

**From:** Paul Webb, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

Paul King, Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration

Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 1 July 2025

**Subject:** Kent County Council – Introduction to Growth & Communities Division

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** n/a

**Future Pathway of report:** n/a

**Electoral Division:** All Divisions

**Summary:** The purpose of this paper is to provide an overview and introduction to the Growth and Communities division, one of three divisions in Kent County Council's Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate. Growth and Communities services encompass the breadth of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee's existing remit.

**Recommendation(s):** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services or Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration.

## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Growth and Communities is about Good Growth – a joined up approach to physical and social infrastructure for both existing and new communities. The services in this division, and therefore in the bailiwick of this committee, are about local economy, spatial development, strategic infrastructure, and employment at the core, but closely wrapped around must be the wider determinants that are at the heart of sustainable communities – well-designed place, feeling safe and involved, with opportunity at the heart.
- 1.2 An All-Member Induction briefing was delivered on 16th June 2025 about the Growth and Communities group of services, and Members of this committee who were unable to attend that are invited to [watch the recording](#)
- 1.3 Growth and Communities comprises six core groups:
  - 1.3.1 Community Protection
  - 1.3.2 Economy

- 1.3.3 Innovation and Business Intelligence
- 1.3.4 Libraries, Registration and Archives
- 1.3.5 Planning Applications Group, including Minerals and Waste Planning Policy
- 1.3.6 Strategic Development and Place

## **2. Community Protection**

- 2.1 Leading a broad range of community protection services to ensure our Kent communities feel safe, secure and resilient. The Community Protection team comprises four key services:
  - 2.1.1 Community Safety: Creating safer and stronger communities in Kent. Leading and facilitating the Kent Community Safety Partnership which is the top tier of community safety in Kent, and is statutorily responsible for preparing an annual Community Safety Agreement. Managing the multi-agency Kent Community Safety Team. Delivering statutory Domestic Abuse Related Death Reviews. Managing the Kent Community Warden Service which is a key part of KCC's efforts to support the elderly and vulnerable without reliance on formal social care. Improving resilience, and additionally fostering wider community cohesion and wellbeing. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.
  - 2.1.2 Coroner Service: Managing the strategic and operational aspects, fulfilling statutory obligations to the Senior Coroner for Kent & Medway. Supporting families through the coronial process. Medway contribute to costs for this service. The coroner service investigates deaths that are violent, unnatural, of unknown cause, or that occur in state detention.
  - 2.1.3 Kent Scientific Services: Analytical testing of food, feed and consumer goods to support businesses and protect consumers. Toxicology testing for HM Coroners. Maintaining statutory standards of weight and measure. Joint working with Trading Standards and Port of London Authority.
  - 2.1.4 Trading Standards: Delivering a wide range of statutory functions that protect consumers, safeguard and support legitimate businesses, prevent or control animal disease outbreaks and control the storage of dangerous goods like petrol and fireworks. Key areas of focus are fair and accurate trading; product safety; weights and measures; combating crime such as scams, counterfeit goods and rogue traders; and food standards and safety. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.

## **3. Economy**

- 3.1 Delivering a range of programmes and activities that help to boost the local economy through supporting local businesses and tackling barriers to growth. The work of the team is underpinned by the Kent and Medway Economic Framework. The Economy team comprises eight key functions:

