

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Mike Sole to Linden Kemkaran, the Leader of the Council

A family who rely on oil to heat their home have been in regular contact with me regarding the rising cost of heating oil, which they attribute to the impact of President Trump's military action in Iran. They have been eagerly awaiting further information about the Crisis & Resilience Funding available. However, having been informed that eligibility for the £300 payment is limited to households in receipt of means-tested benefits or with an income below £33,000, they expressed their frustration, describing the scheme as "about as much use as a chocolate teapot." While it is right that support is targeted towards those in greatest need, many households experiencing fuel poverty may have incomes above £33,000 yet still struggle significantly with heating costs and receive no assistance. In addition, the requirement that oil tanks must be close to empty before support can be accessed does not reflect the practical reality of how families manage heating oil usage and budgeting.

Will the Cabinet Member consider widening the eligibility criteria, should uptake prove low, to ensure that funding reaches those households who are genuinely in need of support?

Mike Sole

County Councillor for Canterbury South

Answer

Thank you for raising these concerns.

We recognise the pressure that rising heating costs are placing on many households, including those that rely on heating oil. However, the Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) operates within government guidance, which requires local authorities to prioritise support for low-income households. As a result, eligibility criteria are not determined solely by Kent County Council.

The current £33,000 income threshold aligns with previous schemes, including the Household Support Fund, and was benchmarked against approaches used by other councils to ensure consistency and fairness. While a threshold is necessary to meet grant requirements, we will keep it under review as income and wage levels change.

The oil tank requirement reflects the CRF's classification as crisis support. Funding must therefore be targeted at households that have run out of oil or are at immediate risk of doing so. Providing support for routine top-ups would fall outside the scope of the scheme and could risk non-compliance with grant conditions.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Harry Rayner to Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport:

Can the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport kindly confirm that the existing bus services currently utilised to carry children to and from schools will continue in full in September (as at present) in view of the fast-rising price and availability of diesel fuel? Parents need to know that if they are purchasing a KCC Travel Saver or a KCC 16+ Travel Saver ticket that the bus services that they are currently relying on will continue.

Harry Rayner

County Councillor for Malling West

Answer

Although the current environment for our bus operators remains a challenging with rising costs and falling passenger numbers, there is not a threat to the schools' transport network. The Council continues to support bus services through its own budget and Department for Transport funding, with over £13m being invested in direct support for bus services.

Parents and carers should therefore apply for the KCC Travel Saver or KCC 16+ Travel Saver as usual, taking account of the published application timescales. Should any risk to school services arise, KCC would work with operators to seek to protect these services wherever possible, recognising their importance to families and young people.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Luke Evans to Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

In response to a previous CCQ, the then Cabinet Member for DOLGE explained that KCC remains committed to reviewing best practices and exploring viable alternatives to glyphosate as a solution for highway weed control, but at that time (September 2025) glyphosate remained the most appropriate solution.

Concerns have been raised by organisations including the World Health Organization, which has classified glyphosate as “probably carcinogenic to humans,” and there is ongoing public concern about exposure in areas frequented by residents, children, and pets. Three dogs died last year in Westgate and vets said it could be due to poisoning from herbicides.

Could the Cabinet Member confirm if there are any updates since September, including any trials of new non toxic products?

Luke Evans

County Councillor for Birchington and Rural

Answer

I can confirm that as a Highway Authority, Kent County Council (KCC) continue to use a targeted weed treatment on roads and pavements twice a year with herbicide. This is as part of our statutory duty under the Highways Act to maintain a safe, accessible, and well-managed highway network for all users.

The product used, which is glyphosate, is still approved for this use by the Chemical Regulations Directorate (CRD) of the Health and Safety Executive (HSE).

The Council is guided by the UK regulatory position, under which glyphosate remains approved for use where it is applied in accordance with the relevant legislation, product authorisations and codes of practice.

Furthermore, I can also confirm that, since the previous response in September 2025, there have been no substantive changes to KCC's approach to highway weed control, and no new non-toxic product trials are currently underway.

We are also not aware that there have been any significant advancements in weed treatment or methodologies beyond that which we stated we had reviewed previously such as Hot Foam, Hot Water, Cultural methods and Infra-Red. Therefore, to date, there is still no alternative proven to be as effective, affordable, and environmentally sustainable as glyphosate.

