



Direct Dial/Ext: 03000416892  
e-mail: joel.cook@kent.gov.uk  
Ask for: Joel Cook  
Date: 14 December 2023

Dear Member

**COUNTY COUNCIL - THURSDAY, 14 DECEMBER 2023**

**Agenda Item No**

5 **Questions (Pages 1 - 12)**

Questions put and answers given.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Ben Watts', is written over a circular stamp or mark.

Benjamin Watts  
General Counsel

This page is intentionally left blank

Question 1

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2023**

**Question by Mr Paul Barlett to Mr Dan Watkins**  
**Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

**Answered by Mr Andrew Kennedy, Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care**  
**and Public Health**

**Question**

The Green Social Prescribing Group was formed by KCC and the NHS to support social prescribing. Social prescribing has been around for 30 years but has been scaled up now it is included as part of NHS plan. Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership have created a Memorandum of Understanding and Strategic Framework how the voluntary and community sector can secure grants including a community chest for social prescribing, micro-commissioning and shared investment funds of up to £5k through a Community Project Officer.

I welcome these developments and ask the portfolio holder to clarify the Council's role in this and could he comment whether KCC is able to support a roll out across the county?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

We welcome the work of Medway and Swale Health and Care Partnership and congratulate them on their focus on social prescribing. Kent County Council supports Social Prescribing countywide as part of our approach to prevention and we have been working with a provider, Community Catalysts to promote micro-enterprises across the county. These micro-enterprises provide people with a range of help, from practical day-to-day help, through to regulated care and support.'

Community Catalysts have been out and about in their local neighbourhoods and communities, developing and deepening relationships with key enablers, building hyper local contacts and knowledge of their "patch", working alongside local organisations and establishing a strong local trusted presence. Catalysts work with people with the right skill set and provide them with the technical knowledge and tools they need to be effective, guiding potential enterprises through areas they need to consider to establish a sustainable, safe and legal micro business

Since May 2022, the catalysts have successfully encouraged the growth of 83 such enterprises, creating a new model of care and support for Kent residents to choose if they wish. Over 420 people have had their care and support needs met in this very personalised way, ranging from help with everyday tasks that mean they can remain independent at home, to support to get involved in activities in their local community, reducing loneliness and isolation.

As an example, a micro enterprise was able to help a gentleman to be discharged after three months in hospital. He was helped with regular checks on his wellbeing three times a week, support to manage his own money and pay his bills, batch cooking healthy meals and to book and attend regular appointments such as his vaccinations and dentists and opticians. He has settled well at home, is leading a healthier life and has had no further need to be readmitted.

The numbers of micro enterprises across the county is rising, offering more choice to the people of Kent about how they would like their care and support to be delivered. Members who would like to find out more about the enterprises in their area can visit the Kent directory of Small Good stuff at: <https://www.smallgoodstuff.co.uk/kent/>

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2023**

**Question by Mr Barry Lewis to Mr Peter Oakford**

**Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services**

**Question**

Looking at the approved net revenue budget for 2023/24, what is the approximate split (in percentage terms) between statutory and discretionary spend?

**Answer**

It's not as simple as splitting spend between discretionary and statutory. The authority provides services under either statutory duties (requiring the authority to perform certain functions) or statutory powers (allowing the authority to provide certain services). By the narrowest definition i.e. those services only provided under statutory powers its around 3% of the net budget. This includes powers under clauses in specific acts such as Childrens Act 1989, Transport Act 1985, as well as general powers under Localism Act 2011. However, even under statutory duties the legislation is often framed in such a way that allows a degree of local discretion although due to the way legislation is framed it's very hard to quantify the discretionary element. The totality of spend in these areas where there is a degree of choice is around 14% of net budget but not all of this spend is purely discretionary. The remainder of spend is deemed statutory. A few years ago a list of statutory duties was produced which identified around 1,400 clauses in legislation or regulation conferring statutory duties on local authorities.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2023**

**Question by Mr Richard Stretfeild to Mr Rory Love, OBE**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

**Question**

Weald of Kent Grammar School annex in Sevenoaks is currently consulting parents on not providing an on-site sixth form. Can the Cabinet Member please explain how this proposal conforms to the requirements for equal provision at both the school's sites? In answering the question, does he agree that this decision will add to the issue of a lack of secondary school places in Sevenoaks district?

