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 Thursday, 2 July 2026

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

ALSO PRESENT: Mr B Collins, Mr C Hespe and Ms L Kemkaran

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mr B Watts (Deputy Chief Executive), Ms C Maynard (Chief Procurement Officer), Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Mr M Bridger (Strategic Commercial and Procurement Lead), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mr T Marchant (Head of Strategic Development and Place), Mr B Sherreard (Programme Manager), Ms J Taylor (Head of Capital), Mrs V Tovey (Assistant Director of Integrated Commissioning), Mr M Wagner (Chief Analyst), Ms R Westlake (Senior Commissioner) and Ms P Edwards (Commercial Policy and Governance Lead)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

67. Apologies and Substitutes
(Item 1)

There were no apologies.

68. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
(Item 2)

There were no declarations of interest.

69. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2026
(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 May 2026 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chairman.

70. 26/00031 - Adoption of the Delivery of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) Strategy
(Item 4)

1. Mr Chris Hespe, Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation introduced the report on the proposed adoption of the Delivery of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) Strategy. Mr Hespe explained that DOLGE had been established following the 2025 election to scrutinise Council expenditure, identify efficiencies and support the budget-setting process. He

stated that Phase 1 had involved detailed examination of budget lines and had contributed to savings, reprioritisation of spending, debt reduction and the setting of a balanced budget. The proposed strategy for Phase 2 would embed DOLGE principles across the authority through a collaborative approach between Members and officers.

2. Mr Hespe outlined four strategic areas within the strategy: efficiency and simplification, ensuring spend and savings were delivered to budget, commercial and income generation, and resilience and local government reorganisation (LGR). He highlighted a number of supporting principles, including full cost recovery where appropriate, reviewing service delivery methods and focusing on value for money. He emphasised that the strategy was intended to become a KCC-wide approach integrated into existing governance and performance arrangements.

3. The Leader endorsed the strategy and thanked officers for their support and cooperation. She described Phase 2 as the delivery stage of work undertaken during the previous year and stated that the strategy would help ensure value for money for Kent taxpayers.

4. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

   (a) Some Members raised concerns regarding the effectiveness and purpose of DOLGE arguing that identifying efficiencies and savings was already a standard function of council officers and previous administrations. Questions were raised about the need for a separate DOLGE function, the use of additional cabinet responsibilities, references in the strategy to “star chambers” and staff incentive schemes, and whether the strategy represented substantive change or was primarily a rebranding exercise. Concerns were also expressed regarding transparency, governance arrangements and the impact on services.

   (b) Further discussion focused on Council finances, debt reduction and the use of capital receipts. Members questioned whether some debt repayments represented best value for money.

   (c) Some Members raised concerns about the discontinuation of the Treasury Management Group and whether assets could be sold to support revenue pressures. The Deputy Leader stated that debt reduction had generated significant savings, that asset disposals were undertaken in accordance with statutory requirements and corporate processes, and that there were no plans for a “fire sale” of assets.

   (d) Whilst some Members did not support the strategy, others defended it, highlighting debt reduction, savings achieved during the first year and the importance of maintaining a focus on efficiency and value for money. Members spoke in support of encouraging innovation and savings across the organisation and argued that residents expected the Council to continually seek efficiencies.

(e) The Leader clarified that there were no additional Cabinet posts under her leadership compared to the previous Administration and there was one fewer Deputy Cabinet post.

(f) Mr Hespe reiterated that DOLGE remained active and that the strategy formalised and embedded the Council’s efficiency work. He stated that the Administration had inherited significant financial challenges and that the strategy was intended to support ongoing efforts to improve financial resilience and value for money.

5. Mr Hood proposed that the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee recommends to Cabinet that the Adoption of the Delivery of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) Strategy is terminated immediately along with the associated Member Special Responsibility Allowances (SRA). The proposal was not seconded.

6. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee, by majority, endorses the proposed decision to:

(a) Approve and Adopt the Delivery of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) Strategy.
(b) Delegate authority to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Local Government Efficiency and Reorganisation, to make non-substantive revisions or updates to the strategy as appropriate during its lifetime.

7. In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the Constitution Mr Brady, Mr Hood, Mr Hook and Mr Rayner wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that they voted against the recommendation to endorse the decision.