Recognising the concerns raised by some residents and Members, KCC Highways will continue to explore opportunities to reduce pesticide use and to trial alternative methods for weed control when new approaches are identified that are effective, affordable and operationally deliverable.

Question No. 4

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Alister Brady to Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

Alignment with the National Outcomes Framework is essential to demonstrate measurable impact, ensure accountability, and maintain public and government confidence - and failure risks poorer outcomes for residents, loss of trust, and potential government intervention or direction.

What clear evidence can the KCC administration provide that its service delivery is fully aligned with the framework and delivering demonstrable results for Kent residents?

Alister Brady

County Councillor for Canterbury City North

Answer

Thank you for the question.

Of course, we recognise that the Government has introduced the Local Outcomes Framework and we will engage with it appropriately - indeed a report was considered at the P&R Cabinet Committee on 2nd July. However, the real test is not whether a council can demonstrate compliance with a reporting framework; it is whether it is delivering for residents.

I am confident that this administration is delivering on the priorities that matter to the people of Kent, and we have robust performance arrangements in place to monitor that delivery, challenge underperformance, and drive improvement.

It is worth noting that many of the measures within the Local Outcomes Framework are not new - they are all based on existing nationally published datasets. The vast majority of these datasets are drawn together from the statutory services that we and our local partners deliver, so there is naturally going to be a level of alignment. Some metrics are already included in our corporate performance monitoring through cabinet committee dashboards but, where this is not the case, services will generally have been

monitoring these for many years, especially as this is the data by which government departments already hold our services to account, albeit in a more disparate way.

We already have established performance reporting through Cabinet Committees, as well as the regular review of key performance indicators and wider management information throughout our services, which allows us to monitor delivery against both national and local priorities.

But it's important that we continue to focus on the issues that matter most for Kent residents. As the saying goes, if everything is a priority, then nothing is a priority. Through our annual KPI and target-setting process, we review performance, identify areas that require greater attention, and direct resources accordingly.

If the Government's benchmarking tool is available in time, we will incorporate it into that process alongside our own data, local intelligence and professional expertise. We will consider how Kent compares with similar authorities, but we will also apply local judgement rather than relying solely on a national framework.

So, yes, we will use the Local Outcomes Framework and are aware of the particular focus it brings onto the metrics included within it. But our primary focus will remain on delivering outcomes for Kent residents, not simply managing to a centrally prescribed set of indicators. That is where I believe the public would expect our attention to be.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from John Moreland to Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

In May 2026 Ringway replaced Amey as this Council's highways maintenance contractor. The handover has not been seamless. By June 2026, the IT transfer remained incomplete, with highways maintenance teams being left without access to their asset list. This has resulted in at least one highways improvement project, scheduled for Rusthall High Street this July, being postponed.

Please may the Cabinet Member confirm how long highways maintenance teams remained without access to their asset list, how many projects have been delayed as a result of this and whether the additional costs caused by this are being met by the Council or by Ringway?

John Moreland

County Councillor for Tunbridge Wells West

Answer

Thank you for your question.

As Members will appreciate, the mobilisation of the new Highways Term Maintenance Contract is a significant undertaking, involving the transfer of a wide range of services, including people, systems and operational responsibilities. While there have inevitably been some transitional challenges associated with a contract of this scale, these have been actively managed by both the Council and Ringway.

With regard to the specific issue raised, the Council's highway asset information is held within our Works Asset Management System (WAMS). Access to this system and the asset data it contains has remained available throughout the transition period, and officers have continued to undertake their duties using the same core asset information as was available under the previous contract arrangements.

I am not aware of any highway maintenance or improvement projects having been delayed as a result of a lack of access to asset information. Consequently, there was no period during which highway maintenance teams were unable to access the asset list in a manner that affected service delivery.

As such there are no costs attributable to either party due a lack of access to asset information.

In relation to the Rusthall High Street improvement scheme, the decision was taken to allow additional engagement and consultation with local businesses and shopkeepers. This was to ensure that the works can be delivered with the least possible disruption to the local community. The team will let you know when the commencement date has been confirmed.

