conducted. The numbers of assessments taking place in each Directorate are:

ASCH – 49

CYPE – 57

GET – 47

2.4 In addition, 16 services across the Chief Executive's and Deputy Chief Executive's departments have been agreed as in scope of the first phase. This is because they have a close operational alignment with a service in ASCH, CYPE or GET, or because they are public facing. This gives a total of 164 services to be covered in the first phase of the SCA process to July. It is expected that the service lists will shift slightly as the process progresses and more detail on individual service areas is understood.

2.5 A named service lead has been identified for each service, who will work with a named Strategy & Policy officer to provide the information required.

2.6 Communication with staff

Communicating with staff at all levels of the organisation about the SCA process has been a priority. This is the first step in KCC's internal preparation for LGR, and communications messages have aimed to provide information and assurance to staff. Information has been cascaded through management chains and featured in staff newsletters and on KNet. There has been direct communication with named service leads to clarify what they need to do, with endorsement from Directorate Management Teams. The process has been designed to be as streamlined and manageable as possible for service leads to engage with.

2.7 Pilots

In order to test the methodology, a pilot was conducted with one service from each Directorate. These were the Deprivation of Liberties Safeguards service in ASCH, Countywide school admissions in CYPE, and Trading Standards in GET. The full SCA process was followed, including sending out standard communication messages, working with the service to complete the Request for Information form and completing the Scorecard which summarises issues

and provides ratings of complexity for the service across different categories. Learning from the pilots has informed the initial findings in section 3 of this report. The methodology worked successfully in the pilots and a small number of improvements were made to the way information is collected and analysed based on learning and feedback from the pilot services.

2.8 Launch of phase 1

During week commencing 27 April, phase one of the SCA process was launched. Information from all services in scope is being gathered, working with nominated service leads.

3. Initial findings

- 3.1 The SCA process has only recently started, and the following findings are drawn from experience of working with a very small number of services in the pilots and some overall findings from initial conversations with services. Further, more detailed findings will be brought to future meetings of this Committee.
- 3.2 As had been expected, the process has identified complexities across several categories for each service assessed so far and has been helpful in identifying service-specific issues that will need to be addressed during LGR implementation. Examples include management of the Kent Test, the need for sufficient numbers of assessors that are independent of care management to support the Deprivation of Liberties Safeguards process, and management of ongoing legal action in Trading Standards.
- 3.3 Information on the geographical distribution of demand and how this is currently managed by countywide services is important and helps to identify if areas of higher demand are currently being mitigated by working at countywide scale. Data on demand distribution from management information systems is being overlaid with qualitative information from the service lead to gain a full understanding of this.
- 3.4 Early assessments have identified a number of specialist roles that require specific qualifications and / or experience in order for parts of the service to function. This has included Best Interest Assessors to support Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards applications, and specialist Trading Standards inspectors. Information is being collected on any barriers to recruiting or developing existing staff if greater numbers of these specialist roles were required.
- 3.6 While the SCA process will not look in detail at all contracts that KCC holds with providers at this stage, commissioning leads will be asked for initial thoughts on specific contracts or service areas where the transfer of contracts to future unitary/unitaries could be particularly complex. Early issues have included where contracts are over an extended time period, or where re-commissioning will coincide with the expected period of time when new unitary/unitary councils will be starting.

3.7 The process is identifying and mapping interdependencies between KCC services. The way in which one service operates in the future will have an impact on other services in some cases, and this needs to be taken into account in the design of future service delivery arrangements.

4. Next steps

4.1 Information collection will continue with services and corporate support functions during May. Once all relevant information for a service has been collected, Strategy and Policy officers will develop a summary Scorecard for the service. This will provide a comprehensive picture of each service, a judgement on level of complexity in each category and will flag any significant complexities or risks. An initial recommendation on service delivery options for the future will be provided.

4.2 The following table sets out the SCA timeline.

Activity	Date
Development of methodology and pilot SCA process with nominated services	March 2026
Phase 1 - SCA process conducted across ASCH, CYPE, GET and relevant CED/DCED services	April/May 2026
Analysis and synthesis	June 2026
Completion of phase 1 SCAs and initial recommendations	July 2026
Phase 2 - SCA process conducted for corporate support services	July to September 2026

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

Recommendations

The Cabinet Committee is asked to:

1) Note and comment on the progress and next steps in delivering the Service Complexity Assessment process.

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Background documents:

Paper to Devolution and Local Government Reorganisation Cabinet Committee on 23 March 2026: *KCC Service Preparation*. Available at: [Agenda for Devolution and Local Government Re-organisation Cabinet Committee on Monday, 23rd March, 2026, 2.00 pm](#)