

DECISION REPORT TO CABINET COMMITTEE

From: Brian Collins, Deputy Leader

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 2 July 2026

Subject: Turner Contemporary Works

Decision no: 26/00036

Key Decision: *Yes, it involves expenditure exceeding £1m*

Classification: **Unrestricted report with exempt Appendix A**, *not for publication under the Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 refers - information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: Margate (Thanet) – Local Member: Jamie Henderson (Reform UK)

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:

The report sets out remedial works to the Turner Contemporary building, owned by Kent County Council (KCC). These works have been identified as business-critical and will ensure the gallery can continue to deliver their programmes.

The Turner Contemporary is a major cultural asset in Kent. In May 2026, it welcomed its five millionth visitor, a significant milestone in the gallery's history and a powerful reflection of its role as one of the UK's leading cultural institutions.

KCC and the Turner Contemporary are committed to working together to achieve outcomes that deliver coastal regeneration, growing the Kent economy and improving wellbeing of communities.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or **MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Deputy Leader in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix B).

1. Introduction

- 1.1 KCC has a strong, strategic partnership with the Turner Contemporary Trust, who are responsible for the operation of the Turner Contemporary. As the gallery building is owned by KCC, the council remains liable for the maintenance and upkeep of the gallery. Under the terms of the lease KCC retain responsibility for elements of the building, including external fabric and key elements of infrastructure.
- 1.2 It is important to maintain the gallery as a key cultural asset to the county; it delivers significant value to KCC by acting as a catalyst for regeneration and playing a transformative role in the area of Margate, boosting tourism through significant visitor numbers and stimulating investment and local economic growth while helping to reduce deprivation in coastal communities.
- 1.3 Preparatory work, including the December 2024 building survey commissioned by KCC and subsequent design development, confirmed that the planned remedial works are business-critical to maintaining the Turner Contemporary's ability to deliver its creative and cultural programmes. The works address statutory and operational risks relating to compliance, accessibility, sustainability and building performance, ensuring the Turner Contemporary will continue to host national and international exhibitions safely and effectively.
- 1.4 The works will provide improvements to visitor experience, increase the revenue generating potential and reduce environmental impact.
- 1.5 A Key Decision is required because the total value of the proposed project (including contingency) could exceed £1m, which includes entering into the necessary contracts to deliver the works.
- 1.6 The Turner Contemporary supports KCC's priorities by creating jobs, attracting investment, enhancing education and skills through cultural programmes, improving community wellbeing, and supporting coastal regeneration. At the same time, the gallery strengthens Kent's reputation as a cultural destination, helping secure further investment and supporting long-term, sustainable place-making.

2. Key Considerations

- 2.1 KCC owns the gallery building and retains responsibilities for key elements of maintenance and upkeep.
- 2.2 The proposed works are business-critical and support compliance, accessibility, sustainability and building performance.
- 2.3 The Arts Council England grant provides substantial external funding, but KCC must provide match funding and may need contingency provision.
- 2.4 A decision is needed because the overall project value may exceed the relevant governance threshold.

- 2.5 Not progressing would increase the risk of reactive maintenance, higher future costs which would fall to the Council if not supported by the grant, disruption to gallery operations and reputational impact.

3. Background

- 3.1 An Arts Council England Grant application was made in November 2025 by the Culture and Creative Economy Service seeking capital investment for essential maintenance works to the Gallery. The grant was awarded through Arts Council England's Creative Foundations Fund – a part of the government's £127.8 million Arts Everywhere initiative.
- 3.2 As part of the application, a scope and budget costs analysis was required and to support the development of the scope, a contractor was appointed via the KCC Construction Partnership Framework.
- 3.3 The application was successful and a grant of £865,000 has been awarded by Arts Council England and formally accepted by KCC.
- 3.4 As part of the grant qualification requirements, KCC will need to contribute £50,000 to the project. The current scope of works has been produced based on investigations and condition survey information. As with any project an appropriate contingency should be included as part of the project costs.
- 3.5 The total project funding will be specifically allocated to produce and meet the scope which includes essential maintenance and capital works to safeguard the gallery building, which is KCC's asset, and ensure it remains safe, accessible and operational. The works include accessibility improvements, repairs to building fabric, solar panels, ventilation, electrical and extraction upgrades.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- 4.1 **Option 1: Do nothing – not to undertake the works.** If no action is taken then the maintenance obligations will increase over time leading to increased maintenance liability, higher reactive costs, possible operational disruption and loss of Arts Council England grant benefit – *dismissed*.
- 4.2 **Option 2: Enter into the necessary contracts to complete the essential works** - Enter into the contracts for essential maintenance and improvements to the gallery. This allows a proactive approach to KCC maintenance obligations and allow the project to proceed while accommodating the Gallery's operational requirements – *recommended option*.