Question No. 6

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Dean Burns to Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Kent County Council is currently spending around £800 million on adult social care and over £420 million on children's services, with further pressures from SEND transport (KCC Budget Reports 2024/25; Cabinet papers on Adults and Children's Services).

Can the Deputy Leader set out how the Council will genuinely shift towards prevention — rather than crisis management — while managing these escalating costs, and what action is being taken to ensure Kent is not left carrying a disproportionate share of national pressures?

Dean Burns

County Councillor for Ashford East

Answer

Spending on Adult Social Care and Children's Services accounts for nearly $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Council's net revenue budget. Spending on these services is required under legislation such as Care Act 2014, Children and Families Act 2014, Education Act 1996. These acts (along with others and relevant statutory guidance) place obligations on the Council to provide support qualifying individuals. In recent years, the demand for and more significantly the cost of providing support for these individuals has been increasing in excess of the funding available from central government settlement and permitted local taxation. This means spending on these services has been increasing as an overall proportion of the Council's budget.

In Adult Social Care, the Adult Social Care and Health Prevention Framework promotes independence and early intervention, with evidence showing that an enablement-first approach is helping more people remain in or return to their own homes rather than requiring longer-term care. Through the Better Care Fund, joint working with the NHS supports investment in services that prevent deterioration, reduce avoidable hospital admissions and promote independence. Close collaboration is also taking place with Public Health, NHS Kent and Medway, and wider system partners to deliver the

Government's neighbourhood health agenda, bringing together health, social care and community services to provide more joined-up support closer to home. While prevention will not eliminate the need for statutory services, it can help reduce avoidable demand over time and ensure that people receive support earlier, in line with duties to prevent, reduce or delay the need for care.

In Children's Services, Government funding through the Families First for Children Programme and Family Hubs Programme is being invested in preventative services that help children and families access the right support at the right time. SEND reforms have similarly focused on early intervention and strengthening mainstream provision, supported by ring-fenced grants to build local capacity. This aligns with the Council's work to improve inclusion in mainstream settings, enabling more children to have their needs met alongside their peers while reducing reliance on more costly specialist provision over time. However, Kent is not alone in facing these pressures. Without fundamental national reform, particularly to the funding of social care and SEND, demand and costs will continue to outpace available resources. Strong representations continue to be made to Government to ensure that national funding arrangements properly reflect the scale of need and that Kent is not left carrying a disproportionate share of these growing national challenges.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Paul Thomas to Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

As an Opposition Leader, I want to contribute positively to the work of the Authority and I think that engagement with the Executive and in particular the Leader of the Council is an important part of that. This helps us make formal committee meetings more effective, helps support useful County Council debates and proper consideration of Motions for Time Limited Debate.

With that in mind, can the Leader please advise how they plan to work with Opposition Group Leaders, outside of the formal committee settings, to support effective cross-party activity and discussion of KCC business to make sure all elected Members can support the authority in delivering Best Value for the people of Kent?

Paul Thomas

County Councillor for Maidstone South

Answer

Mr Chairman, I would love to have an opposition, and opposition leaders, for that matter, with whom I could work collaboratively. Nothing, nothing, would make me happier.

However.

Since becoming leader of this council, a job that I take extremely seriously, I have on several occasions reached out to my friends opposite to ask if they would work WITH me to obtain successful results for the benefit of the people of Kent. Some of my Cabinet Members attempted the same.

On every single occasion I'm afraid that our requests for cooperation and collaboration fell on deaf ears.

So Mr Chairman, I'm afraid that until the opposition can prove to me, that they can conduct themselves with civility, with calmness, with the ability not to waffle on – and most importantly – the ability not to go running to the local press with confidential council information – knowing that their tittle-tattle will be printed - unchecked – as if it were fact – then I'm afraid that my members and I will continue to simply get on with the job.

Because funnily enough, all the stats would point to the fact that we seem to be doing just fine without their “help”.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Amelia Randall to Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

Upon taking office, the leader and her administration put forward an external recruitment freeze arguing that freezing vacant posts was essential to protecting the councils finances and delivering value for money. Official freedom of information data reveals that over the last financial year, Kent County Council spent a staggering £28.2 Million on temporary agency staff - with over half of that total £16.7 million, draining into just one single directorate: children young people and education.

