



## AGENDA

# GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, 14 May 2024 at 2.00 pm**  
**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,**  
**Maidstone**

Ask for: **Hayley Savage**  
Telephone: **03000 414286**

### **Membership (17)**

Conservative (12): Mr A Sandhu, MBE (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr S Holden, Mr S C Manion, Mr J P McInroy, Mr J Meade and Mr A M Ridgers and Vacancy

Labour (2): Ms K Grehan and Mr B H Lewis

Liberal Democrat (1): Mr M J Sole

Green and Independent (2): Mr M Baldock and Mr M A J Hood

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

- 1 Introduction/Webcast announcements
- 2 Apologies and Substitutes
- 3 Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
- 4 Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2024 (Pages 1 - 10)
- 5 Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director
- 6 24/00032 - New contracts for the provision of Post-Mortem Facilities for the Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, North East Kent, Central and South East Kent coroner areas (Pages 11 - 26)
- 7 24/00033 - Coroners Removals and Transfer Service Contract (Pages 27 - 40)
- 8 24/00034 - Decision to award contracts for Public Rights of Way Vegetation Clearance (Pages 41 - 96)
- 9 Performance Dashboard (Pages 97 - 116)

- 10 Kent County Council's support for Apprenticeships, Community Learning and Skills in the context of the Kent economy (Pages 117 - 158)
- 11 District Visits Programme (Pages 159 - 174)
- 12 No Use Empty (NUE) (Pages 175 - 198)
- 13 Kent Film Office (Pages 199 - 204)
- 14 'Project Gigabit' Broadband Programme (Pages 205 - 210)
- 15 Work Programme 2024/2025 (Pages 211 - 216)
- 16 Future Meeting Dates

To note that future meetings of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee will take place on the following dates:

3 July 2024 at 10am  
11 September 2024 at 2pm  
6 November 2024 at 2pm  
22 January 2025 at 2pm  
6 March 2025 at 10am  
1 July 2025 at 10am

### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Benjamin Watts  
General Counsel  
03000 416814

**Friday, 3 May 2024**

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### **GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 5 March 2024.

PRESENT: Mr A Sandhu, MBE (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr C Broadley, Mr D Crow-Brown, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr B H Lewis, Mr J P McInroy, Mr J Meade, Mr M J Sole and Mr M C Dance

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D Murphy, Mrs C Bell and Sir Paul Carter, CBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer), Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport) and Mr S Samson (Interim Head of Economy)

### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

#### **185. Membership**

*(Item 2)*

RESOLVED to note that Mr McInroy had replaced Mr Thomas as a Member of the Committee.

#### **186. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 3)*

Apologies had been received from Mr Ridgers, Mr Manion and Mr Cannon. Mr Dance was present as substitute for Mr Ridgers.

Mr Baldock was present virtually.

#### **187. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda**

*(Item 4)*

There were no declarations of interest.

#### **188. Minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024**

*(Item 5)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 18 January 2024 were a correct record.

#### **189. Ebbsfleet Development Corporation - Presentation**

*(Item 6)*

*Mr Ian Piper, CEO, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation and Mr Mark Pullin, Director of Planning & Place, Ebbsfleet Development Corporation were in attendance for this item.*

*Mr Conrad Broadly declared an interest that he was the Chairman of Broadness Cruising Club and Chairman of Northfleet Harbour Restoration Trust.*

1. Mr Ian Piper, CEO, and Mr Mark Pullin, Director of Planning & Place, of Ebbsfleet Development Corporation provided a presentation on Ebbsfleet Garden City (a copy of the presentation is attached to these minutes).

2. Mr Piper and Mr Pullin responded to the following questions and comments from Members:

(a) Asked whether there was a doctor's surgery in the area, Mr Pullin said the corporation worked closely with the Integrated Care Board and other healthcare providers in the area and work was ongoing in relation to facilities in Alkerden and Ebbsfleet Central.

(b) Asked about the measurement of public investment and comparisons against other development corporations, Mr Piper said the level of investment was tracked and an evaluation was likely to be carried out by central government. Mr Piper highlighted the importance of public investment scrutiny so that private investment was not displaced.

(c) Asked about the policy for active travel and affordable housing, Mr Pullin said they were working with KCC to support the expansion of Fastrack and there were various other initiatives for example Demand Response Transits. The provision of affordable housing varied across sites but was typically between 25% and 35%. Mr Piper said the neighbourhoods were designed to be walkable and Ebbsfleet aimed to achieve the right balance between parking provision and car ownership. Mr Jones referred to Kent's 'Mobility as a Service' pilot scheme which provided travel opportunities for residents and may drive behavioural change.

(d) Asked about London Resort, Mr Piper said the Development Consent Order (DCO) was withdrawn some time ago following the designation of the peninsular as a Site of Special Scientific Interest (SSSI).

