

From: Linden Kemkaran, Leader

To: **County Council – 21 May 2026**

Subject: Strategic Statement: 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028'. Six-month Review

Classification: **Unrestricted**

Summary:

Reforming Kent 2025-2028, the Council's new Strategic Statement, was adopted at County Council in November 2025. The Strategic Statement states the priorities for Kent County Council and the County. Following the first six months, a review of the document has been completed to assess progress and to ensure it remains appropriate for the needs of Kent. Some additions and revisions have been made to the document as a result (see Appendix 1), which is presented to County Council as a revised and designed version before publication on Kent.gov

This paper provides an overview of some of the highlights of the work to date against the Strategic Statement.

Recommendations: County Council is asked to:

- (1) **APPROVE** the revisions to the Council's strategic statement, 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028'; and
- (2) **NOTE** the progress made

1 Background

- 1.1 The draft of '*Reforming Kent, 2025-2028*' was presented to County Council in November 2025, where it was adopted. At this time, it was made clear that given the uncertainty and unprecedented time of change, the Strategic Statement must be a 'living document', and that the administration would update it as necessary to ensure it remains relevant and useful for residents, partners and staff. The revisions and additions made to the Strategic Statement as indicated in Appendix 1 uphold this commitment.
- 1.2 Also, this report provides an overview of some of the progress made against the aims of the Strategic Statement. A copy of the recent series of infographics issued by the County Council on the performance of the Council is featured as Appendix 2. That performance covers the financial year rather than solely the six month period from November 2025, however it clearly shows the direction of travel of the authority under the current administration and highlights some of the breadth of the work and successes.

2 ‘Reforming Kent, 2025-2028’ - Progress on Delivering its Aims.

- 2.1 The Strategic Statement was not intended to be a comprehensive catalogue of all the Council’s work, but a statement on the authority’s ambitions, priorities and key actions required. It sets the direction of travel for Kent County Council and provides the overall context within which the authority will drive forward its work for the residents of Kent.
- 2.2 The Strategic Statement highlights four aims that are the areas of greatest challenge and opportunity; and each of these is supported by a number of objectives and priorities. The following provides a high level overview of some of the progress made under each of these aims, which is taken from progress reporting over 2025-26. Although some of the statistics relate to the full financial year rather than just the 6 month period under review, they demonstrate the ambition, priorities and direction of the administration.

Putting Kent Residents First

- 2.3 We continued to stand up for Kent’s residents on a range of issues, including making representations to Government on new nuclear provision at Dungeness, the prospect of reopening the international rail services at Ashford and Ebbsfleet, and developing proposals to secure a foreign registered HGV environmental levy for use by KCC's Highways service. We submitted bids to the Government Structures Fund for vital investment in key routes in the county such as the A226 Galley Hill Road, pressing for more than £40m to help reconnect communities and restore this important route following the cliff collapse in April 2023, which cut a major link between Gravesend and Dartford. We submitted a separate bid for around £63m for the A299 to address safety-critical issues, including tunnel refurbishments, bridge repairs and carriageway reconstruction.
- 2.4 We rescinded the County Council’s Climate Emergency Declaration, ensuring that future KCC spend would not be determined by Net Zero targets; and we declared an Illegal Migration Emergency to allow scope for the authority to press central government and others to take appropriate action to relieve the financial and public safety strain on Kent and its residents.
- 2.5 We developed an option (1A) for local government reorganisation, establishing potential savings for Kent’s taxpayers of up to £450 million over 10 years.

Reforming Kent County Council

- 2.6 We continued the delivery of the services that matter to residents, whilst ensuring we achieved value for taxpayers’ money.
- 2.7 We handled 671,353 tonnes of waste across the county, diverting 99.6% of household waste away from landfill, meaning almost all rubbish was reused,

recycled or used to generate energy. Between September 2025 and February 2026, over 3,200 extra tonnes of food waste were recycled, which is a 22% increase on the previous period, reducing waste disposal costs by over £380k. We spent £67 million on road repairs and maintenance across the county.

- 2.8 Stabilising the County Council's budget was a top priority over the period, to ensure that we could deliver best value for the residents of the County. We achieved savings totalling £100 million and set a Council Tax rate lower than most County, Metropolitan and Unitary councils in England; removed £39.5 million from future spending plans, and reduced the Council's overall debt by £122 million, repaying £90 million of this debt early to ease long term financial pressures. Some £54 million of savings or contract improvements were negotiated in 2025/26. We set a balanced budget for 2026/27 with no additional planned borrowings, an increase in net reserves, and increased capacity to spend in adult social care, children's services, and growth environment and transport.
- 2.9 Kent's first Commercial Strategy was published, setting out how the Council buys goods and services and works with local businesses. An additional £55 million in council contracts were awarded to Kent-based companies, helping keep more public spending in the local economy. We worked directly with 500 Kent supplier companies, helping them understand and access Council opportunities, and reached 1,400 businesses through the Kent and Medway Growth Hub, providing advice and guidance.

Supporting Residents that need help

- 2.10 KCC provided care and support to 23,174 adults either in the community or a care home. Some 39,933 blue badges were issued, bringing the total in Kent to 94,317. Four hundred and forty three long-term empty homes were brought back into use through the No Use Empty scheme, increasing the number of homes available to live in.
- 2.11 In our Early Years services, 98% of Kent's early years settings were rated 'Good' or 'Outstanding' by Ofsted. Our Kent Family Hubs, supporting children and families across the County, reached 13,653 families and delivered 31,101 interventions and sessions. Almost 4,000 new wraparound childcare places were delivered from September 2025. At least 96% of secondary pupils and 98% of primary pupils were offered a place at one of their preferred schools. In total, 48,100 children and young people accessed SEND services. A total of 66,000 health and wellbeing reviews for babies and young children were delivered to families and 594 foster households worked with the Council to care for children.

Building Better Communities

- 2.12 The authority continued to support and deliver a range of services to enhance quality of life and build community spirit and engagement.
- 2.13 Public satisfaction levels were high with 95% of library users, 96% of registration users and 96% of household waste recycling centre users reporting being satisfied with their services.
- 2.14 Supporting people on their journey into employment remained a priority with 891 people taking part in the Connect to Work programme, receiving help to move them closer to employment.
- 2.15 We launched the Kent Marmot Coastal Region, which will make a real difference to Kent coastal residents.
- 2.16 Our Kent country parks welcomed 1.26 million visitors, offering accessible green spaces. Kent's libraries had 3.2 million visits, providing learning, reading and community spaces for residents. There were 123,541 uses of Kent's archive collections and documents; whilst 240,898 people attended library and archives events and activities.
- 2.17 Our highways services maintained 5,500 miles of roads and 4,000 miles of footways; one of the largest local authority networks in the country; filled around 50,000 potholes, using the Council's agreed inspection and repair processes, and resurfaced 353,356 square metres of road, improving the condition of heavily used routes.

3. Next Steps

- 3.1 Cabinet will continue to monitor progress against the Strategic Statement's aims and objectives, including through the process of Quarterly Performance Reporting. Some of the issues and challenges facing the County Council and Kent are systemic, some concern government policy and some are beyond the scope and remit of the authority. Certainly, to address them comprehensively requires more than three years. However, the Strategic Statement continues to be relevant as a directional statement and guide for Kent County Council and the County as a whole.

4. Recommendations

County Council is asked to:

- (1) **APPROVE** the revisions to the Council's strategic statement, 'Reforming Kent 2025-2028'; and
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5. Appendices:

Appendix 1 *Reforming Kent, 2025-2028* (2026 Update)

Appendix 2 County Council Performance Infographics