From: Linden Kemkaran, Cabinet Member for Public Health

Dr Anjan Ghosh, Director of Public Health

To: Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee – 18 November 2026

Subject: Marmot Accelerator Programme 2026-2028

Decision no: 26/00060

Key Decision: Yes

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: Cabinet Member Decision

Electoral Division: All

Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes

Summary:
This report sets out the proposal to approve the Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework 2026-2028, for the management and deployment of the Programme funding.

Kent became the UK's first Marmot Coastal Region on 13 March 2026, marking the start of a long-term commitment to reducing health inequalities by improving the social determinants of health across Kent's coastal communities.

The Marmot Accelerator Programme is part of this wider, long-term initiative. It will fund innovative projects that improve access to employment, education and training opportunities for residents living within Kent's Coastal Region.

The Programme focuses on supporting three priority groups:

- Young people, aged under 25, who are at risk of becoming or are currently Not in Education, Employment or Training (NEET);
- People on probation;
- People with additional barriers to employment, education and training, including care leavers, carers and people with mental ill health.

Approval is sought for the Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework that will guide funding allocation, enabling projects to be commissioned flexibly while maintaining strategic oversight and accountability.

Approval is sought to add a further £413,700 from Public Health funding, creating a total financial envelope of £1 million for the period 2026-2028.

Recommendation(s):

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make recommendations to the Leader of the Council in relation to the proposed decision, as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to approve the Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework for 2026–2028 for the management and deployment of the Programme funding, as part of the wider Kent Marmot Coastal Region.

---

1. Introduction

1.1 The Marmot Accelerator Programme is part of Kent's wider Kent Marmot Coastal Region, launched by the Council on 13 March 2026. It will fund projects that support people in coastal communities into employment, education and training.

1.2 The Programme will focus on three priority groups: young people who are not in education, employment or training or are at risk of becoming so; people on probation; and people who face additional barriers to employment, education or training.

1.3 This report outlines the proposed Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework for 2026-2028, which will guide the allocation and commissioning of the proposed £1 million Public Health funding to deliver the Programme's intended outcomes.

2. Key Considerations

2.1 People living in coastal areas often have poorer health than those living elsewhere. The Chief Medical Officer's 2021 report found that coastal communities in England have poorer outcomes across a range of physical and mental health conditions. This difference, or "coastal excess," remains even when factors such as age and deprivation are taken into account.

2.2 There are similar inequalities within Kent. Life expectancy is lower in some coastal areas than in inland areas. These inequalities are described in Kent's 2021 Annual Public Health Report and latterly, the Institute of Health Equity's 2026 report on Kent's coastal communities, which found that life expectancy in Thanet is 76.8 years for men and 82 years for women. In Tunbridge Wells it is 82 years for men and 86 years for women.

2.3 Work and health are closely linked. Good employment can support health and wellbeing, while poor health can make it harder to find and stay in work. There are also differences in employment between Kent's coastal and inland areas. In 2024-25, 23.4% of working-age residents in Kent's coastal districts were economically inactive, compared with 19% in inland districts.

2.4 In response, on 13 March 2026, Kent County Council (KCC), along with its partners, launched the Kent Marmot Coastal Region to reduce health inequalities by addressing the wider factors that affect people's health and wellbeing in these communities. The initiative has a long-term focus in the following districts: Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Swale and Thanet.

2.5 The initial focus is on work and skills for work, addressing three of the Marmot principles:

- Enable all children, young people, and adults to maximise their capabilities and have control over their lives,
- Create fair employment and good work for all, and;
- Ensure a healthy standard of living for all.

2.6 The Kent Marmot Coastal Region will be achieved through a three-tiered approach:

- Tier 1: Top-level change through a long-term coastal focus and culture change to address inequalities
- Tier 2: Mid-level change through system alignment
- Tier 3: Ground-level influence through small-scale impact testing via 'Marmot Accelerators'

2.7 The Marmot Accelerator Programme forms part of Tier 3. It will test local level approaches that can help people overcome barriers to employment, education and training.

2.8 The Programme will work alongside existing employment and skills activity in Kent. This will help to avoid duplication, make best use of existing support and strengthen the impact of the Programme.

3. Background

<u>The Marmot Accelerator Programme</u>

3.1 The Programme (2026-2028) will adopt a test-and-learn approach. It will fund projects that test different ways of helping people into employment, education or training. Learning from the projects will help inform future policy, commissioning and service development.