(e) Asked about planning enforcement, Mr Pullin said planning applications were looked at with regards to sufficient resident and visitor parking and planning enforcement was carried out by management companies. The Ebbsfleet Garden City Trust had been created to oversee communities, for example, community buildings, following completion of the development.

(f) A Member commented that existing Northfleet residents had not seen any tangible benefits and had lost three historic buildings, questioning whether there should be more focus on heritage. Mr Pullin outlined opportunities such as new open spaces, schools and youth provision which may help with community cohesion. Mr Pullin said his team would be looking at a heritage action plan going forward and would be reaching out to local communities.

(g) Asked about solar power in future developments, Mr Piper said this depended on EDC's direct influence in terms of land ownership, for example a complete energy strategy would be looked at for Ebbsfleet Central.

RESOLVED to note the presentation.

## **190. Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director**

*(Item 7)*

1. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, provided an update on the following:
  - (a) The winter period had been busy for the registrations team with over 11,000 birth and death registrations completed between October and the end of January. Mrs Bell had visited the Ashford Gateway and Danson House in Bexley where KCC delivered registration and ceremonial events on behalf of Bexley Council.
  - (b) Virtual tours had been launched in some of KCC's libraries to showcase facilities online and help residents plan their visits. The virtual tours were viewable on the Kent Libraries website and app.
  - (c) Thursday 7 March was World Book Day and displays and activities would take place across Kent libraries, mobiles and online.
  - (d) The removal of library stock and furniture had commenced at Folkestone Library and a public consultation on the long-term options for the building would commence in Spring 2024.
  - (e) A national independent review of English public libraries had been conducted and the report was launched in February 2024. The paper raised awareness of the role of libraries and what the government could do to support and recognise them as a valuable community asset. Mrs Bell met with the Department for Digital, Culture, Media & Sport's (DCMS) Head of Library Strategy and Delivery and the DCMS team at the beginning of March and the national review was one of the topics discussed.
  - (f) Trading Standards were continuing to visit retailers to provide advice and guidance on vapes. Since November the team had carried out 208 advisory visits and 19 'Challenge 25' visits. The number of illegal vapes removed from the high street at the end of January stood at 2,067. The Council's Victim Safeguarding Officer dealt with 127 scam and doorstep crime victims since April last year.
2. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, provided an update on the following:
  - (a) The No Use Empty (NUE) Scheme had restored almost 600 empty commercial and residential properties bringing the total to 8,185 properties since its inception in 2005, and all funds for 2023/2024 had been allocated. In addition, NUE had funded 230 new build homes across eight Kent districts since 2021 and created 24 business units in Dover.

- (b) The Kent & Medway Business Fund and Regional Growth Fund had created 3,812 jobs and protected 1,477 jobs, bringing the total to 5,289. The scheme was relaunched in Autumn 2023 with money secured from government for the next ten years. Mr Murphy thanked officers for their work in securing the funding.
3. Mr Jones, Corporate Director Growth, Environment and Transport, provided an update on the following operational matters:
- (a) The team had been working with the Sandwich taskforce in supporting Discovery Park to enable the continuation of business activities following Pfizer's announcement last year regarding redundancies.
- (b) There had been a number of high-level entries for the Taste of Kent awards and planning arrangements for this year's Kent Invicta Chamber Business Awards in November had commenced.
- (c) Works at Margate Library were now complete including refurbishment of the children's library. Mr Jones thanked the knitting group at Clifton Library who had collectively knitted 199 little vests for the Chip Shop Babies alongside the local Women's Institute. News of this reached knitters up and down the UK and as a result, tens of thousands of vests had been knitted and sent out to needy babies around the world.
- (d) Active Kent and Medway's FANS scheme (Free Access to National Sports People) provided support to the county's leading sports performers through free, off peak access to a number of sports facilities within the county. As part of the scheme, FANS members in full-time education in Kent and Medway could apply for grant aid to help them with the costs associated with competing at national level. In the latest round of funding applications grant aid had been awarded to 30 young performers from across the county.
- (e) The latest results of the Sport England Active Lives Children and Young People Survey had been released. Nationally 47% of children and young people were meeting the Chief Medical Officer's recommended 60 minutes of sport or physical activity a day, and in Kent and Medway this was 45.2%. The research showed that inequalities remained and to help address this Active Kent and Medway facilitated a wide range of programmes including the Kent School Games and the Opening School Facilities Programme as well as working with the School Games Organiser Network and local schools to encourage the least active children to be more active.
- (f) The Coroner's Service move to their new facilities at Oakwood House was now complete with four courtrooms in use for inquests every day.
- (g) Kent Scientific Services were granted £260,000 from the Food Standards Agency. The instruments those grants had funded were now installed and delivering more efficient analysis, broadening the Council's commercial offer to clients.

- (h) Kent Trading Standards had been busy helping the farming community with bluetongue in Kent and the control zone was lifted on 19th February.