71. 26/00039 - Extension of Domestic Abuse Act Framework and Associated Services
(Item 5)

1. The Leader introduced the report on the extension of the Domestic Abuse Act Framework and associated commissioned services and reminded Members that Kent County Council has statutory responsibilities under Part 4 of the Domestic Abuse Act 2021 to assess local need, publish a domestic abuse strategy, and commission support for victims of domestic abuse and their children in safe accommodation.

2. Ms Victoria Tovey, Assistant Director of Integrated Commissioning, and Rachel Westlake, Senior Commissioner, presented the report. Ms Westlake explained that the Domestic Abuse Framework sets out how grant funding is used to meet the Council's statutory duties and is currently in place until 2027. The proposed extension would align the framework with the newly confirmed grant funding through to March 2029. The report also sought approval for a ten-month continuation of the Council's domestic abuse support services from April 2027 to January 2028. Work was underway to develop a new Kent Integrated Family Domestic Abuse Service, bringing together multiple funding streams and service elements into a single coordinated service.

3. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

   (a) Members welcomed the report and sought clarification regarding funding contributions from district and borough councils. Officers explained that although KIDAS operates countywide, West Kent authorities have separate local commissioning arrangements. Ms Westlake clarified that in West Kent, KIDAS provides refuge support and support for high-risk domestic abuse cases, while locally commissioned services support medium-risk cases.

   (b) A Member asked how easy it was for victims of domestic abuse to access support through KIDAS and about the balance between self-referrals and professional referrals. Ms Tovey explained that awareness was promoted through a dedicated website, social media campaigns, partnership working, workforce training and a single point of access. Ms Westlake added that many refuge referrals are self-referrals, while police make the largest number of referrals overall. She also noted that relocation some distance from a victim's home area is often necessary to ensure their safety.

   (c) Asked why the continuation contracts were proposed for ten months, ending in January 2028 rather than at the end of a financial year, Ms Tovey explained that the timescale had been determined by working backwards from the anticipated procurement and mobilisation requirements for the new service. She advised that the extension would provide sufficient contingency and continuity while allowing the new arrangements to be fully implemented. She confirmed that a further Key Decision on the recommissioning exercise would be brought to a future meeting of the cabinet committee.

   (d) Regarding the differing end dates for the Domestic Abuse Framework and the continuation of the KIDAS and SASS contracts, Ms Westlake explained that the framework governs the use of the Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant and therefore aligns with the confirmed funding period to March 2029. The service extensions, however, are intended only to provide continuity until the new integrated service is operational. She confirmed that the framework and service costs are funded through grant funding and partner contributions, including Public Health funding, and do not place additional demands on the Council's core budget.

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

   1. Approve extension and update of the framework arrangements, to reflect consolidated funding arrangements, set out in the report for ongoing management of the DA Act Funding 2027-29.
   2. Approve the extension of Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS) including Referral, Assessment and Triage service and services delivered under contract SS 16041 up until 31 January 2028 (10 months).
   3. Approve the extension of Safe Accommodation Support Service (SASS) contract SC 220255 up until 31 January 2028 (10 months).

4. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to, in consultation with the Leader, Corporate Director for Finance, Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, to revise and update the Domestic Abuse Framework as necessary to reflect the consolidated Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant funding arrangements, and to make minor operational amendments, provided these remain within scope of the approved Framework criteria, associated grant terms and the council's statutory duties.
5. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health to, in consultation with the Corporate Director for Adult Social Care and Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education, where applicable depending on affected portfolios, to administer any further Homelessness, Rough Sleeping and Domestic Abuse Grant monies under the funding/governance framework put in place by this decision, including the determination of Officer Decisions to progress activity via the framework.
6. Delegate authority to the Director of Public Health, in consultation with the Chief Executive, to take all necessary actions to implement this decision, including but not limited to negotiating, finalising the terms of and entering into contracts or other legal agreements, and to approve variations to existing contracts (including KIDAS and SASS) to incorporate additional or enhanced activity, subject to the securing of additional external funding.