**Answer**

Weald of Kent Grammar School is an Academy and is not maintained by Kent County Council as the Local Education Authority. The academy has a sixth form offer at both its Tonbridge and Sevenoaks sites. The school currently allows students entering the sixth form to choose at which site they would like to be based.

Of the 458 students in the school's sixth form, 69 are based at Sevenoaks this school year and on student preference the school forecasts there are to be between 30-46 students in the Sevenoaks sixth form next school year. Operating a small sixth form presents the school with operational, educational, and financial challenges.

The Academy is consulting with parents and stakeholders on whether to continue providing a sixth form provision at the Sevenoaks Annex site or transfer the small Sevenoaks sixth form to the Tonbridge site. That decision is one for the Academy Trust to make, and I would always stress the importance of taking the school community's voice into account when making such decisions.

There is no requirement that there is equal provision between sites where a school operates a satellite model. The relevant statutory guidance states that expansion of any existing grammar school onto a satellite site will be approved only if it is a genuine continuation of the same school, and the Academy Trust has the financial resources to operate the satellite site.

If the Academy were to transfer its Sevenoaks sixth form to Tonbridge then I understand that there will be no net loss of places and every student wishing to continue into the sixth form at Weald will be offered a place.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2023**

**Question by Ms Kelly Grehan to Mr Dan Watkins**  
**Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health**

**Answered by Mrs Penny Cole, Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and**  
**Public Health**

**Question**

Can the Cabinet Member please explain what quality-assurance checks KCC undertakes to ensure residential care facilities are suitably able to meet the needs of the young adults that we place into their care?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question.

There is a contractual framework in place, with social care providers having completed a stringent tender process to gain a contract with Kent County Council (KCC). The tender process included several quality assurance questions, and providers were required to supply information regarding their safeguarding procedures and case studies to support their application. The tender submissions were evaluated by KCC colleagues from commissioning, operational and safeguarding teams, and providers were required to meet a minimum score to be awarded the contract. Tender submissions that did not meet the minimum criteria were declined. There are currently 196 residential services on the contract and operational colleagues are required to seek placements with these providers initially as the due diligence has been carried out.

Ongoing contract management is in place with a team of Locality Commissioners working closely with colleagues from operational teams, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and the Integrated Care Boards. Where concerns are highlighted, these are triaged and investigated accordingly by the relevant team. When required, visits are carried out by commissioning and operational teams, where advice and guidance can be provided to the residential home to enhance the support given to the individuals within their care. Senior Commissioners meet with CQC on a monthly basis where information is shared regarding any potential concerns around the services.

Where significant concerns are highlighted by either CQC or KCC, professional meetings are convened with the provider in attendance as well as any other funding authorities. This supports a joined-up approach in ensuring improvements are made and sustained. We have a sanction process within the contract which means that we can either restrict or suspend any further Kent placements into the residential home whilst we work with the provider for them to evidence improvements. When significant concerns are identified, the operational teams carry out reviews for the Kent funded individuals to ensure they are receiving the support they need to live their lives.

Self-Assessment Framework questions are sent out annually to all providers, both framework and non-framework, to gain information linked to their contractual requirements. These are reviewed by the Locality Commissioning Team and followed up to gain further information if required.

Provider surveys are also sent out to ensure that we have the information regarding the support provided by each home. Within the Disability Residential Contract there are four defined categories of support – Mid, High, Specialist and Specialist Plus. This ensures that people are referred to the residential service that can meet their needs.

The commissioning teams meets regularly with the strategic providers that have a large number of residential services and Kent funded placements. The quality of services is a standing item on the agenda.



**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2022**

**Question by Chris Passmore to Neil Baker,**  
**Cabinet Member for Education and Skills**

**Question**

Barming Station on Hermitage Lane currently only has access from the north, no step free access between the platforms and only one train an hour - this limits access to important transport services and increases road use and congestion in the local area. As a further 1,000 houses are going to be built within half a mile of the station, potentially increasing traffic congestion on Hermitage Lane, can the Cabinet Member comment, noting that KCC invested funds in the Thanet Parkway Railway development, on whether consideration has been given to supporting any capital infrastructure costs for upgrading the station, with a view to reducing reliance on individual car use as part of supporting KCC's Net zero commitments, the Framing Kent's Future objective to encourage and facilitate use of alternative transport options and recognising the Access for All principle noted in KCC's Railway Strategy?

