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 Wednesday, 9 September 2026.

PRESENT: Mr A Brady, Mr M A J Hood, Mr T Mallon (Vice-Chair), Mr M Paul, Mrs. B Porter, Mr T Prater, Mr R Waters, Mr A Thorp, Mr D Sian, Mrs. M Lawes, Mr P Thomas and Mr H Rayner

ALSO PRESENT: Mr Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services), Mr Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), Mr Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport , Mr Spencer Dixon (Deputy Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport),Chris Burwash (Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services) , Mr Mark Mulvihill (Deputy Cabinet Member Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health) , John Yates (Head of Delivery), Mrs E Fairbairns (Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce) Mike Russell (Stakeholder Engagement Manager) and James Latter (Pathfinder Manager).

IN ATTENDANCE: Simon Jones (Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport), Stephanie Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Matthew Wagner (Interim Chief Analyst),), Helen Rowe (Interim Head of Highways-Assets), Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy), Victoria Soames (Senior Project Manager) , Whitney Gee (Programme Manager) , Elizabeth Milne (Head of Environment) , Liz Davidson (Partnership Director) and James Willis (Democratic Support Officer).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

101. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 2)

Mr Defriend sent Apologies. Mr Rayner was present for this iteration of the Committee.

102. Declarations of Interest
(Item 3)

No declarations of interest were received.

103. Minutes of the meeting held on 07/07/2026
(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held July 7th, 2026, were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chair.

104. Verbal Updates
(Item 5)

Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services), Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), and Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) Provided an update on the Following:

1. Mr Osborne discussed the following aspects:

a) The Committee received an update on the Dover Border Access Improvement Scheme (DBAIP). It was reported that £20 million funding had been secured through the Levelling Up Fund to support the project.

b) Members were advised that the project would reconfigure the border control facilities within the Port of Dover's Eastern Docks. The works would provide additional processing space and vehicle queuing capacity for the equivalent of more than 500 heavy goods vehicles.

c) It was reported that the Port of Dover would deliver the works. The project would be funded through a combination of Government funding and investment from the Port, and no financial contribution would be required from Kent County Council (KCC).

d) Members were informed that, under normal operating conditions, the improvements were expected to reduce the frequency and duration of traffic management measures associated with Dover Traffic Assessment Project (TAP) and Operation Brock by up to 80%.

e) The Committee received an update on Kent County Council's active travel rewards app (WeRoam). The app would encourage residents to record journeys made by walking, cycling, or using a wheelchair or mobility aid in return for rewards. The initiative aimed to improve health and wellbeing, reduce car use, and support climate objectives. A strong early response to the scheme had been observed with 1,859 downloads recorded shortly after launch. It was also reported that the app had attracted interest from other local authorities and received positive media coverage, including on BBC Radio Kent.

f) Members were advised that the Bearsted Road scheme had entered fully into the construction phase, with major gas and water utility diversions completed. Retaining wall works at Newnham Court had progressed and work continuing on new access roads and associated infrastructure had continued. Additional funding had been secured, and the scheme remained on track for completion in winter 2026/27.

g) Between April and August, approximately 628,000 square metres of Kent's road network had been improved through resurfacing, and 425,000 square metres of preventative maintenance works had been undertaken, including

significant completed schemes at Burham Green, the A249 Detling Hill, Forest Hill and East Sutton Road in Maidstone.

h) Members joined in congratulating Mr John Farmer on his retirement and thanked him for his 56 years of dedicated service to Kent County Council.

2. Mr Henderson presented the following:

a) The Committee received an update on work being undertaken with partners across Kent and Medway through the Pathways2Resilience programme (P2R). Members were advised that the programme was developing a long-term, evidence-led approach to water resilience and climate adaptation, considering both current pressures and the future impacts of climate change on communities, businesses and public services.

b) It was reported that evidence had indicated that summer rainfall could reduce significantly in future decades, while Winter rainfall events could become more intense. It was highlighted that this presented challenges for a growing county, where reliable water supplies were essential to support residents, businesses, agriculture, the environment and economic growth.

c) The Committee was informed that work had been undertaken to review current and future water demand, assess climate-related risks and examine a range of potential scenarios to inform long-term planning. investment and resilience measures. The next phase of work would look to bring local authorities, water companies, environmental organisations and local communities together to shape a shared vision.

d) Members were advised that proposals to improve resilience had included South East Water's plans for a desalination plant at Reculver, capable of producing up to 30 million litres of water per day, and the progression of the Broad Oak Reservoir project, with completion anticipated in 2033.

e) Members were advised that Thanet Earth had secured an extension to its Environment Agency (EA) licence to increase abstraction from the aquifer, helping to reduce demand on the wider water network during periods of network pressure.

f) The Committee received an update on waste and recycling initiatives, including the Extended Producer Responsibility (EPR) scheme and the forthcoming (due to launch Oct 1st) Deposit Return Scheme (DRS). Members were advised that these measures, alongside new opportunities to convert waste into fuel, would help improve resource efficiency, support environmental objectives and reduce waste management costs to taxpayers.

g) Members noted that food waste recycling had increased by 28% since April, with more than 2,100 additional tonnes collected. This had generated savings of over £290,000 in disposal costs and reduced the volume of waste requiring

disposal. It was further reported that this progress was being supported through clearer recycling guidance and communications to encourage positive behavioural change.

h) The Cabinet Member closed out the discussion by highlighting the continued expansion of the Maya's Community Support Centre reuse network, with a free shop warehouse in Herne Bay, a shop in Canterbury High Street and the recent opening of a new facility in Cliftonville, providing valuable support to local communities.

