From: Richard Palmer, Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services

Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director, Growth & Communities

To: Growth, Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee – 10 November 2026

Subject: KCC to Review and Improve their response to 5th September Dover protest

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: Dover Town

Summary
This report provides Kent County Council's response to the petition concerning the recent protest relating to illegal migration in Dover on 5 September 2026.

The report sets out the responsibilities of the County Council in relation to emergency planning and response and its role during the incident on 5 September 2026.

Recommendation
The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the petition and the information in the report and **ENDORSE** the review of KCC's response and the work through the Kent Community Safety Partnership and the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum, with an update to a future meeting of the Committee.

1. Introduction

1.1 A petition has been submitted to Kent County Council asking it to review and improve its response to the Dover protest on 5 September 2026. The protest was unannounced and no notice was given to Kent Police. Kent Police led the response.

1.2 Although the protest was centred on Dover, the resulting transport disruption extended beyond the town along the A20/M20 corridor.

1.3 The petition raises concerns about the impact of the disruption on Dover and seeks assurance that appropriate arrangements are in place to respond to similar incidents in the future Specifically, the petition asks for “KCC to work with Community Safety and resilience partners, including Kent Police, to review and improve the collective strategic response to significant unauthorised protest activity where they pose significant disruption risks. In particular, we urge KCC to:

- Review the highways and community safety response to the 5 September 2026 protests; and

- Work as part of the Kent & Medway Resilience Forum, alongside key partners, such as Kent Police, to ensure joint response and communications strategies are in place to quickly and effectively respond to large scale disruptive protest."

2. KCC's responsibilities

2.1 KCC is a Category 1 responder under the Civil Contingencies Act 2004. Its responsibilities include to assess emergency risks, maintain emergency and business continuity plans, warn and inform the public, and share information and work with other responders.

2.2 KCC's Emergency Response Framework sets out these arrangements. KCC manages impacts within its responsibilities and works with partner agencies through established resilience arrangements. Each agency's role depends on the incident.

2.3 It should be noted that, protest activity alone does not trigger an emergency response. Under the Framework, KCC assesses whether an incident exceeds routine arrangements or risks serious harm, damage or disruption to life, welfare or essential services. There is no fixed threshold: each incident is assessed on its circumstances.

3. Highways and community safety response

3.1 KCC's highways and community safety roles focus on managing the effects of disruption on roads, communities and council services, and helping partners prepare for incidents, rather than policing protest activity.

3.2 As Highway Authority, KCC helps keep the road network safe and operating, using its available powers to reduce disruption as far as reasonably practicable. This can include monitoring roads, managing traffic, arranging diversions, sharing travel information and deploying highways resources.

3.3 KCC's Community Safety Team supports countywide and local Community Safety Partnerships, co-ordinates joint working and shares information. It helps partners monitor community tensions, provide reassurance and respond proportionately to disruption.

3.4 The disruption arising from the protest on 5 September 2026 escalated into a multi-agency Major Incident, with Major Incidents declared by initially Port of Dover and then Kent Police. KCC supported the multi-agency response through established resilience and emergency planning arrangements, including co-ordination through the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum Tactical and Strategic Coordinating Groups. The Strategic Coordinating Group (SCG) met at 12 noon on 5 September 2026.

3.5 Kent Police led the response and managed measures to reduce highways disruption. KCC provided tactical support through the multi-agency resilience and emergency planning arrangements described above. Its role was largely

behind the scenes and included supporting police-led public communications by sharing messages through its own platforms. This helped provide consistent information to communities while police managed the operational response.

4. Future learning

4.1 The Cabinet Member for Communities and Regulatory Services has requested an officer review of KCC's response on the day, including its support through the multi-agency resilience and emergency planning arrangements and its sharing of police communications. KCC has not yet competed a separate review of the incident. Kent Police has also requested a College of Policing Learning Review.

4.2 As Chair of the Kent Community Safety Partnership, the Cabinet Member has asked the Partnership to consider the community safety lessons from 5 September. KCC will also ask the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum to consider, with Kent Police, National Highways and the Port of Dover, whether joint response and communications arrangements for large-scale disruptive protest need strengthening, drawing on the findings of the KCC review and the College of Policing learning review

5. Conclusion

5.1 KCC recognises the concerns raised through the petition. The County Council has established arrangements for preparing for and responding to emergencies and works with partner organisations where incidents require a co-ordinated multi-agency response.

5.2 For this incident, Kent Police led the response and KCC provided practical support and shared police communications.

6. Recommendation

6.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to **NOTE** the petition and the information in the report and **ENDORSE** the review of KCC's response and the work through the Kent Community Safety Partnership and the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum, with an update to a future meeting of the Committee.

7. Report Author

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