- 3.1.1 Economic Programmes and Strategy: The Kent & Medway Economic Framework is the (relatively recently adopted, just over one year old) overarching economic strategy for the county which focuses on supporting business growth, the skills & employment agenda, access and productivity, infrastructure, and place. The Framework is the work programme of the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership (see below). The Business Advisory Board provides regular intelligence to KCC and its partners about economic challenges faces by the local business community.
- 3.1.2 Business Investment: offer financial support to Kent & Medway businesses through the Kent & Medway Business Fund, aiding growth and job creation. Prioritising businesses that show growth, innovation, increased productivity, and local supply chain commitment. A scheme providing loans up to £600,000 over five years. Uses an evergreen government funding investment managed by KCC working to an Independent Board. Typically provides an update to this Committee every six months.
- 3.1.3 Commissioned Programmes: The Economy team commissions four principal programmes: Kent & Medway's Visitor Economy (Visit Kent) and Inward Investment (Locate in Kent) service supporting the tourism sector and encouraging businesses to establish a base and grow in the county. The Kent Foundation provides support to primarily young entrepreneurs through mentoring from experienced business owning volunteers to grow their (the young entrepreneurs') businesses. Produced in Kent champions the food and drink sector in Kent and Medway.
- 3.1.4 Health and Economy: Working on the Integrated Strategy for Health & Work and its implementation plan in partnership with the Integrated Care System to tackle some of the health-related challenges that keep people out of the workforce. Coordinating the activities of the Strategic Partnership for Health & Economy. There will be a separate report on this strand of work to Committee today, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025.
- 3.1.5 Kent Ambassadors: Managing the Kent Ambassadors programme, a network of highly successful and experienced individuals across all spheres of professional life, residing or working in Kent, to enhance, drive and support 'Team Kent' – aka all aspects of life and business in Kent.
- 3.1.6 No Use Empty: Award-winning scheme offering loans to revitalise empty residential and commercial properties in Kent, improving the physical urban environment and supporting regeneration and commercial activity. More than 8,000 empty properties have been brought back into active use over nearly 20 years of the scheme. £64.3m financial support offered by No Use Empty, leading to total of £110.7m investment into Kent.

- 3.1.7 Business & Sector Support: Supporting local businesses and strategic economic sectors in Kent through management of the Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract. This is a fully funded government service that enables small and medium sized businesses in Kent and Medway to access local and national business support through a one stop shop: information; navigation; signposting; diagnostic assessments; and guidance.
- 3.1.8 Skills and Employability: Overseeing the development and implementation of the Get Kent & Medway Working Plan which, with a range of partner organisations, focuses on tackling challenges in the field of health, skills and employment. There will be a separate report on Get Kent & Medway Working Plan to Committee today, July 1<sup>st</sup> 2025. More broadly, Skills and Employability function is focussing on improving the skills and employability of individuals in Kent to match vacancies in key industry sectors. The Kent & Medway Employment Task Force considers challenges and opportunities in the skills and labour market arena, championing initiatives that support Kent's residents and employers.

#### **4. Innovation and Business Intelligence**

- 4.1 Responsible for division-wide continuous service improvement, innovation and support. The team lead on service reviews, the management and utilisation of intelligence and data, digital innovation and digital systems management, online and offline external communications, and provides a single divisional business support function for the day-to-day administration of services and projects. The Innovation and Business Intelligence team comprises five key services:
  - 4.1.1 Business Innovation: Leading on new, innovative and cross cutting agendas for a range of place-based services and themes. Lead on population health for the Growth, Environment and Transport directorate, addressing wider determinants i.e. the social, economic and environmental factors that influence a person's health beyond individual choices and behaviours.
  - 4.1.2 Business Support: Providing a single business support function and approach for the division.
  - 4.1.3 Communications: Delivering innovative and creative communications strategies that align with business plan priorities.
  - 4.1.4 Intelligence and data: Providing a specialist criminal intelligence capability for Trading Standards supporting its 'intelligence-led' service delivery model. Providing a dedicated waste crime intelligence analyst to the Kent Resource Partnership, and host a Serious Organised Crime analyst who works across KCC and a number of external partnerships. Providing a range of vetting and due diligence services for KCC.
  - 4.1.5 Digital Systems: Guiding and supporting services across the division with their current and future digital technology strategies

ensuring the timely and effective management and development of core specialist business applications.

## **5. Libraries, Registration and Archives**

5.1 Delivering physical, digital and outreach services that support people throughout their lives. Delivering positive preventative services that contribute to improved health and wellbeing, help to tackle social isolation, foster positive wellbeing and combat digital exclusion. The Libraries, Registration and Archives Group comprises three key services:

- 5.1.1 Libraries: Across 99 libraries, improving literacy to foster a lifelong love of reading. Supporting our communities to find the information they need, to develop skills to access online services, become more active citizens and social interaction. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.
- 5.1.2 Registration: Registering key milestones in people's lives (births, marriages, citizenship and deaths) and the lives of their families. Come together to form strong community ties. Through our ceremony offer celebrating citizenships, marriage and civil partnership.
- 5.1.3 Archives: Conserve, protect and provide access to invaluable historical archive material for the county – includes local history collections such as historic maps, historical periodicals, visuals and audio-visuals, as well as important historical records: parish registers; tithes records; historic administration and business; records of estates; and personal items such as letters and diaries.