3. Mr Palmer presented a portfolio update to the committee:

a) Members were informed of the outcomes of Trading Standards Operation Judicial, a multi-agency enforcement initiative undertaken in Canterbury on the 28th of august and had targeted six retail establishments. More than 10,000 counterfeit, unsafe and non-compliant products had been seized, including illicit vapes, toys and electrical items.

b) The Cabinet Member reported that Trading Standards had recently secured £30,000 for victims of fraud following a successful investigation and court proceedings. Additional safeguarding activities in August had prevented losses totalling approximately £127,000 through interventions relating to scams and doorstep crime.

c) Updated the Committee on public events delivered by officers. This had seen 251 residents attend with an additional 169 of KCCs staff attending a delivered scam training session.

d) The Committee was advised of a national Trading Standards acid awareness campaign relating to corrosive substances and public awareness activity with retailers. Trading Standards had discussed the risks to merchants and who maybe buying hazardous substances.

e) An update was provided on the work of the Community Safety Team, including delivery of Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs) and a recent learning event attended by more than 150 frontline professionals.

f) Members were updated on the work of the Community Warden Service and the Water SMART programme. The Cabinet Member paid tribute to Community Warden Giles Barnard following his recent death in July. Members from across the Committee recorded their appreciation for his service to local communities.

g) The Committee was informed of the continued success of Kent's libraries service, including strong participation in the Summer Reading Challenge 2026 and customer satisfaction levels of 95% from 7894 responses received. Further updates were provided regarding the work of Active Kent and Medway

and the ongoing delivery of programmes supporting health and physical activity.

4. In the absence of Mr Wimble, Mr Henderson delivered the following update on behalf of the Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Special Projects:

a) Members were informed that 76% of learners participating in Wave 6 of the Skills Bootcamps programme had achieved a positive employment or skills outcome, exceeding the national average. Additional funding had been secured to deliver construction-focused training opportunities.

b) The Committee was advised that the Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIPs) for Kent and Medway had recently been launched and identified future skills priorities across a range of sectors. Updates were provided on the No Use Empty programme (NUE), which had supported commercial developments expected to deliver additional business units across Kent.

c) Members noted the recent appointment of Mrs Sarah Roots as Non-Executive Chair of Grow in Kent and received an update on the Kentish Wine Way campaign. The Kent and Medway Business Fund (launched 2024) had now loaned in excess of £5 million to support local businesses. Members were informed that demand for the fund had remained strong.

d) The Cabinet Member's update included progress relating to the campaign for enhanced international rail services through Kent. Members were informed of recent announcements from potential rail operators and ongoing work to demonstrate demand for future services. Residents and businesses were encouraged to back the campaign by completing a demand survey.

e) Members were advised of continued engagement through the Straits Committee and a recent visit by a delegation from Zeeland and representatives of the Dutch Embassy to explore regeneration and economic development opportunities.

5.Members and officers discussed the following points:

a) Questions were raised regarding timescales and performance monitoring associated with the Dover Border Access Improvement Project. Officers advised that delivery was expected within approximately two years and that the project's success would be measured through reductions in traffic management interventions, including Operation Brock.

b) Members welcomed the work of the Community Warden Service and sought assurances regarding opportunities to expand coverage across Kent. Officers advised that additional funding opportunities, including contributions from parish councils and commercial sponsorship arrangements would be explored.

c) Members discussed water resilience challenges, including concerns regarding water leakage and repair timescales. The Cabinet Member confirmed that the issue would continue to be raised with water companies and highlighted the importance of residents and Members continuing to report leaks. Representatives present also referred to ongoing investment in major water infrastructure projects and reductions in leakage across their networks.

d) Members requested that information on future water infrastructure projects across Kent be shared and highlighted concerns regarding future housing growth and water supply capacity in parts of the county. Members highlighted ongoing frustration on the way water infrastructure issues are addressed.

e) Members discussed support for community-led reuse initiatives and welcomed ongoing work between officers and local groups to reduce waste and increase reuse opportunities. The ongoing work with Maya's reuse was commended and members suggested that greater access be given to items from KCCs own waste transfer station. The Chair acknowledged this point and the Cabinet Member advised that the matter would require further investigation before a response could be provided. It was therefore agreed that the issue would be considered outside of the meeting and a response provided to members in due course.

RESOLVED to note the verbal updates

105. Southern Water: Installation of Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) Six-Monthly Update
(Item 6)

John Yates (Head of Delivery), Emma Fairbairns (Clean Rivers and Seas Taskforce) Mike Russell (Stakeholder Engagement Manager) and James Latter (Pathfinder Manager) were in attendance for this item.

