

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 6 May 2026

PRESENT: Mr P Chamberlain (Chairman), Mr N Wibberley (Vice-Chair), Mr D Burns, Mr W Chapman, Ms S Emberson, Mr L Evans, Mr J Finch, Mr M A J Hood, Mr M Mulvihill, Mrs B Porter, Mr H Rayner and Mr M J Sole

ALSO PRESENT: Mr B Collins and Ms L Kemkaran

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms L Adam (Operations and Client Relationships Manager), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive), Ms C Maynard (Chief Procurement Officer), Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Ms V Lawrence-Rose (Project Manager), Ms R Anderson (Head of Business Information, Strategy and Assurance), Mr M Cheverton (Head of Real Estate Services), Mr H D'Alton (Programme Manager (Strategic Programmes)), Mr S Dodd (Investment and Development Consultant), Mr A Jeffery (Head of Resilience & Emergency Planning), Ms E Sanderson (Head of Portfolio Management Office), Ms J Taylor (Head of Capital), Ms T Veasey (Financial Hardship Programme Manager), Mr M Wagner (Chief Analyst), Ms J Hanna (Domestic Abuse Projects and Partnerships Team Lead) and Ms R Hare (Assistant Director for Integrated Children's Services for South Kent)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

55. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies for absence were received from Mr Hook, for whom Mr Sole was present as a substitute.

56. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

57. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2026

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2026 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

58. Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department

(Item 4)

1. The Leader of the Council introduced the report which provided an overview of performance against key strategic and operational measures for the Chief Executive's Department and the Deputy Chief Executive's Department.
2. Mr Matthew Wagner, Chief Analyst, outlined progress against agreed Key Performance Indicators (KPI) and explained that overall performance remained positive, with twenty four indicators rated green, three amber, and three red. He highlighted the three red indicators which related to the age of sundry debt, the timeliness of subject access request responses and the handling of complaints.
3. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:
 - (a) Members raised concerns regarding the level of outstanding debt with the Integrated Care Board (ICB), including whether payments were being made, the overall scale of reciprocal debt, and the associated financial risks. Mr Brendan Arnold confirmed that the matter was subject to ongoing high-level discussions and mediation, with a constructive and cooperative approach being taken. Further detail would be provided in future reports to the committee.
 - (b) Additional questions were raised regarding the increase in complaints volumes and whether this reflected declining service performance. The Deputy Chief Executive noted that complaints levels did not directly correlate with service performance and confirmed that more detailed analysis would be provided through Governance and Audit Committee reports.
4. RESOLVED that the performance dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and the Deputy Chief Executive's Department be noted.

59. 26/00016 - Crisis and Resilience Fund (CRF) 2026-2029 - Delivery Plans
(Item 5)

Mr Rob Yates was present for this item as a Guest Member.

1. The Leader of the Council introduced the report which set out the proposed delivery plan for the Crisis and Resilience Fund for the period 2026–2029. The fund replaced the Household Support Fund and brought together crisis support and housing-related assistance into a multi-year programme focused on prevention and resilience.
2. Mr Ben Watts, Deputy Chief Executive, provided a PowerPoint presentation and outlined the funding allocation, the four required strands of delivery, and the proposed eligibility criteria. Mr Watts explained the emphasis on a cash-first approach where safe and appropriate, alongside robust safeguards to protect public funds, including assessment processes, fraud prevention measures and ongoing monitoring.
3. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

- (a) Members discussed the balance between providing timely financial support and protecting against fraud, particularly in relation to the cash-first approach. Officers confirmed that decisions would be made on an individual basis, drawing on experience from previous schemes, and supported by appropriate verification processes. It was also clarified that while Kent County Council (KCC) would manage the core crisis scheme, district and borough councils would play a role in delivery, particularly in administering the additional heating oil support funding in partnership with KCC and other organisations.
- (b) Questions were raised regarding communication and how eligible residents would be made aware of the fund. Officers confirmed that information would be available via a dedicated webpage and that partners, including district councils, would support targeted communications. Members suggested further engagement with external partners, such as heating oil suppliers, to increase awareness among eligible households.
- (c) Members also explored broader issues around financial inclusion and income maximisation, including whether additional support could be provided to ensure residents access existing entitlements. Officers acknowledged the importance of this issue and agreed to consider it further outside the meeting, noting that the CRF itself was subject to specific government constraints.
- (d) Further queries addressed the scale of need for heating oil support and the distribution of funding. Officers noted that while detailed data is limited, the Council's role was to allocate the available funding as fairly as possible in line with scheme requirements. Clarification was also provided that homeless applicants could access support via professional referrals.

4. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:

- a) Approve the Crisis Resilience Fund Delivery Plan for 2026-2029
- b) Approve the proposed use of the CRF across (a) Crisis Payments (after careful assessment cash first by default unless inappropriate), (b) Housing Payments replacing Discretionary Housing Payments (DHP) within CRF scope (year 3), (c) Resilience Services (e.g. income maximisation, debt advice, digital inclusion), (d) Community Coordination, and (e) any additional provision funded by government as a top-up to CRF targeting defined local need, in line with CRF guidance.
- c) Delegate authority to the Senior Responsible Officer (Director of Public Health), in consultation with the Leader, to assess the suitability of cash, vouchers or goods and take all necessary actions to implement the decision, including but not limited to, entering into contractual arrangements, legal agreements, making grant awards, and making any consequential changes to ensure compliance to CRF guidance, grant determination and reporting requirements, and ensuring spend within the funding period. Judging which method of delivery i.e. cash, vouchers or goods is most appropriate on a case by case basis.
- d) Delegate authority to the Deputy Chief Executive and Corporate Director of Children, Young People and Education, where relevant, to implement

operational arrangements with internal services and partners to support the implementation of the CRF.

- e) Authorise officers to undertake any ancillary activities required to meet CRF funding rules, including procurement, data sharing arrangements, and engagement with district councils, VCS partners and suppliers.

60. Resilience Update

(Item 6)

1. The Deputy Leader introduced the report and acknowledged the commitment of officers involved in emergency planning and response activity, including out-of-hours work.
2. Mr Andy Jeffery, Head of Resilience and Emergency Planning, provided an update on resilience activity, encouraging Members to attend ongoing training on their roles in emergency situations. Members were informed that the national UK terrorism threat level had increased from “substantial” to “severe,” with the government reflecting a higher likelihood of attack linked to rising Islamist and extreme right-wing threats, although no additional local measures were currently required. Mr Jeffery highlighted the strong commitment and positive engagement of Council officers over the past three months, noting that staff consistently went above and beyond, including outside normal hours, to support residents. This dedication was central to ensuring an effective response to incidents and reflected the Council’s duty to assist people at some of the most challenging moments in their lives.
3. Mr Jeffery also provided an update on the Canterbury meningitis outbreak, where KCC’s internal debrief identified areas for improvement, including staff resourcing, information sharing, emergency facilities, and Member communications, alongside positive feedback on public health leadership, effective command structures, and strong cross-service collaboration.
4. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:
 - (a) Questions were raised regarding communications during incidents, infrastructure resilience, and the preparedness of services to respond to repeat events, particularly in relation to water supply disruptions. Mr Jeffery acknowledged these concerns and noted that findings from the recent KCC Short Focused Inquiry into water outages would be reported separately, providing further detail and recommendations.
 - (b) The Committee also considered broader risks, including infrastructure pressures and potential major incidents such as terrorism. Members sought reassurance regarding preparedness for complex scenarios, including cross-boundary coordination with neighbouring authorities and government agencies. Mr Jeffery confirmed that close working relationships were in place, including with Essex County Council and relevant national bodies, and that further briefings for Members could be arranged where appropriate, subject to sensitivity.

- (c) The discussion also covered the use of Airwave radios to improve communications resilience in the event of network failure. Mr Jeffery confirmed that the system had recently been rolled out to key staff and would be tested further, particularly in areas with limited mobile coverage.
- (d) The Deputy Chief Executive emphasised the importance of Member training in resilience and emergency response. It was noted that not all Members had yet completed the relevant training, and efforts would continue to ensure full participation, with potential reporting on completion rates in future.

5. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

61. Freedom of Information and Subject Access Requests

(Item 7)

- 1. Mr Ben Watts, Deputy Chief Executive, and Ms Lizzy Adam, Operations and Client Relationships Manager, introduced the report, explaining that it followed earlier discussions and provided additional detail on the pressures facing the service and the actions being taken to improve performance within existing resources.
- 2. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

62. Kent & Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy

(Item 8)

This item was taken after Item 5.

- 1. The Leader of the Council introduced the report, explaining that it provided an update on progress against the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy 2024–2029 and sought to inform the next phase of delivery.
- 2. Ms Jenny Hanna, Domestic Abuse Projects and Partnerships Team Lead, summarised progress during the second year of the strategy, including activity focused on prevention and early intervention, workforce development, improved risk management arrangements, survivor support services and recovery-focused provision. Ms Hanna highlighted the importance of partnership working across a complex system and the central role of survivor voice in shaping delivery.
- 3. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:
 - (a) Members welcomed the progress and acknowledged the scale of work undertaken. Questions were raised regarding the sustainability of funding over the five-year strategy. Ms Hanna confirmed that core funding was provided through ring-fenced government grants to meet statutory duties, supplemented by partner contributions, with further updates to be provided through future commissioning reports.

- (b) Members also discussed opportunities to strengthen prevention work, including expanding campaigns, training, and engagement with schools, community groups, and sports organisations. Suggestions included further development of active bystander training and extending initiatives such as the White Ribbon campaign. It was noted that domestic abuse can affect individuals of all genders and ages, and this was reflected in the strategy's inclusive approach. Officers acknowledged these suggestions and agreed to explore them further through existing partnership groups. It was also confirmed that previous campaigns, such as "Don't Disrespect," were time-limited but could be revisited subject to partner and stakeholder input.
4. RESOLVED that progress against the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy be noted.