72. Local Outcomes Framework
(Item 6)

1. The Leader introduced the report on the new Local Outcomes Framework (LOF). Mr Matt Wagner, Chief Analyst, explained that the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government had introduced the Local Outcomes Framework as an outcomes-based and data-led approach to accountability across local government. The framework sets out 16 national priority outcomes and around 130 associated metrics, with a strong emphasis on benchmarking councils against comparable statistical neighbours. He explained that the framework would sit alongside existing inspection regimes and KCC's own performance management arrangements, providing a national comparison rather than focusing solely on locally determined targets. Mr Wagner highlighted that the framework is additional to existing arrangements, many of the outcomes measured rely on wider partners and external factors beyond the direct control of the Council. Some details remained unclear, including the operation of the national benchmarking tool and the final definitions of some metrics. He explained that the framework provided a useful indication of the Government's priorities and would be considered as part of the Council's annual review of key performance indicators.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

   (a) Members asked how the framework would influence future decision-making and when KCC's performance indicators would be aligned with the new national measures. Mr Wagner outlined the annual process used to review key performance indicators and targets. He confirmed that directorates were being encouraged to cross-reference existing measures against the Local Outcomes Framework. He noted that while some LOF measures could be incorporated into Cabinet Committee dashboards, others were only reported annually and would be better suited to separate annual reporting.

(b) Concerns were raised about the inclusion of measures that fall outside KCC's direct control, including housing, temporary accommodation, public transport, employment and digital connectivity. Mr Wagner acknowledged that a number of the measures related more directly to district council responsibilities or wider partnership outcomes. He advised that KCC would be compared only with authorities of the same tier through the statistical neighbour model and expressed the expectation that the national tool would clearly distinguish between county council responsibilities and those of other organisations.

3. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

73. Budget Planning Process 2027-28 and Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update
(Item 7)

1. The Deputy Leader introduced the report, explaining that it followed on from the budget agreed in February. The final figures had now been completed and audited, and the report presented sets out the proposed process to update the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP).

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

(a) Regarding each 1% increase in inflation which would add approximately £10 million to Council budget pressures, Mr Dave Shipton, Head of Financial Strategy, explained that the Council was currently planning on the Bank of England's middle inflation scenario, which assumed inflation of around 3.5% continuing into 2027. He advised that services were being asked to plan on that basis while contingency arrangements would be developed should a higher inflation scenario emerge. He noted that the position would be reviewed further ahead of publication of the draft budget proposals later in the year.

(b) Mr Shipton confirmed that monitoring on delivery of savings was produced on a quarterly basis and reported to Cabinet. Mr Collins confirmed that regular meetings are held with directorates in between production of these reports.

(c) On Local Government Reorganisation, Mr Shipton advised that the current assumption was that KCC's share of transitional costs could be initially funded through borrowing from reserves, with successor authorities repaying those costs from future reorganisation savings. Members raised concerns around the use of capital receipts, and the impact of previously agreed reductions in property maintenance budgets.

(d) Asked about the Council's reserve levels, Mr Shipton explained that the Council's general reserve had dipped to approximately 4.4% of net revenue expenditure at the end of 2025/26 due to the use of reserves to balance the year-end position. However, approved budgeted contributions to replenish and strengthen reserves to above 6% during 2026/2027, which remained within the Council's target range of 5% to 10%, assuming no further significant drawdowns were required. The specific amounts in general reserve and impact of forecast outturn will be included in budget monitoring reports.

(e) Mr Shipton clarified that the published MTFP was based on an illustrative assumption of a 0% council tax increase. He further explained that forecast growth in council tax income reflected a projected increase in the council tax base for new housing developments rather than increases in council tax charges. He also clarified that figures within the reserves section reflected the removal and replacement of planned annual contributions rather than a planned drawdown of reserves.

(f) Mr Ben Watts, Deputy Chief Executive Officer, reminded Members that the Section 25 Assurance Statement presented as part of the annual budget-setting process remained relevant throughout the financial year and should continue to be considered when reviewing the Council's financial position and future budget planning.

3. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

74. Commercial and Procurement Performance Update (Financial Year 2025/2026)
(Item 8)

1. Mr Michael Bridger (Strategic Commercial and Procurement Lead) introduced the report and explained that it covered performance during 2025/2026 and was aligned with the Council's new Commercial Strategy. He reported that the Council had delivered £54.4 million in financial benefits during the year and had increased spending with Kent-based suppliers by £33 million, bringing local spend to 62%. He stated that these achievements reflected collaborative working between the Commercial and Procurement Division, Finance and service directorates. He also noted that the report identified areas for improvement, particularly around reducing retrospective waivers and increasing participation from voluntary, community and social enterprise (VCSE) organisations.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

(a) Concerns were raised about the reduction in spending with VCSE organisations. Mrs Maynard, Chief Procurement Officer, explained that while spend with VCSE organisations had reduced slightly, the Council remained committed to securing best value for taxpayers while maintaining a diverse provider market. She noted that many VCSE providers operated at significant scale, particularly within adult social care, and that procurement decisions continued to focus on value for money. She confirmed that spending with the sector would continue to be monitored closely. Mr Bridger added that officers were increasing pre-market engagement activity to ensure VCSE organisations had earlier notice of procurement opportunities, recognising that smaller organisations often had fewer resources to prepare bids.