1) Mike Russell opened the presentation with the following points:

a) The representatives from Southern Water introduced the six-monthly update and provided the Committee with an overview of progress made in delivering Sustainable Drainage Systems (SuDS) and storm overflow reduction measures across Kent. Members were advised that the Clean Rivers and Seas Task Force had expanded significantly, with more than 120 officers now engaged in storm overflow reduction programmes across the region.

b) Members were informed that Southern Water (SW) was delivering a £1.5 billion storm overflow reduction programme across its region, with approximately £300 million currently being invested in North Kent. The

programme focused on reducing storm overflow activity, improving water quality and creating more sustainable catchment management solutions.

c) SW officers provided an update on works underway within the principal North Kent catchments, including Whitstable, Queenborough, Sittingbourne, Faversham and Herne Bay. Members were informed that the approach combined traditional engineering solutions with sustainable drainage measures, smart infrastructure and surface water removal schemes

d) In relation to Whitstable, Members were advised that surface water separation and intelligent gate systems had reduced storm overflow events and that additional improvements, including the development of a new treatment works, were under consideration to address historical issues within the catchment.

e) The Committee heard that an 82% reduction in storm overflow events had been achieved within Queenborough through the installation of additional storage capacity, smart network controls and surface water removal activity. Members were informed that similar work in Sittingbourne had delivered an 85% reduction in spills by reducing groundwater ingress into the sewerage network.

f) SW officers outlined progress on a number of SuDS projects, including rain gardens and public realm improvements within Herne Bay town centre, attenuation and drainage schemes at Beacon Hill and Victoria Park, Herne Bay; a proposed SuDS scheme at Cobbers Bridge Road; a series of linked SuDS interventions throughout Faversham town centre; works at Cornwallis Circle, Beckley Street and Cromwell Road, Whitstable; and projects being developed within Sheppey and Queenborough.

g) Members were advised that investigations had also commenced within future catchments, including Bidborough and Tunbridge Wells, to identify surface water connections and opportunities for intervention. Officers explained that a substantial programme of investigative work was required before solutions could be designed and implemented.

h) The Committee noted the importance of partnership working and heard that Southern Water was working with local authorities, schools, major landowners, health organisations and commercial partners to identify opportunities for sustainable drainage and surface water management. Officers highlighted examples of successful collaboration through SuDS in Schools projects, public realm schemes and discussions with significant landowners and infrastructure operators.

i) Members were informed that Southern Water continued to operate its Rivers and Seas Watch platform, which provided real-time information on storm overflow activity and enabled residents and stakeholders to monitor performance and hold the organisation to account.

2) In discussion, Members raised the following matters:

a) Concerns were expressed regarding discharges from the Edenbridge Wastewater Treatment Works and the potential impact upon the forthcoming

Hever Castle Triathlon. Members requested assurances that every effort would be made to avoid storm overflow discharges ahead of the event. Officers acknowledged the concerns and undertook to investigate the issue further and provide a direct response. It was explained that storm overflow events were automated safety mechanisms and could not be manually activated; however, the organisation recognised the importance of continued investment to reduce such events.

b) Members sought clarification regarding the reduction targets for storm overflows and how improvements would be measured. Officers advised that regulatory targets required storm overflow activity to be reduced to fewer than ten events annually at designated locations and that performance would continue to be published through annual reporting and public data platforms.

c) Questions were raised regarding partnership working and whether drainage schemes already being delivered through wider regeneration initiatives were being reflected within the programme. Presenters confirmed that Southern Water was supporting a range of projects outside the specific storm overflow programme and that lessons learned from these initiatives would continue to inform wider delivery.

d) Members discussed opportunities to work more closely with farmers and landowners to create natural drainage features and on-farm water storage. Officers confirmed that engagement with the agricultural sector was ongoing and that catchment-based approaches formed an increasing part of future delivery plans.

e) Clarification was sought regarding rainfall thresholds and the circumstances in which storm overflows became operational. Officers confirmed that further work was underway to present this information in a more accessible format and acknowledged the importance of communicating such measures more clearly.

f) Members raised concerns regarding future maintenance responsibilities for SuDS infrastructure. It was explained that maintenance obligations would be determined through agreements with local partners and that appropriate maintenance funding would form part of the arrangements for each scheme.

g) Questions were raised regarding monitoring arrangements for inland river outfalls and the availability of data to local residents. Officers advised that information relating to monitored outfalls was available through Rivers and Seas Watch and that residents could continue to use that platform to access operational information.

h) The Chairman thanked the representatives of Southern Water for their attendance and welcomed the offer for continued engagement with Members regarding water resilience, storm overflows and sustainable drainage initiatives across Kent.

RESOLVED to note the Southern Water SuDS installation updates.