Will the leader admit that her signature recruitment freeze has completely backfired, forcing managers to bypass full time hiring in favour of extortionate, premium rate corporate agency middlemen, or does she truly believe that an annual £28.million temporary staffing bill represents the financial efficiency she promised Kent residents?

Amelia Randall

County Councillor for Birchington and Rural

Answer

No. I do not accept the premise of the question.

The recruitment controls were introduced as a responsible measure to protect the Council's financial position. They were not a blanket ban on recruitment. A central process was put in place so that essential, statutory and financially justified roles could still be filled.

The agency spend was not caused by the recruitment controls. It reflects the reality that, in some services, increasingly at this time of uncertainty and particularly in children's services, there are not enough people willing to take permanent roles. Many social workers choose to remain agency workers, and if we did not use them, we would leave critical vacancies unfilled and put statutory services at risk.

The phrase “corporate agency middlemen” is also wildly inaccurate and misrepresents the position. Kent County Council uses its own arrangements, including Commercial Services Kent Ltd, a wholly owned company which provides temporary staff on behalf of the Council. That helps us manage cost and maintain control, rather than simply relying on an unmanaged external market.

Agency staffing is not the preferred long-term answer. We work hard to drive more permanent recruitment, better retention and stronger workforce planning and have a range of actions and activities to achieve this and officers can update you on this. But where the alternative is leaving vital frontline posts vacant, the responsible decision is to protect services for Kent residents while continuing to reduce reliance on agency staff wherever we can.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

**Question from James Defriend to Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Integrated
Children's Services**

During the Fostering fortnight in May, we celebrated the dedication of Kent's foster carers and the life changing difference they make to children and young people.

Can the Cabinet Member update Council on the steps being taken to recruit and maintain more foster carers in Kent and explain how increasing our in-house fostering capacity will help more children remain close to their families, schools and community, whilst delivering better outcomes and better value for tax payers?

James Defriend

County Councillor for Dover Town

Answer

Recruiting and retaining more in-house foster carers in Kent remains a key priority. Kent Fostering continues to focus on targeted recruitment campaigns, using both localised community messaging and wider social media and digital platforms to reach Kent residents. Kent uses inspirational stories from our foster carers and children in care to highlight the rewards and benefits of fostering for the Local Authority. Virtual Information Events continue to be held monthly; these are well attended with an average of 15-20 potential new carers attending. Kent recognises retaining and valuing our existing foster carers is central to encouraging others to come forward and provide an extensive rewards package including "Refer a friend" Scheme, Mockingbird support, regular training, support groups and peer mentors, alongside activity days and awards ceremonies for both foster carers, children in care and care leavers.

The fostering service attend community events throughout Kent to raise awareness of the urgent need for more local foster carers. By investing in growing Kent's community of

in-house foster carers, Kent can make best use of public funds by reducing reliance on Independent Fostering Agencies and residential children's homes of which the placement costs are considerable. Many of such placements are far from the child's home and can impact on how much family time a child may have with their birth family and local friends network, whilst leading to the child experiencing a disruption in education and health provisions given the child may not be able to continue attending those provisions given the distance to travel. Kent is accessing DFE support to deliver

“Renewing Fostering”, a project where local authorities come together to support recruiting more foster carers, both nationally and locally. This will help more children remain close to their families, continue to attend their local school and wherever possible support children to live within a family Kinship arrangement.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Stuart Heaver to Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

Given that 8,000 homes and businesses in Whitstable West were left without water for several days in late May, causing untold hardship and economic damage, and that this was the fourth major water outage in Kent within ten months - to what extent does the Leader feel the Kent Water Forum to tackle these issues, as announced in July last year by the then Cabinet Member for Environment, has been a success?

Stuart Heaver

County Councillor for Whitstable West

Answer

I'm sure my friend opposite will agree that the water situation in Kent has gone from bad to worse in the course of the past year. We have witnessed tens of thousands of households and businesses being without water, either side of the Christmas period and again more recently during the first heatwave of the year in late May. And now there is a hosepipe ban.

We have all felt anger and frustration that the water companies seemed slow to react and were not very adept at handling the communications with residents.