(b) Regarding the increase in waiver requests, Mr Bridger explained that some waivers were necessary due to urgent health and safety requirements, service continuity needs or limited supplier markets. Ms Maynard confirmed that the time between a waiver being identified and submitted had reduced, indicating improvement in compliance and earlier engagement by services. She also explained that the Council was developing an overarching commissioning plan to improve forward planning and help prevent avoidable waivers.

(c) Mr Bridger confirmed that retrospective waivers remained a particular area of focus and that officer training and monitoring arrangements were being strengthened to reduce the need for them in future. Ms Maynard added that retrospective waivers did not necessarily mean expenditure had already occurred and that, in many cases, officers were still able to intervene to ensure best value was achieved. She also highlighted that urgent works, such as emergency repairs to school buildings, could legitimately require retrospective waiver approval.

(d) Mr Watts advised that reports from the Commercial and Procurement Division were helping the Corporate Management Team challenge and support directorates more effectively. He noted that improved reporting enabled management action to be taken where procurement processes had not been followed appropriately, whilst also helping to identify wider operational pressures affecting services.

(e) Regarding cross-authority cooperation, Mr Bridger explained that the Council worked closely with other county, district and borough councils, as well as central government departments, and expected this collaboration to continue and develop further. Mr Watts added that strengthened internal governance arrangements, including the Contract and Procurement Oversight Board, were improving cross-directorate collaboration and scrutiny of major contracts. He noted that these arrangements were already delivering benefits and would become increasingly important in preparation for Local Government Reorganisation.

3. RESOLVED to note the report.

75. 26/00032 - Adoption of the KCC Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy 2026-2028
(Item 9)

1. Mr Brian Collins, Deputy Leader and Mrs Clare Maynard, Chief Procurement Officer, introduced the report. Mrs Maynard explained that the policy sets out how the Council will use its purchasing power to secure wider benefits for Kent residents, businesses and communities. The policy supports both the Council’s Strategic Statement and Commercial Strategy and will ensure social value is fully embedded within procurement activity in line with the Procurement Act and national policy requirements.

2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion covered the following:

   (a) Members welcomed the policy, supported the outcomes-focused approach and the emphasis on measurement and accountability, and praised the progress made in strengthening the Council’s procurement arrangements.

   (b) Asked what consequences would apply if suppliers failed to deliver their social value commitments, Mrs Maynard confirmed that social value commitments would form part of contractual arrangements and would be monitored through contract management processes and key performance indicators, ensuring suppliers could be held accountable for delivery.

   (c) Mrs Maynard explained that the proposed 10% weighting represented a minimum requirement and that higher weightings could be applied where appropriate, depending on the nature of the procurement.

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

   (a) Approve the adoption and implementation of the Winning for Kent: Procurement with Purpose Policy 2026-2028.
   (b) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to refresh and make non-material revisions to the policy where changes do not alter policy intent or require additional governance.
   (c) Delegate authority to the Chief Procurement Officer to take all necessary actions, including but not limited to, entering into and finalising the terms of relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision.

76. Work Programme
(Item 10)

RESOLVED that the work programme be noted.

77. 26/00036 - Turner Contemporary - Arts Council England (ACE) Grant
(Item 11)

1. Mr Collins introduced the report regarding remedial works to the Turner Contemporary building, owned by Kent County Council (KCC). These works had been identified as business-critical and would ensure the gallery could continue to deliver their programmes.

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

   1. Approve the allocation of £1,055,196 to enable the necessary repairs, maintenance and improvement of the Turner Contemporary Gallery; and
   2. Delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, negotiating, finalising and entering into

required contracts and other legal agreements as necessary to implement the decision.

78. 26/00040 - Oracle Cloud Programme
(Item 12)

Open Access to Minutes

1. 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.

2. Mr Collins introduced the report.

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

    1. Approve the allocation of £7,562,446 from the flexible use of capital receipts to fund the remainder of Phase 2 of the Oracle Cloud Programme until February 2027.
    2. Delegate authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport (Senior Responsible Officer) in consultation with the Director of Technology and the Deputy Leader, to undertake necessary actions, including but not limited to negotiating, finalising and entering into contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.