106. Performance Dashboard
(Item 7)

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

1) Mr Wagner updated Members on the following KPI movements:

    a) Introduced the report and explained that it contained data up to the end of June 2026. Members were advised that of the 58 Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) included within the dashboard, 40 had achieved target and were rated green, three had achieved performance above the floor standard and were rated amber, and four were below the floor standard and rated red. Four KPIs were not reported during Quarter 1 due to occurring at differing times of the year and the remaining seven were unable to be reported as planned.

    b) The Committee was advised that the four red-rated indicators related to: *HT02 – All Highways and Transportation enquiries requiring a response that were responded to within 28 days, HT08 – Emergency incidents attended within two hours, EW4 – Percentage of local planning authority requests for advice from the Heritage Service responded to within 21 days;* and *EW5 – Percentage of local planning authority requests for advice from the Ecological Advice Service responded to within 21 days.*

    c) Members were informed that a number of new Highways and Transportation KPIs had been introduced for 2026/27. Officers explained that several new indicators had not been reported due to ongoing validation work, system integration changes and the introduction of the new Highways Term Maintenance Contract.

    d) In relation to HT02 and HT08, officers advised that performance had been affected by a combination of adverse weather conditions, high service demand and the transition from the previous highway's contractor to the new provider, Ringway. Members were informed that systems and reporting arrangements continued to be embedded and that performance was expected to improve as those arrangements matured.

    e) The Committee noted that all emergency incidents had been attended, however system integration issues had affected the ability to fully validate performance reporting during the quarter. Officers confirmed that work continued with Ringway to improve reporting accuracy and confidence in the data being presented.

2) Members discussed the following matters:

    a) Questions were raised regarding the introduction of the new highway's contractor and the comparability of performance data with figures produced under previous contractual arrangements. Officers explained that KPI definitions remained largely unchanged and that validation work was being

undertaken to ensure consistency and reliability of future trend analysis. Members were advised that additional clarification could be provided once the new systems had become fully established.

b) Concerns were expressed regarding performance against highway enquiry response times, emergency attendance times and pothole repairs. Members highlighted examples from their local divisions where highway defects remained unresolved and queried whether improvements reported within countywide data were being experienced consistently across Kent.

c) In response, officers acknowledged the challenges associated with mobilisation of the new contract and advised that Ringway had inherited a significant backlog of work. Members were informed that considerable effort was being directed towards validating completed works, improving workflow management and reducing outstanding cases. It was reported that early operational indicators suggested improvements were being made and that performance was expected to improve in future quarters.

d) Members queried when the transition period associated with the new contract should be considered complete and sought assurances that performance expectations would continue to be robustly managed. Officers advised that ongoing performance monitoring remained in place and that the Cabinet Member had requested a detailed timetable for resolving outstanding performance reporting issues and embedding the new contract arrangements.

e) Discussion took place regarding the amber-rated Household Waste Recycling Centre mystery shopper assessment KPI (WM08). Members sought assurance that the reduction in performance represented a genuine change in service standards rather than a change in methodology. Officers confirmed that a new provider had been appointed to undertake the mystery shopping programme and that changes in scoring methodology had influenced the result. A review of the methodology was underway to ensure future results remained comparable and any relevant changes would be highlighted to Members at the next committee.

f) Members raised concerns regarding the performance of the Heritage Service (EW4) and the Ecological Advice Service (EW5). Officers explained that increasing planning activity, the introduction of Biodiversity Net Gain requirements and capacity pressures within specialist teams had contributed to delays in responding to planning consultations. Members were advised that recruitment and administrative support arrangements were being implemented to improve performance and reduce backlogs.

g) Questions were raised regarding the staffing levels required to improve performance within both services. Officers advised that the Ecological Advice Service was currently managing a vacancy and that work was underway with local planning authorities to review funding arrangements, ensure sufficient capacity and improve service resilience. Members were further advised that the expertise provided by both services remained highly valued by district and borough councils.

h) Members requested that future reports continue to contain explanatory information when KPIs are rated red, together with details of any actions being taken to address underperformance

i) The Committee discussed the possibility of introducing a KPI relating to repeat pothole repairs undertaken within the two-year warranty period provided under the new highways contract. Officers agreed to consider the suggestion as part of future performance monitoring arrangements.

j) Members highlighted both positive and negative experiences of highway maintenance works within their divisions. Examples of successful resurfacing schemes were noted, and officers were asked to pass Members' appreciation on to operational teams where appropriate.

k) Members welcomed the overall position that 85% of those KPIs reported in Quarter 1 had achieved their target and recognised the work ongoing to improve both highways performance and specialist planning consultation services.

RESOLVED to note the performance dashboard

107. 26/00045 - Transition of Active Kent & Medway to an independent legal entity and conclusion of hosting arrangements
(Item 8)

Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services) and Liz Davidson (Partnership Director) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report:

a) Explained that Active Kent & Medway was currently hosted by Kent County Council, which acted as the accountable body for funding, employment and governance arrangements. Members were advised that the existing hosting arrangements were due to conclude in March 2027 and that, following a structural review, the independent Board of Active Kent & Medway had determined that its preferred future operating model was to become an independent legal entity.

b) Members were informed that the proposed transition would enable Kent County Council to conclude its role as host authority while supporting the transfer of functions, funding arrangements, governance responsibilities and staffing arrangements to an independent organisation. The Committee heard that the proposed model would provide clearer accountability, stronger governance arrangements, greater organisational resilience and improved opportunities to secure and manage future external funding

c) The Cabinet Member advised that, having reviewed the proposal in detail, particular consideration had been given to the impact upon existing staff, service users and delivery partners. Members were informed that engagement had been undertaken with staff and stakeholders and that the proposed

arrangements were expected to support the continued development of sport and physical activity services across Kent and Medway.