The situation in Kent is much worse than I had at first thought. The results of the Council's Short Focused Inquiry were very helpful in highlighting the major issues and it's clearly a multi-faceted problem

So I have adapted my approach accordingly and the Kent Water Resilience Forum, which has a much wider scope, is due to hold its inaugural meeting in October.

Mr Chairman with your permission, I'd like to save the details of this for when I present item number 11 on today's agenda.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Dean Truder to Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

Does the Leader agree that the continued large-scale housebuilding without confirmed sustainable water infrastructure risks placing unacceptable pressure on existing communities, will she therefore urge the Government, planning authorities and water companies to place a moratorium on further major housing approvals in Kent until water companies can demonstrate that sufficient long-term water resources and infrastructure are in place?

Dean Truder

County Councillor for Swanley & Hextable

Answer

I recognise the concerns raised. As I referenced in answer to the previous question, the County Council's Short Focused Inquiry on Water Supply highlighted clear pressures on water resources and infrastructure in Kent, including the need for greater long-term planning, investment, and stronger alignment between development and water capacity.

I have previously lobbied Government on water sector failings and will continue to do so, making clear that infrastructure must keep pace with growth. However, decisions on housing and planning sit with Government and local planning authorities.

The Kent Water Resilience Forum, which has a wide scope, is due to hold its inaugural meeting in October.

Mr Chairman again with your permission, I'd like to save the details of this for when I present item number 11 on today's agenda.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

**Question from Marc Logen to Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Integrated
Children's Services**

Many young people who come into contact with the youth justice system have experienced significant challenges in their lives.

Can the Cabinet Member explain how Kent County Council, through the Youth Justice Service & its partners, is working to identify & support vulnerable young people at an earlier stage, helping to reduce offending behaviour & improve life chances?

Marc Logen

County Councillor for Sevenoaks North & Darent Valley

Answer

Kent County Council works with partners such as the Police, schools, health services and community organisations to identify and respond to children who are vulnerable to offending and other negative outcomes. The aim is to offer the right support quickly, prevent problems getting worse and avoid unnecessary entry into the criminal justice system.

Our main prevention approach is through Adolescent Early Help, which supports children and families before issues escalate. Referrals can come from professionals or by self-referral.

When the local authority is involved, our services assess the child's needs and risks and coproduce an intervention plan with the child and their support network (including family and professionals) to meet those needs. This early help and diversion approach is helping to reduce the number of children entering the youth justice system.

Many children involved have complex needs, including challenges with school attendance, mental health, special educational needs, substance misuse and family circumstances. Adolescent Early Help and Youth Justice work together across education, health, social care, Family Hubs, police and voluntary organisations to address these wider issues, not just the behaviour.

The focus is on improving life chances as well as reducing offending. This includes helping children access suitable education, improve their health and strengthen family support.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Ben Fryer to Linden Kemkaran, Leader of the Council

In July last year, following the 40% increase in Dartford Crossing charges, the Leader wrote to Lilian Greenwood MP, Minister for the Future of Roads, asking for Kent to receive a share of Dart Charge income. Residents in my division, and across Dartford, suffer dreadfully from crossing-related traffic, with residents on the Bridge Estate sometimes effectively cut off when local roads grind to a halt.

Almost a year on, has the Leader received a formal reply from the Minister, and will she continue to press for Dart Charge income to fund traffic mitigation for Dartford communities most affected by the crossing?

Ben Fryer

County Councillor for Dartford North East

Answer

Thank you for the question.

Yes, I did receive a formal response from the Minister for the Future of Roads following my letter regarding the 40% increase in Dartford Crossing charges. Unfortunately, the response was predictably disappointing. While the Minister acknowledged the concerns raised, she confirmed that the Government intends to continue using Dart Charge revenues, after operating costs, to support wider transport schemes, including the Lower Thames Crossing, rather than allocating a share directly to Kent or the communities most impacted by crossing-related traffic.

I remain of the view that there is a strong case for Kent to receive a proportion of this income. Communities in Dartford bear a significant burden from congestion associated with one of the country's most important strategic crossings, and it is only fair that they see a direct benefit from the revenue generated.