5. How the proposed decision supports the Council's Strategic Statement

- 5.1 The decision supports building better communities as set out in the strategic statement Reforming Kent by:

- 5.2 **Reducing inequalities:** Investment in maintaining the gallery supports the continued regeneration of Margate, a coastal area with higher deprivation, helping to improve economic prospects and community resilience.
- 5.3 **Economic growth:** Ensures the building remains fit-for-purpose protecting a major cultural asset that attracts visitors, sustains the local tourism economy, and supports businesses across East Kent.
- 5.4 **Health and wellbeing:** Keeping the gallery operational enables ongoing access to arts and cultural activities, which contribute to mental wellbeing, social inclusion, and stronger communities.
- 5.5 **Education and skills:** Maintenance safeguards a venue that delivers education programmes and creative learning opportunities aligned with KCC's skills and aspiration objectives.
- 5.6 **Sustainable infrastructure and place-making:** As KCC retains responsibilities for elements of the building, maintaining it ensures a high-quality, safe, and sustainable public asset that underpins long-term regeneration.

6. Financial Implications

- 6.1 An Arts Council England Grant application was made in November 2025 seeking capital investment for essential maintenance works to the Gallery building, which is owned by KCC.
- 6.2 The application was successful and a grant of £865,000 has been allocated for the works to the gallery building.
- 6.3 As part of the grant qualification requirements, KCC will need to contribute £50,000 to the project. The current scope has been produced based on investigations and condition survey information. It is anticipated that when further investigations are undertaken and construction works commence, further items, currently outside of scope may be revealed and therefore a contingency will also be required. Therefore, a total allocation of £1,055,196 is required to enable the necessary repairs, maintenance and improvement of the Turner Contemporary Gallery.
- 6.4 KCC's contribution has been allocated within the Modernisation of Assets (MOA) budget.
- 6.5 The total project funding will be specifically allocated to produce and meet the scope which includes essential maintenance and capital works to safeguard the building as a KCC asset and ensure it remains safe, accessible and operational.
- 6.6 Further financial information is included within exempt appendix A.

7. Legal implications

- 7.1 The grant of £865,000 has been formally accepted and is currently progressing through the legal processes required to finalise the agreement.
- 7.2 As part of the grant qualification requirements, KCC will need to contribute to the project.
- 7.3 Legal support has been procured and appointed in consultation with KCC Legal Services.
- 7.4 Further legal information is included within exempt appendix A.

8. Equalities implications

- 8.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA), attached at Appendix D, has been undertaken and identified no direct equalities implications arising from this decision.

9. Data Protection Implications

- 9.1 A Data Protection Impact Assessment (DPIA) screener has been performed and has confirmed that there are no DPIA implications and that a further DPIA assessment is not required in respect of this decision.

10. Other corporate implications

- 10.1 No other corporate implications have been identified at this stage.

11. Governance

- 11.1 The level of expenditure will be in excess of the Director's delegated threshold of £1m.
- 11.2 As per the Constitution and the Council's governance processes a Key Decision will therefore be required for this decision to proceed.
- 11.3 In accordance with the property management protocol the views of the local Member will be sought and reported to the Cabinet Member taking the decision.
- 11.4 Delegated authority is to be given to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of any agreement and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement.
- 11.5 The Government has announced plans for Local Government Reorganisation (LGR), aiming to abolish two-tier government by 2028. At present, KCC has not received specific guidance from Central Government about how LGR will be implemented in Kent and Medway; further details are expected in July 2026.

Until directed otherwise, KCC remains responsible for making decisions in the best interests of Kent taxpayers.

12. Conclusions

12.1 Approval of the decision will enable KCC to secure and utilise the Arts Council England grant funding, provide the required match funding and contingency provision, and enter into the necessary contractual arrangements to deliver the essential remedial works.

12.2 This will support KCC in meeting its responsibilities as owner of the gallery building, reduce the risk of escalating maintenance liabilities and operational disruption, and ensure Turner Contemporary remains safe, accessible and fit for purpose. Proceeding with the works will also protect a significant cultural asset, support the gallery's continued contribution to coastal regeneration, the visitor economy and community wellbeing, and provide a proactive and financially prudent approach to maintaining the building.

Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to CONSIDER and ENDORSE or MAKE RECOMMENDATIONS to the Deputy Leader in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix B).

13. Background documents / Appendices

- 13.1 Exempt Appendix A – Financial and Legal implications continued.
- 13.2 Appendix B – Proposed Record of Decision
- 13.3 Appendix C - Conditions of the Grant funding
- 13.4 Appendix D – EqIA

14. Contact details

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