d) Officers explained that the proposal related solely to Kent County Council's role in concluding the hosting and accountable body arrangements and providing appropriate transition support. Members were advised that the independent organisation would be responsible for its own governance, funding and operational arrangements following the completion of the transition programme

e) Active Kent & Medway currently received significant external funding, including investment from Sport England and Public Health, which Kent County Council administered as accountable body.

f) Kent County Council did not provide core revenue funding to the organisation, and the transition would be supported through a structured programme covering governance, funding, legal arrangements, workforce matters, ICT, finance and contractual responsibilities; and the preferred model reflected the position adopted by the majority of Active Partnerships operating nationally

2.In discussion, Members raised the following matters:

a) Questions were raised regarding references within the report to potential overcapacity within certain support services and whether the transfer arrangements could result in staffing implications for KCC. Officers advised that no redundancies were anticipated as a consequence of the proposal. It was explained that any impact upon central support functions would be minimal and related primarily to wider corporate arrangements currently supporting the hosted service.

b) Members sought clarification regarding whether the decision constituted a key decision or non-key decision, noting differing references within the report documentation. The Clerk advised that regardless of the classification, the decision would remain subject to the Council's governance arrangements and could be called in if required. It was acknowledged that the inconsistency would be reviewed and clarified. *(Clarified: Item was a Non-Key Decision that would be subjected to the same level of scrutiny)*

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

CONFIRM the cessation of Kent County Council's role as host authority for Active Kent & Medway (AKM).and the conclusion of the current hosting arrangements.

APPROVE the transition arrangements to support a transfer of functions, resource and staffing to an independent legal entity.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport and the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services and the Cabinet Member for Public Health, to implement the necessary arrangements arising from the cessation of hosting, and

to take other relevant actions, including but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision

108. 26/00046 - Specialist Highway Support Services Framework
(Item 9)

Richard Palmer (Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services), and Victoria Soames (Senior Project Manager) were in attendance for the item.

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report:

a) Explained that the current Independent Cost Consultancy contract used by the Major Capital Programme Team would expire in March 2027. The report sought approval to procure a new Specialist Highway Support Services Framework to provide independent cost consultancy, specialist utility support and programme review services to support the delivery of highway and transportation projects across Kent.

b) Members were advised that independent cost consultancy services had been utilised by Kent County Council for more than fifteen years and provided an important independent assessment of project costs, programme delivery and financial assurance. Officers explained that the independence of these services from the design function offered additional confidence in project budgets and business cases.

c) The Committee heard that the proposed framework would be structured into three lots*: Lot 1 – Independent Cost Consultancy, Lot 2 – Specialist Utility Support; and Lot 3 – Programme Review Support.*

d) Members were informed that the framework would provide access to specialist expertise on a call-off basis and would support improved cost certainty, programme assurance, governance and risk management across the Council's highways and transportation capital programme. The framework was worth (maximum value) £4 million over the contractual period with an option for an additional year and would replace the current arrangements when they expired in March 2027

2.Members raised the following points:

a) A Member queried whether the framework presented an opportunity to employ specialist quantity surveyor expertise directly within the authority rather than commissioning external consultants. Officers advised that demand for the service fluctuated considerably and that retaining sufficient specialist expertise in-house would be difficult. It was explained that the framework provided flexibility and access to specialist skills only when required.

b) Members sought clarification regarding how the authority would measure whether the framework delivered value for money and achieved the objectives

outlined within the report. Officers explained that the procurement process itself would ensure that suppliers were competitively assessed against quality and price criteria. In addition, individual call-off commissions would contain clear statements of work, performance expectations and monitoring arrangements to ensure that the required outputs were delivered.

c) Questions were raised regarding whether savings generated by the use of specialist support services could be quantified. Officers advised that the primary purpose of the framework was to provide independent assurance, strengthen project governance, improve cost certainty and reduce financial risk. While direct savings could not always be easily quantified, Members were informed that the services provided assurance that projects represented value for money and that cost estimates and commercial decisions had been independently scrutinised.

d) Members discussed the balance between externally commissioned expertise and the use of in-house resources. Officers advised that the specialist nature of the services, together with the requirement for independence and the variability of workload, meant that an external framework arrangement remained the preferred and most practical solution.

e) The Committee recognised the importance of maintaining independent technical and commercial assurance across major infrastructure projects and supported the proposed framework as a mechanism for providing specialist expertise, strengthening programme delivery and reducing project risk.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

APPROVE the procurement and AWARD of a Specialist Highway Support Services Framework to provide independent cost consultancy, specialist utility support and programme review services to support the delivery of highway and transportation schemes across Kent.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to take relevant actions necessary to implement the decision, including but not limited to undertaking the procurement process, awarding the framework agreements, finalising the terms of, and entering into the relevant contracts and any associated legal agreements

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to exercise any extension option(s) provided for within the framework agreement.

109. 26/00051 - Chestfield Tunnel Ventilation Replacement

(Item 10)

Peter Osborne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport), Helen Rowe (Head of Highways-Assets) and Whitney Gee (Programme Manager) were in attendance for the item.