I will therefore continue to press Government – and whichever Minister may or may not be in charge by the autumn - to recognise the impact on Kent residents and to consider how Dart Charge income can better support local traffic mitigation measures, highway improvements and infrastructure investment in the areas most affected by the Crossing.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Not progressed

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Rob Yates to Wayne Chapman, Chair of the Flood Risk and Water Management Committee

Following the May 2026 water outages affecting over 20,000 people in Kent, which led to the UK's largest commercial greenhouse having their water supply disconnected, will the Chair of the Flood Risk and Water Management committee confirm if he has been in touch with senior representatives of Water Resources South East, Southern Water and South East Water, to ask them to explain why they are failing to keep our taps on, and will the Chair confirm whether Kent County Council members will be able to scrutinise these individuals whose foreign owned companies (Southern Water and South East Water) control the flow of water to our farms, our hospitals and our residents?

Rob Yates

County Councillor for Cliftonville

Answer

I fully recognise the serious impact that the May 2026 water outages had on residents, businesses and key services in Kent, including the disruption experienced by households and sectors that rely on a secure water supply.

KCC is working with partner agencies through the Kent & Medway Resilience Forum, including the water companies, to ensure that learning from the recent water outages is understood ahead of any future water disruption incidents. The recent Short Focused Inquiry, for which there was cross party support set out a number of recommendations for consideration by the executive.

The administration is taking a strategic and collaborative approach to improving water resilience in Kent. This approach recognises the complexity of the water system and the need to involve the range of stakeholders who influence supply, demand, planning, regulation, investment and emergency response. Further detail is set out in a separate paper being debated later in the meeting, including the proposed 25-year Water Resources Strategy and the establishment of the Kent Water Resilience Partnership to identify risks, agree actions, support long-term resilience planning and enable greater scrutiny. Alongside this, where appropriate the Flood Risk and Water Management Committee will provide an opportunity for water companies to attend and answer questions from Members.

I believe that the Leader will set out fully to the Chamber her intended approach to holding the water companies and stakeholders to account in item number 10 on the agenda.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Richard Streatfeild, MBE to Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

The total approved General Fund capital programme including roll forwards for 2025-26 was £378.8m. The capital programme spend for the year is £260.8m, which represents 69% of the approved budget. In addition to this, schools spend totalled £12.4m and spend on Private Finance Initiatives (PFI) which are on the council's balance sheet totalled £2.9m. The £105.8m underspend against the budget is split between a +£29.7m real variance and -£135.5m rephasing variance. The 'Capital by directorate' table sets out the position at the end of 2025-26. The major in-year variances (real variances of over £0.1m and rephasing variances of over £1.0m) are were described by directorate within the papers.

Would the Cabinet Member agree that this administration has not been able to run capital projects to time or to budget? In answering the question, could he explain why?

Richard Streatfeild, MBE

County Councillor for Sevenoaks Town

Answer

The current budget variances are not indicative of these conclusions. This level of rephasing and variance is not unusual across authorities; it is not something new. The average rephasing for the previous 3 years, 2022-2025 was £180m each year or 44% of the budget. For 2025-26 the rephasing was £135m against a budget of £380m (36%), which was lower than the previous years' average. The main contributors to rephasing are the timing of funding, planning delays, environmental factors that cannot always be identified prior to works commencing, projects delivered by third parties and projects put on hold as need has changed or whilst best value for money is determined. Many of these are outside of the authority's control or are necessary to ensure that tax-payers money is being spent in the best way.

Real variance does not necessarily mean "overspend"; it is comparing the outturn figures to budget. If for example KCC receives additional grant that was not in the budget that would be included in the "real variance" figure. In the 2025-26 outturn, at least £22.3m of the £29.7m real variance comprised of additional funding that had not been budgeted for.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Martin Brice to Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

Would the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport please pass to the staff in his department my heartfelt congratulations for the excellent work on Major Yorks Road in Tunbridge Wells to reduce the risk of flooding in The Pantiles area of the town. This was carried out over two summers with the minimum of traffic disruption. This came at considerable cost and is money well spent.

Is he aware that the Commons Conservators have also acted to slow the passage of water from the Commons down to the Pantiles by creating runnels to guide rainwater into the woodland areas? Would he be good enough to suggest to staff that substantial efforts be made to clear the surface water drains on Castle Road, London Road, and Mount Edgcumbe Road?