**Answer**

Thank you, Mr. Passmore.

We recognise the growth pressures across the county and the need for further investment in infrastructure. This was clearly set out in our adopted Local Transport Plan 'Delivering Growth without Gridlock' and we are embarking on developing a new updated plan.

Responsibility for trains stations and services ultimately falls with the Department for Transport within government, and the bodies that deliver its instructions – Network Rail and Southeastern trains.

We agree that service levels and facilities at stations need to improve – this was established in our Kent Rail Strategy and we will continue to call for this. It should be an ambition that most lines in Kent see an improvement in services so that there is a train at least every half hour on the mainlines, and we also have called for an acceleration in the delivery of step free access at stations across Kent.

Improvements to stations and services are nonetheless often costly, and also require approvals by government, Network Rail and Southeastern trains. Regarding the new Thanet Parkway station, funding was made available from Local Growth Fund and Getting Building Fund.

In the instance of Barming, upgrade and service improvement rests more with the cyclical budget processes for the DfT and Network Rail rather than routes for funding that KCC can lead itself.

I can report that mitigations from development has included funding much needed road network improvements to our Council's road network.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2023**

**Question by Ms Mel Dawkins to Mr Tony Hills**  
**Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment**

**Question**

As we know, many people are disincentivised from owning an electric vehicle (EV) as there is a lack of EV infrastructure. I appreciate that KCC is working hard with other councils across the county to install additional public charging points, but I think we need to be doing more. One option which I think should be considered (and which has been looked at in the past) is the possibility of installing cable gullies in pavements. According to the Kent.gov.uk website, 'we do not currently allow cable gullies to be installed in pavements, but we are watching trials across the country and awaiting government guidance, which is due in 2024, to see if we could support this type of initiative in the future'. Several pilot schemes have in fact recently been introduced across the country, with Durham County Council, Oxford County Council and Surrey County Council having all successfully trialled this new, pioneering technology.

In light of the successful trials elsewhere, can the Cabinet Member please explain whether the Council will be reconsidering its position on cable gully charging in 2024, so that we can make owning an electric vehicle more accessible for our residents?

**Answer**

Thank you for your question, Ms Dawkins.

The Council is aware of ongoing trials of EV gully technology, and officers are actively participating in a national discussion surrounding this via a forum led by the Department for Transport. We are awaiting Government Guidance to be published for Local Authorities on this in 2024 which we hope will address some of the key issues surrounding gullies including safety, liability in the event of incident, interpretation of current legislation, parking and maintenance considerations.

When the guidance is published officers will produce a report so that a fully informed decision to cable gullies can be taken at a later date.

**COUNTY COUNCIL****Thursday 14 December 2023****Question by Mr Alister Brady for Mrs Sue Chandler**  
**Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services****Question**

Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 ('Section 507B') states that Local Authorities are statutorily responsible 'to secure, so far as reasonably practicable, leisure-time activities and facilities for young people aged 13 to 19 and those with learning difficulties or disabilities aged 20 to 24'. The new Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy also highlights the need to give children and young people the best start in life and to help children and young people to be physically and emotionally happy' while also 'addressing the social determinants that enable healthy lives, including social networks and safety'.

Considering Cabinet has now taken the decision to cease the delivery of service provision through the commissioned Youth Service contracts from 1 April 2024, can the Cabinet Member please clarify whether KCC will be providing any direct replacement services once these contracts end, and if so, what these services will look like; and if not, can the Cabinet Member explain how ceasing the delivery of these services supports the Council's statutory duty under Section 507B of the Education Act 1996 ('Section 507B') and our commitment to delivering the shared outcome goals set out in the new Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy?

**Answer**

Your query relates to both our statutory duty and commitment to delivery shared outcome goals as set out in the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy.

The proposed design of our future Family Hub model takes an inclusive approach to address the needs of children and young people from 0-19, (19-25 with SEND) and their families. This will include face to face, digital and outreach provision, which will be based on the needs of young people within each district. KCC considers that the existing in-house provision, including proposed developments within the planned Family Hub model will allow KCC to meet relevant statutory requirements without the commissioned Youth Services.

We will also continue to develop community-based youth work by supporting existing local volunteer-led groups and help build the capacity of other public, private and third sector organisations as per our statutory duties to help coordinate the local youth offer for Kent.