1.The Cabinet Member presented the following:

a) Explained that the proposal concerned the replacement of the ventilation system within Chestfield Tunnel on the A299 Thanet Way. Members were advised that the ventilation system was a safety-critical asset which had reached the end of its serviceable life and required replacement to ensure the continued safe operation of the tunnel.

b) The Committee was informed that failures within the existing ventilation system during 2024 had resulted in significant disruption to the highway network and had necessitated the implementation of traffic management arrangements. It was further explained that the existing jet fan system had exceeded its expected operational lifespan and that the risk of further failures would continue to increase without intervention.

c) Members were advised that the preferred solution was the replacement of all 32 jet fans with modern equivalents fitted with angled louvre deflectors and the relocation of Fan 2 within each bank to improve maintenance access to associated lighting infrastructure. Officers explained that this option had been identified as offering the best balance of safety, operational effectiveness, constructability and value for money.

d) The Committee heard that the estimated cost of the preferred option was approximately £2.8 million and that funding would be met through the Department for Transport Highways Maintenance Block allocation. Members were advised that the option represented a significantly lower cost than alternative solutions which had been assessed during the options appraisal process.

e) Officers explained that the replacement system would: improve smoke control capability and tunnel safety; increase system reliability and resilience; reduce the likelihood of unplanned closures and emergency maintenance activity; improve access for maintenance works; and extend the operational life of the tunnel ventilation infrastructure.

2.Committee discussion raised the following points:

a) Members sought clarification regarding the contractual arrangements and whether the works would be delivered on a fixed-price basis. Officers advised that a competitive procurement process would be undertaken through the Council’s existing contractual arrangements. Members were informed that the design work had already been substantially developed, helping to reduce delivery and cost risks. Officers further advised that while some uncertainty remained regarding fixing arrangements within the tunnel structure, overall project risks had been substantially mitigated through the design process.

b) Questions were raised regarding whether the Equality Impact Assessment correctly reflected the preferred option. Officers confirmed that although one document referenced Option 2A, the preferred solution progressed through the decision report was Option 2B and that this represented the option under consideration.

c)) A Member queried whether contractual timescales and potential penalties could be applied in order to ensure timely delivery of the scheme. Officers explained that while contractual mechanisms could be considered, applying financial penalties often resulted in increased tender costs. Members were advised that the preferred approach was to manage delivery collaboratively through robust project management and contract administration arrangements.

d) The Committee recognised the importance of ensuring that the tunnel continued to operate safely and reliably and supported the proposed investment in replacement infrastructure.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

PROCEED with the replacement of the Chestfield Tunnel Ventilation System.

AUTHORISE the associated financial commitment, subject to the completion and approval of a satisfactory commercial business case demonstrating affordability, value for money and compliance with KCC procurement requirements.

DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, to take all necessary actions to implement the decision, including the procurement and award of contracts, subject to approval of the commercial business case.

110. Extended Producer Responsibility Activity and Updates-Report
(Item 11)

Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy) were in attendance for the item

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report and discussed the following:

a) Provided Members with an update on the national waste reforms and their implications for Kent County Council's waste disposal function. Members were advised that the report focused on Packaging Extended Producer Responsibility (PEPR), the Deposit Return Scheme (DRS) and the future implications of the Emissions Trading Scheme (ETS).

b) Members were informed that PEPR had already generated significant additional funding for local authorities. The Committee noted that Kent County Council had received £13.3 million during 2025/26 and had been allocated £11.6million for 2026/27, with future allocations continuing to be dependent upon national funding methodologies and scheme development

c) The Cabinet Member advised that the DRS would be introduced nationally in October 2027 and would focus on collecting plastic drinks bottles and metal beverage cans through a dedicated producer-funded collection system. While the scheme was expected to reduce the amount of material entering Kent's municipal waste stream, Members were advised that it could also reduce income generated from the sale and processing of recyclable materials currently managed through local authority contracts.

d) The committee heard that the ETS continued to represent a potential future financial pressure for waste disposal authorities. Officers explained that, although the UK ETS Authority had recently confirmed that waste incineration would not be brought into the scheme from January 2028 as previously anticipated, the policy remained under development and could still create significant future cost pressures associated with Energy from Waste facilities.

e) Members noted that Kent County Council and the Kent Resource Partnership were continuing to prepare for future legislative changes through service planning, financial modelling, behavioural change campaigns and partnership working to increase recycling rates, reduce residual waste and improve resource efficiency.

2.Members raised the following points

a) Members discussed the operation of the forthcoming DRS and queried whether there would be opportunities for local authorities to benefit from the collection of deposit-return materials. It was suggested that containers returned to retailers through collection machines could potentially be incorporated into local authority recycling arrangements rather than relying entirely on separate collection networks. Officers advised that discussions on this issue were ongoing nationally through local authority and government engagement channels. Members were informed that the issue had been raised through the Kent Resource Partnership and with Defra.

b) Questions were raised regarding whether glass bottles would be included within the DRS. Officers clarified that the current proposals related only to PET plastic bottles and metal drinks cans and did not include glass containers. Glass containers continue to be collected through all kerbside waste collection services for households.

c) The committee welcomed initiatives that sought to encourage the return and recycling of drinks containers and discussed the wider opportunity presented by producer responsibility measures to encourage more sustainable packaging design and improved environmental outcomes. Officers highlighted that EPR would increasingly place financial pressure on producers to consider recyclability and sustainability when designing packaging.

d) Members raised the need for additional recycling infrastructure and discussed concerns about the future management of waste processing capacity, including materials recovery facilities and the handling of appliances such as refrigerators and freezers. Officers advised that market challenges continued to exist nationally but confirmed that Kent had not been required to refuse household refrigeration items at its Household Waste Recycling Centres.