3.2 The Programme will support three pledges made when the Kent Marmot Coastal Region was launched. These are to be achieved within 2026-2028:

- To support at least 200 young people aged under 25, into education and employment, who would otherwise be part of the Not in Education, Employment or Training group (NEET).
- To support at least 150 people on probation into education and employment.
- To support at least 100 people with additional barriers to employment, education and training, such as care leavers, carers and people with mental ill health, into work.

Framework for allocating funding and delivery plan

3.3 It is proposed that a 'Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework' will be used to guide the use of the allocated Public Health funding and support decision making.

3.4 The Framework will provide a transparent and consistent approach to the commissioning, funding and oversight of projects, ensuring that investment is aligned to the Programme's objectives and targeted towards priority groups.

3.5 To receive funding, proposals must:

A. Directly support residents within the Kent Marmot Coastal Region.
B. Directly support residents from at least one of the priority population groups: young people who are or at risk of becoming NEET, people who are on probation and people experiencing additional barriers to employment, education and training.
C. Focus on employment, education and/or training practices and opportunities.
D. Demonstrate alignment with relevant Kent-based strategies and policies.
E. Provide evidence of at least one sustainable outcome, to demonstrate impact beyond the agreed funding term.
F. Evaluate and publish an end-of-project report.

4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- Do nothing / defer action: Dismissed as this would not support the delivery of the launch pledges as part of the Marmot Coastal Region Initiative.

- Deliver a single County-wide project offer: Dismissed as the purpose of the Marmot Accelerator Programme is to test locally tailored approaches across different coastal communities, to different population groups and provide funding opportunities to a range of suppliers.

- Deliver all funding through one procurement route: Dismissed as a blended approach of Direct Awards, Requests for Quotations and Competitive Grant Awards provides greater flexibility, encourages innovation, supports local organisations and maximises value for money.

- Deliver projects outside of the Framework: Dismissed as the Framework will provide a consistent and transparent approach to spending decisions and to considering and approving proposals, ensuring that funding is allocated fairly and consistently.

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

5.1 The Marmot Accelerator Programme supports KCC to achieve the following objectives set out within the Reforming Kent Strategic Statement 2025-2028 via the Programme delivery:

- **Putting Kent residents first:** the voices of residents with lived experience and local organisations are embedded within the Programme and local businesses are encouraged to create job opportunities for Kent residents.
- **Reforming Kent County Council:** the Programme is cost-efficient, whilst enabling high-quality, innovative test-and-learn approaches.
- **Supporting residents that need help:** the Programme supports priority population groups outlined in the launch pledges, and funds innovative, test-and-learn approaches that focus on prevention and early intervention.
- **Building better communities:** the Programme prioritises and addresses coastal inequalities, supporting the Council's Marmot commitment in the Strategic Statement.

6. Financial implications

6.1 A total funding allocation of £1 million from Public Health funding is proposed for April 2026 to March 2028.

6.2 An Officer Decision (Decision No. OD-26-00033) was taken in September 2026, which approved £586,300 Public Health funding for the Marmot Accelerator Programme.

6.3 This proposed decision seeks approval of a further £413,700 from Public Health funding to create a total financial envelope for the Programme of £1 million.

6.4 Planning and commissioning for the Programme is already underway. Two projects have been awarded, and were approved and funded from the £586,300 Public Health funding previously authorised under Officer Decision OD-26-00033. See Appendix B for an outline of how the Programme is expected to support the three priority groups and how the £1 million funding will be used.

6.5 The planned activities set out in Appendix B totals £997,256. The remaining £2,744 will be allocated in accordance with the approved Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework and the Council’s relevant financial and governance requirements, and determined by the Director of Public Health.

6.6 All expenditure will be undertaken in accordance with the Council's financial, procurement and governance requirements. Any additional funding for the Marmot Accelerator Programme, Programme continuation beyond March 2028, establishment of an ongoing commissioned service, or substantive changes to the approved scope or delivery arrangements will be subject to separate governance and approval processes.

7. Legal implications

7.1 Legal, commercial and information governance advice will be sought, as required, to ensure that the Programme complies with all relevant legal requirements. In particular, any contracts awarded under the Programme must

be procured in accordance with the Council's 'Spending the Council's Money' rules and in compliance with the Procurement Act 2023. Any grants awarded would need to be assessed and made in accordance with the Subsidy Control Act 2022. Relevant data protection requirements must also be complied with.