## **6. Planning Applications Group, including Minerals and Waste Planning Policy**

6.1 Shaping Kent's development and future through statutory planning functions and the Minerals and Waste Local Plan preparation. This Planning Applications Group, including the Minerals and Waste Planning Policy, comprises two key services:

- 6.1.1 Planning Applications: Delivery of the County Council's statutory planning functions – development management and plan making. Determining planning applications for minerals and waste management development in the county and for the County Council's own community developments such as new schools, along with pre-application advice, monitoring and planning enforcement.
- 6.1.2 Minerals and Waste Planning Policy: Preparation of the statutory Minerals and Waste Local Plan and associated Sites Plans which provide the context for determining planning applications for minerals and waste management development. Work with Kent District and Borough Councils as part of the Duty to Corporate responsibility on Mineral and Waste Safeguarding

matters to ensure that sustainable development is delivered.

## **7. Strategic Development and Place**

- 7.1 Leading KCC's approach to growth and infrastructure delivery in the county. Deliver a range of strategic and frontline functions to achieve outcomes relating to growth, the economy, health, wellbeing and inclusion to create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places. The Strategic Development and Place group comprises eight key services:
- 7.1.1 Broadband: Supporting the local delivery of Government-led programmes to extend gigabit-capable networks to properties that are not expected to benefit from telecom providers' commercial upgrade programmes. This team works to influence Government and providers to boost broadband connectivity across Kent.
  - 7.1.2 Gypsy and Roma Traveller Residents Service: Currently managing seven local authority Traveller sites, six of which are owned by KCC, housing 130 families. Allocating pitches, and supporting the residents through site management, support with accessing finance, and accessing wider services such as health. Responding to unauthorised encampments on land owned or controlled by KCC.
  - 7.1.3 Active Kent and Medway: Fulfils a strategic commissioning and coordination role for sport and recreational activities for the residents of Kent and Medway, working collaboratively to use physical activity to transform lives. One of 43 Active Partnerships in England, this service has the Vision "More people, More active, More often". This service is hosted by the County Council.
  - 7.1.4 Creative Economy: One of the county's top three 'industrial' sectors, and one of England's eight. Maximising the arts and creative sector's contribution to economic growth and community well-being. Working with the sector to ensure excellence in delivery and products while promoting wider participation. Leads on coordinating the delivery of Kent's cultural strategy to secure investment, and grow the county's creative product to further national and international acclaim. Key driver on population health and wider determinants.
  - 7.1.5 Strategic Planning and Infrastructure: Leading on the development of the Infrastructure Mapping Platform (IMP), a digital platform to deliver an accessible and interactive spatial view of Kent-wide planned housing growth and infrastructure data. Establishing the County Council's stance on growth and infrastructure matters at local, regional, and national levels, including engaging with emerging government planning policy and relevant consultations. Coordinating the County Council's response and ensuring the implementation of the council's policies and services across emerging Local Plans, strategic planning applications, Nationally Significant Infrastructure projects, Neighbourhood Plans, and the Community

Infrastructure Levy, and other planning documents as they arise. Working alongside strategic partners to lead on understanding the energy infrastructure needs for Kent. This includes potential around nuclear energy at Dungeness, and strategic energy planning – our Local Area Energy Plan will feed in an evidence base to the Regional Energy Strategic Plan and in turn the Strategic Spatial Energy Plan.

- 7.1.6 Developer Contributions: Negotiate and secure financial contributions, including Section 106 and the Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL), from new developments. These funds support the delivery of Council services, such as schools, highways, waste, social care, and public rights of way. This service reports annually to Committee with the County Council's Infrastructure Funding Statement.
- 7.1.7 Public Rights of Way: Responsible for the statutory management, maintenance, and development of Kent's extensive 7,000km Public Rights of Way (PROW) Network, valued at £142 million. Offers services related to Common Land and Village Green, while also maintaining the PROW legal record (Definitive Map). Leading the creation and maintenance of the King Charles III England Coast Path in Kent, covering 350km. Developing and providing new routes, promoting sustainable transport options for communities.
- 7.1.8 International: This function leads on Short Straits – a partnership approach to cooperation with neighbouring EU council equivalent organisations and British and foreign embassies to support principally economic, social and environmental shared projects with mutual benefit.