Members were informed that work continued with partners and contractors to manage capacity requirements and ensure appropriate disposal arrangements remained available.

e) Discussion took place regarding the importance of minimising the amount of waste sent for disposal through Energy from Waste facilities and increasing levels of reuse, recycling and recovery. Officers advised that reducing residual waste remained a key priority and that future reforms would continue to incentivise recycling and resource efficiency across Kent.

f) The Committee welcomed the progress made through the Packaging EPR scheme and recognised the significant financial and operational implications associated with the forthcoming DRS and future emissions trading scheme arrangements. Members further acknowledged the importance of continuing to improve recycling performance and reduce residual waste across Kent.

RESOLVED to note the Extended Producer Responsibility Activity and Updates Report.

111. 26/00054 - Procurement for Waste Transfer Services Contract - Folkestone & Hythe - CN260748
(Item 12)

Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), Helen Shulver (Assistant Director Resource Management and Circular Economy) were in attendance for this item.

1.The Cabinet Member introduced the report and discussed the following:

a) Explained that Kent County Council, as the Waste Disposal Authority, had a statutory duty under the Environmental Protection Act 1990 to provide arrangements for the disposal of household waste collected by district councils. Members were advised that the existing temporary waste transfer arrangements serving Folkestone and Hythe would expire in January 2028 and that a long-term solution was therefore required.

b) Members were informed that KCC currently operated an interim arrangement at Ross Way, Folkestone. The Committee heard that the facility was unable to accommodate all waste streams arising within the district and that residual and food waste currently had to be transported to Ashford. Officers advised that the current arrangements were operationally inefficient, generated additional costs and would cease when the existing contract expired in January 2028.

c) The Cabinet Member explained that the report represented an update to the previously approved Junction 11 Waste Transfer Station scheme. Members were advised that material changes had occurred since the original decision had been taken, requiring a reassessment of the preferred approach.

d) Officers outlined the principal issues affecting the Junction 11 project and explained that a critical additional parcel of land required to discharge planning conditions had not been secured. Despite efforts by KCC to acquire the land independently, negotiations had been unsuccessful. Members were informed that without the additional land the planning conditions could not be discharged and the project could not be delivered within the required timescales.

e) The Committee heard that progression of the Junction 11 scheme would expose the Council to further financial and delivery risks, including land acquisition risks, programme delays and the potential requirement to commit additional expenditure before certainty regarding deliverability could be established.

f) Officers advised that a market engagement exercise had since identified the availability of a viable alternative solution through the procurement of a commercial waste transfer service within the district. Members were informed that such an approach would provide a deliverable solution within the timeframe required while maintaining KCC's ability to meet its statutory obligations.

g) The Committee noted that the proposed procurement would seek to secure a commercial provider capable of receiving, bulking and transporting waste arising from Folkestone and Hythe. Members were advised that the procurement exercise would include consideration of value for money, environmental performance, contract flexibility, social value and future Local Government Reorganisation requirements

2. The following aspects were discussed:

a) Concerns were expressed regarding the financial implications of ceasing work on the Junction 11 scheme. Members noted that approximately £722,000 had already been incurred in developing the project and queried whether those costs would become abortive. Officers confirmed that the expenditure already incurred would be treated as abortive costs should the project not proceed. Members were advised that there was also a risk that some Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) funding may need to be returned if an alternative compliant use could not be identified.

b) Questions were raised regarding why the land acquisition issues associated with the Junction 11 proposal had not been identified earlier in the process. Officers explained that the land parcel for the footprint of the waste transfer station had been secured and that the additional land requirement emerged through the planning process. KCC had reasonably anticipated that the land would be available through wider acquisition arrangements. It was only later that it became apparent the necessary land could not be secured in the required timescale.

c) Members sought clarification regarding whether the future transfer station service would remain within the district boundary. Officers advised that the intention of the procurement exercise was to secure a solution within Folkestone and Hythe wherever possible and that a solution outside the

district would create additional operational and financial consequences, including tipping-away costs.

d) Concerns were raised regarding the potential location of any future facility and the impact of increased heavy vehicle movements on surrounding communities and local roads. Officers explained that the proposal was not to build a new facility but to procure a commercial contract and therefore the procurement process and any associated planning requirements would consider traffic management, routing and operational impacts of contracting with an existing facility.

e) Members queried whether the existing Ross Way site could simply continue operating beyond the expiry of the current arrangement. Officers advised that Ross Way is a privately owned facility and the current contract to process waste on behalf of KCC could not be extended. The infrastructure at the site was ageing, and substantial investment would be required if any future contractual arrangement were to be considered however the operator of the site would be welcome to respond to the procurement opportunity if they wished. Members were also informed that the site currently accepted only certain waste streams and therefore could not meet the district's full operational requirements.