Martin Brice

County Councillor for Tunbridge Wells South

Answer

I thank the Member for their complimentary comments regarding the works carried out at Major York's Road in Tunbridge Wells. KCC Highways has completed phases of highway drainage improvement works in this area, and KCC's Flood and Water Management Team has more recently undertaken works to install a culvert and infiltration basin on the Common.

The Conservators of the Commons have also carried out additional works at various locations. KCC has worked closely with the Conservators throughout the delivery of these improvements, and I would like to thank them for their constructive collaboration.

I can also confirm that works have now been commissioned to cleanse the surface water drains on Castle Road, London Road and Mount Edgcumbe Road.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

Question from Antony Hook to Peter Osborne, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport

The temporary bridge installed by KCC over Faversham Creek several years ago suffers from poor drainage. Surface water pools deeply, creating hazards and discomfort for pedestrians, cyclists and motorists.

Will the newly arranged second temporary bridge resolve this drainage issue and can the Cabinet Member update the council on steps to re-install a permanent opening bridge?

Antony Hook

County Councillor for Faversham

Answer

The County Council is aware that surface water can accumulate on the existing temporary bridge during periods of rainfall. The bridge continues to be inspected and maintained to ensure it remains safe for use.

The current bridge will need to be replaced within the next 12 months as the existing contract approaches expiry; however, no replacement temporary bridge has yet been procured. As part of the design process for a replacement temporary bridge, the Council will seek to improve drainage and reduce water pooling where reasonably practicable. However, temporary bridge structures have inherent design limitations, and, given the constraints of the site, it may not be possible to prevent standing water during all rainfall events.

With regard to a permanent opening bridge, whilst Kent County Council supports a long-term solution for the crossing, the original opening bridge is not a KCC asset and responsibility for a permanent replacement rests with Peel Ports as bridge owner. KCC has not received any recent updates from Peel Ports on proposals or timescales for a permanent solution.

As Highway Authority, KCC's role is to ensure the route remains safe and fit for purpose for highway users. In the immediate term, the Council is focused on securing a replacement temporary bridge so that access across Faversham Creek can continue to be maintained, while recognising the importance of a longer-term solution for the crossing.

COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING

16/07/2026

**Question from Mark Hood to Jamie Henderson Cabinet Member for Environment,
Coastal Regeneration and Public Health**

Many Kent residents work hard to sustain beautiful gardens which border on footpaths which are maintained by the County Council. Our contractors apply pesticides to Kent's verges and paths and even when the operator spot sprays there is often drift of the chemical which can have a deadly effect for treasured plants.

Will the Cabinet Member consider introducing a system so residents can display the Plan Bee logo or another of his choice to make contractors aware of these areas which are being maintained to support wildlife and improve amenity and avoid treating them?

Mark Hood

County Councillor for Tonbridge

Answer

As Highway Authority, Kent County Council undertakes targeted weed treatment on roads and pavements twice a year as part of its statutory duty under the Highways Act to maintain a safe, accessible and well-managed highway network.

Pesticides are applied only where weeds are present on highway hard surfaces, in line with approved procedures, relevant legislation and contract requirements. Verges are not treated. All operatives carrying out weed control are trained and hold the required certification.

To reduce the risk of drift, they check weather conditions throughout the day and may only work when it is dry and not too windy. The equipment used, is designed to keep treatment controlled and prevent overspray and drift.

KCC cannot remove sections of adopted highway from the treatment programme because of its statutory responsibilities, so signage asking contractors to avoid treatment would not be appropriate. However, operatives only treat green weeds present at the time of their visit. Where residents safely remove weeds from highway hard surfaces, there should be no need for herbicide to be applied in that location.

A county-wide recognisable marker or sign for private land being actively managed for wildlife is a helpful suggestion and could support greater awareness of sensitive

adjoining areas. While it could not be used to prevent necessary weed treatment on the highway, it may provide a useful visual reminder for operatives to take particular care where there is a risk of overspray or drift. I would be pleased for officers to explore this further with interested Members and relevant stakeholder groups.