## **8. Key Strategies and Policies**

8.1 The Growth and Communities Division work to a number of key strategies and policies as listed below:

- [Kent Community Safety Agreement](#)
- [KCC Trading Standards Enforcement Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- [Kent and Medway Economic Framework - Kent County Council](#)
- [No Use Empty](#)
- [Libraries, Registration & Archives Strategy - KCC](#)
- [Minerals & Waste Planning Policy](#)
- [Developer Contributions Guide](#)
- [Kent Design Guide](#)
- [Infrastructure Funding Statement](#)
- [Serious and Organised Crime \(SOC\) Strategy 2023-2028](#)
- [Rights of Way Improvement Plan](#)

## 9. Finance

- 9.1 For 25/26, the Growth and Communities division has a net revenue budget of c. £32m
- 9.2 The gross budget includes c. £15m of income, totals £48m
- 9.3 The Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration portfolio has a gross budget of £6.0m, net budget of £4.2m.
- 9.4 The Community & Regulatory Services portfolio has a gross budget of £41.9m, net budget £28.6m.
- 9.5 Budget breakdowns 2025/2026:

Group	Gross (including income, grants and external funding)		Net (excluding income, grants and external funding)	
Community Protection	£14.8m	30.8%	£10.8m	33.6%
Economy	£3m	6.2%	£1.5m	4.6%
Innovation & Business Intelligence	£1.9m	4%	£1.7m	5.3%
Libraries, Registration & Archives	£18.4m	38.3%	£11.5m	35.7%
Planning Applications Group	£1.5m	3.1%	£1.2m	3.7%
Strategic Development & Place	£8.2m	17%	£5.2m	16.1%
Other	£0.3m	0.6%	£0.3m	1%
	<b>£48.1m</b>		<b>£32.3m</b>	

- 9.6 The Growth and Communities division has committed to £755.6k of savings for 25/26. The majority of these savings comprise of increased income and fees/charges across the division.
- 9.7 The Growth and Communities division has £177.7k of new spending pressures for 25/26. The majority of these pressures comprise of price inflation, staff and pay increases (essential for service delivery) and costs related to service delivery.
- 9.8 The Growth & Communities division has a Capital budget of £2.3m in rolling programmes (predominantly Public Rights of Way and also includes Sports

Facility Improvement and Village Halls and Community Centres)

9.9 The Growth and Communities division has an additional Capital budget of £8.5m for individual projects

9.9.1 Digital Autopsy

9.9.2 Essella Road Bridge (PROW)

9.9.3 Innovation Investment Initiative (i3)

9.9.4 Kent & Medway Business Fund

9.9.5 No Use Empty and Kent Broadband Voucher Scheme.

9.10 Full details of the revenue budget, savings, spending pressures and the capital budget can be found in the [Kent County Council Budget Book 2025-26](#)

## **10. Equalities implications**

10.1 The Growth & Communities Division works in line with our corporate equality objectives, complying with the Equality Act.

## **11. Conclusion**

11.1 The Growth and Communities division encompasses a vast and diverse set of services that are essential for the well-being and development of the community and of business in the county. With an integrated focus on sectors such as economic development, community engagement, regulatory and protection services, the division plays a crucial role in planning for, and supporting, thriving businesses and flourishing communities.

12.1 The division's commitment to growth and improvement is evident in its wide range of initiatives aimed at enhancing service delivery, supporting local communities and businesses, and ensuring sustainable development. These efforts reflect a comprehensive and dynamic approach to addressing the needs of the community and promoting overall prosperity.

13.1 Financially, the division has shown prudence in managing its budget while identifying and addressing savings and spending pressures effectively.

## **12. Recommendation**

### **Recommendation:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any comments to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services or Cabinet Member for Economic Development and Coastal Regeneration.

### 13. Background Documents

- [Kent County Council Budget Book 2025-26](#)
- [Kent Community Safety Agreement](#)
- [KCC Trading Standards Enforcement Policy](#)
- [Domestic Abuse Strategy](#)
- [Kent and Medway Economic Framework - Kent County Council](#)
- [No Use Empty](#)
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