f) Questions were raised regarding the availability of alternative providers within the district and the extent to which a competitive procurement exercise could be achieved. Officers confirmed that market engagement had demonstrated the existence of a viable solution, although competition within the market remained relatively limited. Members were advised that a compliant procurement process would be undertaken to ensure value for money and transparency.

g) Additional concerns were raised on the original decision-making process and the cost that had ultimately resulted in the non-securing of the parcel of land targeted. The Member highlighted that the previous administration had already begun discussions on a similar site in Otterpool and that the current endeavour had simply wasted tax payers' money.

h) Members highlighted the importance of ensuring that waste services continued without interruption during the period of Local Government Reorganisation (LGR). Officers advised that contract provisions would be designed to permit transfer or novation to successor authorities where required and that continuity of service remained a primary consideration.

i) Discussion took place regarding food waste management arrangements. Officers advised that market engagement suggested food waste could present additional challenges and explained that alternative arrangements at an existing KCC facility may be required should a commercial solution not be available through the procurement process.

j) Members acknowledged the challenges that had arisen in relation to the Junction 11 proposal and recognised that the recommended procurement route represented the only viable and deliverable solution within the timescales available. The Committee further noted the importance of

maintaining continuity of statutory waste disposal services and ensuring that future contractual arrangements remained flexible in the context of LGR.

RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision, namely:

CEASE activity related to key decision 25/00068 and halt the continuation of development of the Junction 11 waste transfer station scheme

APPROVE the procurement and award of a Transfer Services contract to secure a commercial waste transfer solution through a compliant competitive process.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy to undertake all relevant actions to facilitate the procurement process.

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health, to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision: and

DELEGATE authority to the Director of Environment and Circular Economy, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, to award extensions of the contract in accordance with the relevant clauses within the contract.

112. Environment Achievements and Updates - Report

(Item 13)

Jamie Henderson (Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health), and Elizabeth Milne (Head of Environment) was in attendance for this item:

1. The Cabinet Member introduced the report and explained that it represented the first annual update on the delivery of the Kent County Council Environment Plan.

a) Members were advised that the report summarised progress made during 2025/26 against the six environmental goals established within the Plan and also set out priorities for the year ahead.

b) The Committee was informed that positive progress had been made across all six goals and that environmental activity continued to contribute towards operational efficiency, service resilience and environmental improvement throughout Kent. Members were advised that achievements included reductions in greenhouse gas emissions, the expansion of renewable energy generation, improvements in recycling performance, support for water resilience projects and continued investment in nature recovery initiatives.

c) Members were advised that amendments would also be made to the published Environment Plan to reflect the adoption of Kent County Council's Energy

Efficiency Plan. Officers explained that the principal change involved shifting the emphasis from the previous net-zero target approach towards improving energy efficiency, reducing operating costs and lowering emissions across council services and assets.

2. Members discussed the following:

a) Members welcomed the work undertaken by officers and the progress reported against the Environment Plan. Particular recognition was given to the collaborative work undertaken through the Environment Plan Cross-Party Members Group and the range of projects delivered across the authority.

b) Questions were raised regarding the financial benefits generated (1.2 million KW) through solar energy projects and renewable infrastructure. Officers advised that additional financial information had subsequently become available and confirmed that the energy generated from KCC solar installations represented a significant financial benefit to the authority.

c) Members expressed concern regarding the substantial reduction in tree planting activity compared with previous years and sought assurances that opportunities would continue to be pursued to expand tree cover across Kent. Officers explained that the reduction largely reflected the loss of external grant funding streams previously available through national tree planting schemes. Despite this, Members were advised that officers continued to pursue alternative funding opportunities and had recently secured additional funding to support future planting activity.

d) Discussion took place regarding the need to ensure that newly planted trees were resilient to increasingly dry climatic conditions. Officers advised that future planting programmes would continue to consider climate resilience, species suitability and long-term sustainability. Reference was also made to work involving disease-resistant elm varieties and opportunities to increase biodiversity benefits through future planting initiatives.

e) Members highlighted the importance of securing additional investment to support both Plan Tree and Plan Bee ambitions. Officers advised that a future Green Finance Strategy would seek to identify and secure wider funding opportunities for environmental projects and longer-term delivery of Environment Plan objectives.

f) The Committee discussed the relationship between biodiversity objectives, nature recovery and wider planning and mineral extraction matters. Members reflected upon the importance of balancing environmental considerations with economic and infrastructure requirements across the county.

g) Members welcomed the achievements delivered during the first year of the Environment Plan and recognised the importance of maintaining momentum across all six environmental goals. The Committee further acknowledged the challenges associated with securing external funding and supporting long-term environmental improvement across Kent.

h) Additionally, Members raised further opportunities of private sector funding with discussions closing on the point of the NIAB site in hermitage lane site and the option to quarry on its land to prevent the issue faced by the Oaken Wood site.

RESOLVED to:

a) note the Environment Achievements and Updates Report and the priorities identified for 2026/27; and

b) note the proposed amendments to the published Environment Plan to align it with the Kent County Council Energy Efficiency Plan.

113. Work Programme
(Item 14)

The work programme was noted.