63. 26/00027 - Infrastructure Condition Survey Programme
(Item 9)

1. Mr Hugh D'Alton, Strategic Programme Manager, introduced the report, which set out proposals to recommence a rolling programme of condition surveys across the Council's estate from quarter three of the 2026 financial year. Mr D'Alton explained that the Council managed a large and ageing estate, including corporate, tenanted and education assets, and that the previous survey cycle (2019–2022) was now out of date. Restarting the programme would provide up-to-date information to support investment decisions, prioritise maintenance, ensure buildings remained safe and operational, and meet statutory and reporting requirements. The work would be funded within existing budgets, although a key decision was required due to the expected value exceeding £1 million.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:
 - (a) Members discussed the gap in surveying coverage, noting that 70% of the estate was surveyed during the last cycle, with the remaining 30% largely impacted by access issues during the COVID-19 period. Officers clarified that while some buildings had not had full condition surveys, they had continued to be monitored through statutory compliance checks and maintenance processes. It was confirmed that higher-risk buildings were prioritised during the previous programme, and the next phase would seek to address gaps in coverage.
 - (b) Concerns were raised regarding the scale of the maintenance backlog and the level of funding allocated within the medium-term financial plan. Members highlighted the disparity between identified maintenance needs and projected future budgets. The Deputy Leader acknowledged ongoing financial pressures and confirmed that funding levels were subject to review and may be adjusted, particularly once further clarity was available on wider organisational changes.
 - (c) Members also discussed the implications of potential local government reorganisation (LGR) on the Council's estate, including the risks of investing in or disposing of assets ahead of structural changes. Mrs Spore

advised that the condition survey programme was necessary regardless of any future reorganisation, as it provided essential data to support informed decision-making and long-term asset management.

- (d) Clarification was provided that the programme would commence in the third quarter of the financial year (2026–27). Mrs Spore emphasised that updated condition data was critical for understanding asset condition, forecasting maintenance needs, and supporting both current operations and any future successor authorities.

3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 - 1) The establishment of a condition survey programme to ascertain the current condition status of property assets within the Council's education and corporate estate and inform future decision taking; and
 - 2) Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, entering into contracts and other legal agreements as required to deliver the programme in line with approved budgets.

64. Work Programme 2026

(Item 10)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

65. 26/00022 - Freehold Disposals Programme 2026-27

(Item 11)

Mr Colin Sefton was present for this item as a Guest Member.

1. Mrs Rebecca Spore (Director of Infrastructure) introduced the report, which proposed a new strategic approach to managing property disposals. Mrs Spore explained that, rather than bringing forward individual disposals throughout the year, the programme provided a transparent overview of 45 assets at various stages of the process. This approach enabled greater Member oversight, improved planning, and flexibility to respond to market conditions, while still maintaining full governance arrangements and Local Member involvement. The programme also set out anticipated capital receipt targets over the next three years, with proceeds to be reinvested in the Council's capital priorities.
2. Members broadly supported the revised programme approach but raised concerns regarding the potential impact of disposals in the context of local government reorganisation (LGR), particularly the risk of losing assets that could support future social housing, education, or community needs. Mrs Spore confirmed that decisions were balanced against current statutory and financial responsibilities, with ongoing engagement with district councils to explore future use where appropriate. It was also confirmed that all disposals remained subject to legislation, policy requirements, and future government direction, and that strategic sites for education and other long-term needs were actively safeguarded.

3. RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.
4. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. APPROVE the Kent County Council Freehold Disposal programme 2026/2027, and;
 2. DELEGATE authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and relevant Cabinet Members as required, to implement the approved programme, including but not limited to, agreeing all necessary disposal terms and entering into relevant contracts or other legal agreements as required to implement the decision.

66. 26/00021 - Biodiversity Net Gain Pilot Scheme at Preston Hill

(Item 12)

1. Ms Rebecca Anderson introduced the report on a proposed Biodiversity Net Gain (BNG) pilot scheme at Preston Hill, marking a new approach for the Council in using land to create and sell biodiversity units. Ms Anderson explained that the site had been assessed alongside other potential uses and, due to its location within the green belt, BNG was considered the most appropriate option. The scheme was expected to enhance the site's ecological value while also generating a higher financial return than alternative uses. The proposal included outsourcing delivery and management of the site to the Commercial Services Group, with a nine-month period to establish the necessary agreements and arrangements. Members were advised that, due to the complexity of BNG schemes, this would operate as an 18-month pilot to allow for monitoring and evaluation before any wider rollout to other sites.
2. Members raised questions about the potential to apply similar approaches to other Council-owned land, including former landfill sites, and whether BNG schemes could compete with or limit opportunities for community or charitable use. Ms Anderson confirmed that such sites were being considered where appropriate, but viability depended on factors such as site size, costs, and the ability to generate sufficient biodiversity units. It was emphasised that decisions would continue to be taken on a case-by-case basis.
3. RESOLVED that, under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972, the press and public be excluded from the meeting on the grounds that the following business involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.
4. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. Approve the Biodiversity net gain (BNG) pilot scheme at the Preston Hill site and an arrangement with Commercial Services Group (CSG) to implement the decision in relation to the site as set out by the blue hatched area in appendix C; and

2. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to take necessary actions, including but not limited to, negotiating, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant leases, contract arrangements or other legal agreements, as required, to implement the decision as necessary.