7.2 Any impacts arising from Local Government Reorganisation (LGR) will be addressed through Programme management of the projects and the established LGR transition and governance arrangements.

8. Equalities implications

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA) has been undertaken and demonstrates a positive impact, with no negative impacts.

8.2 The Programme aims to support priority population groups within the coastal region of Kent, supporting KCC to reduce health inequalities by improving the health of Kent's population, especially for those living within coastal communities. Priority population groups include young people who are NEET or at risk of becoming NEET, people on probation and people with additional disadvantages such as care leavers, carers and those experiencing mental ill health.

9. Data Protection implications

9.1 Data protection implications will be fully considered as part of Programme implementation. When required, Data Protection Impact Assessments (DPIAs) will be undertaken.

10. Governance

10.1 The report seeks approval from the Leader of the Council, as the Cabinet Member responsible for Public Health, to:

- approve the allocation of a further £413,700 from Public Health funding, bringing the total Marmot Accelerator Programme financial envelope to £1 million.
- approve the Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework 2026–2028 arrangements set out in this report for the management and deployment of the £1 million Programme funding envelope.

10.2 Subject to the decision being taken, authority will be delegated to the Director of Public Health to implement the decision and deploy the Programme funding in accordance with the approved Framework and the Council's relevant financial, procurement, legal and governance requirements.

10.3 This authority will include, but not be limited to, determining and approving individual funding allocations and commissioning arrangements within the parameters of the approved Framework; undertaking the necessary procurement and grant award processes; and negotiating, finalising and entering into contracts and other legal agreements as necessary to implement the decision.

10.4 KCC Public Health will be responsible for managing implementation of the Programme. Internal governance arrangements will monitor expenditure to ensure that activity and expenditure remain within the parameters of the Framework approved by this decision.

10.5 KCC Public Health will provide annual updates to the Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee on Programme progress, expenditure and achievement of outcomes.

10.6 Any expenditure or activity outside the scope of the approved Framework, or any substantive change to the approved funding envelope or Programme arrangements, will be subject to the appropriate further governance and approval processes.

11. Conclusions

11.1 Kent is the UK's first Marmot Coastal Region. The initiative is a long-term commitment to reducing health inequalities by improving health and wellbeing in Kent's coastal communities.

11.2 The Marmot Accelerator Programme is a key component of this initiative and will support the Council's commitment to reducing health inequalities in coastal communities by improving access to employment, education and training opportunities for residents who face the greatest barriers.

11.3 The Programme will generate learning about effective approaches to supporting Kent residents into employment, education and training that can inform future policy, commissioning and service development.

11.4 A Framework will ensure a consistent and transparent approach to allocating and managing the £1 million Programme funding for a range of locally tailored projects that recognise and respond to the needs of different coastal communities.

11.5 Robust governance, monitoring and evaluation arrangements will provide assurance on delivery, expenditure and outcomes.

11.6 Approval of the proposed decision will enable the £1 million Public Health funding to be managed and deployed through the Programme during 2026-2028.

12. Recommendation(s)

The Adult Social Care and Public Health Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make recommendations to the Leader of the Council in relation to the proposed decision as detailed in the attached Proposed Record of Decision document (Appendix A), to approve the Marmot Accelerator Programme Framework for 2026–2028 for the management and deployment of the Programme funding, as part of the wider Kent Marmot Coastal Region initiative

13. Background documents

Kent Annual Public Health report 2021
Chief Medical Officer's Annual Report 2021
Kent Marmot Coastal Region Data-led Report 2026
Kent Marmot Coastal Region Deep Dive Report 2026
Marmot Accelerator Programme EQIA
Marmot Accelerator Programme - Grants Privacy Notice

14. Appendices

Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix B: Outline of the Programme planned activities and expenditure

15. Contact details

Report Author: Ruth Simmonds-Constable **Job title:** Senior Commissioner **Telephone number:** 0300 041 5339 **Email address:** ruth.simmonds@kent.gov.uk	**Director:** Dr Anjan Ghosh **Job title:** Director of Public Health **Telephone number:** 03000 412633 **Email address:** Anjan.Ghosh@kent.gov.uk **Deputy Director:** Dr Ellen Schwartz **Job title:** Deputy Director of Public Health **Telephone number:** 03000410552 **Email address:** Ellen.Schwartz@kent.gov.uk