In regard to our commitment to delivering the shared outcomes goals of the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy, the proposed Family Hub model is to take a systems approach to meeting the needs of children, young people and their families working with our delivery partners in health and the third and voluntary sectors. This will build on our existing partnership working with co-located services where appropriate and working towards the principles and formal training of "making every contact count" to ensure that

needs of families and young people are identified through interaction with any of our delivery partners and we take a coordinated approach to addressing these needs.

I have provided some examples of large scale youth activities that are accessible for all young people across Kent including where KCC have facilitated access to funding for initiatives and groups supporting young people. This has been considered within our role to help coordinate the local youth offer for Kent.

- **Kent Scouts** works with over 17,000 young people across Kent and Medway.
- **Kent Army Cadets** is home to over 1000 cadets in 35 detachments across the county. Around 6,000 cadets take part in the Army Cadet Force with an opportunity to undertake the Duke of Edinburgh Award. Around 2,000 gaining Bronze, Silver and Gold DofE awards.
- There are around 20 **Sea Cadet** units in Kent and Medway and while charges vary per unit, all charges are very low and heavily subsidised. There are charges for training courses and camps, but these are kept to a minimum. Sometimes you can get a bursary or grant for activities like our week-long voyages sailing offshore.
- **Active Kent and Medway Small Grants Programme** – in the past 12 months we have supported activity provision for 1394 young people across Kent and Medway.
- **The SEND community directory** [Activities and events - Search Results | Local Kent Directory](#) has 525 charities, activities and events available for all age groups including young people. This is updated weekly by KCC.

**COUNTY COUNCIL**

**Thursday 14 December 2023**

**Question by Ms Karen Constantine to Mr Derek Murphy**  
**Cabinet Member for Economic Development**

**Question**

Pfizer recently announced that it will be closing its research and development plant in Sandwich. In total, 500 direct jobs will be lost, while it is estimated that for every job created by the company, an additional two are supported across the Kent economy - meaning an indirect loss of around 2,400 jobs. The Pfizer site also contributes around £10 million a year to the Kent economy through local spending and generates around £187 million in regional gross value added.

In light of these substantial losses to both the local people and the Kent economy, can the Cabinet Member please elaborate on the comments he made about this issue at the Cabinet meeting on 30 November 2023 by providing a more detailed update on the work KCC is undertaking with relevant stakeholders to secure the future of the Discovery Park Site, to prevent a 'brain drain' from occurring, and to protect local jobs. In answering, can the Cabinet Member also please clarify whether KCC is in a position to be able to help those who are set to lose their jobs find alternative employment?

**Answer**

The County Council is fully engaged in discussing with local partners, Government Ministers and with Pfizer's senior management with the aim of putting in place the most effective measures to help those employees at Sandwich who are under threat of redundancy.

As Ms Constantine will know, the Leader of Kent County Council issued a statement on 15 November, the day after Pfizer's announcement, that:

*"KCC will work with the local management at Discovery Park to bring about the best outcome for them and the staff, and we will do all that we can to support new business and employment across East Kent, to minimise the impact of any job cuts on the local area."*

With the support of Government Ministers, Roger Gough will lead a new Sandwich Task Force to ensure that Pfizer's decision does not adversely affect the staff who are currently employed on the site and that alternative uses of the equipment and buildings are explored in a constructive manner. Pfizer's senior management have agreed to join this.

Meanwhile, Kent County Council has announced an interest-free loan scheme to support new investment in Kent: this would be available to Small and Medium Sized Enterprises at Discovery Park.

The Kent and Medway Employment Task Force, which the Leader chairs and whose membership includes Sir Roger Gale MP, Kent's schools, colleges, and Universities as

well as the Department for Work and Pensions, will oversee local jobs initiatives, with further action to be discussed at its planned 19 December meeting.

I am pleased to note that Pfizer has confirmed that they plan to “retain a scientific presence in the UK including at our Discovery Park location at Sandwich” and that the closure of their Pharmaceutical Sciences Small Molecule facility was a result of a global cost-cutting exercise and not a decision driven by local factors in Kent.

Local Members of Parliament, Dover District Council and Sandwich Town Council have also pledged to work with Pfizer to reduce the potential impact on the local economy.

Pfizer’s decision presents an opportunity to widen the science base at Discovery Park to other companies which might be interested in acquiring the buildings and equipment no longer required by Pfizer.