RESOLVED to note the verbal updates.

**191. 24/00010 - Contracting Inward Investment and Visitor Economy Services for Kent & Medway**

*(Item 8)*

*Mr Steve Samson (Interim Head of Economy) was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Murphy explained that the contractual arrangements with Locate in Kent and Visit Kent would come to an end on 30 June and it was proposed that these services would be re-procured as a joint contract, making an annual saving to KCC of approximately £150,000.
2. Mr Steve Samson introduced the report and said the purpose of combining the service was to bring about efficiency savings with back-office operations and to ensure the services could continue in a sustainable way whilst encouraging a joint approach to providing key services that promote the county's visitor economy and inward investment opportunities. As set out in the report, both services brought a range of economic benefits for Kent and Medway.
3. Members commented on the effectiveness of a joint organisation for both services, and the importance of creating an equal balance between the two services, noting the importance of ensuring the right balance of political board members and those with business experience. Mr Murphy said discussions had taken place regarding the governance of the service going forward and it had been made clear that both services were to be taken in equal importance. He said the Council would work closely with organisations such as Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Kent Ambassadors to push the economy of Kent forward through investment industries and the visitor economy.
4. A Member asked about the effectiveness of marketing Kent to the rest of the UK and Europe. Mr Murphy said it was the Council's desire to have a stopping service at Ebbsfleet and/or Ashford International Stations and the Council was lobbying as much as it could on this. Visit Kent was measured against national KPIs and had recently won an award for best tourist attraction bodies in the United Kingdom. Once the successful organisation(s) for the contract had been appointed further information would be reported back to the cabinet committee.

RESOLVED to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development on the proposed decision to procure an Inward Investment and Visitor Economy services contract for the next two financial years and delegate to the Director Growth & Communities to take other relevant actions including but not limited to entering into required legal agreements as necessary to implement the decision.

**192. 24/00012 - Contingency contract to provide emergency facilities in the event of a mass fatality incident**

*(Item 9)*

*Mr Mark Rolfe, Interim Head of Community Protection, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mrs Bell introduced the report and explained that the Council had a statutory duty to facilitate the Coroner's Service, and this included in the event an incident resulted in mass fatalities.
2. A Member asked how the provider would cope in the event of a national incident or one that spread across several counties, Mr Rolfe explained that organisations who provided this service tended to provide international aid and, if needed, this could become inward looking and bring help into the country. The purpose of the contract was part of a scaled response ranging from small incidents up to a full-scale emergency response requiring government military aid which could only be requested if the civil options were in place.
3. Following comments made by Members, Mrs Bell clarified that the contract was not an insurance policy and the costs of the contract, depending on circumstances, could be significant. Mr Rolfe said the contract included the payment of a retainer so that facilities could be called upon if needed and the retainer gave access to the provider's expertise and training. If an incident occurred where the contract was required to be called upon the Kent Resilience Forum Mass Fatality Plan would include a scaled response. If facilities were required that were outside of the Council's ownership and control, costs incurred would be an unfunded pressure on the Council's budget.

RESOLVED to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to delegate authority to the Director of Growth & Communities to take any necessary actions to enter into a contract for the provision of emergency facilities, including mortuary facilities, in the event of a mass fatality incident.

**193. 24/00014 - Signing of Memorandum of Understanding as prerequisite to access funding to deliver a Nutrient Neutrality Strategy in East Kent**  
*(Item 10)*

*Mr Max Tant, Flood and Water Manager, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Murphy explained that the government was offering £9.8m of capital for nutrient neutrality mitigation in East Kent along with revenue grants to support the delivery of a strategy.
2. Mr Tant introduced the report and explained that nutrient neutrality was an issue in East Kent that had been holding up development for almost four years. To access the government funding and the revenue grants the Council was required to sign Memorandums of Understanding. Mr Tant highlighted that the revenue funding was only available during this financial year and a strategy would be developed to deliver nutrient mitigation with the capital funding.
3. Mr Sole declared an interest in that he was a Councillor at Canterbury City Council.



4. Following a question from a Member, Mr Tant explained that all developments in the affected area had to be nutrient neutral. Some large developments were able to invest in onsite wastewater treatment works to achieve this, but this option was not available to smaller developments. A strategic mitigation solution was therefore required within the catchment.

RESOLVED to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Economic Development on the proposed decision to:

- (i) AGREE to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding to accept £9.8m capital and Memorandums of Understanding for supporting revenue funding from DLUHC to support nutrient neutrality mitigation works in East Kent.
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport, after consultation with the Cabinet Member for Economic Development, and Corporate Director of Finance, to review and agree to the required terms and conditions to enter into the necessary grant arrangements.
- (iii) AGREE for the Director for Growth and Communities to bring a strategy for delivery of nutrient neutrality for adoption to this Committee prior to claiming the capital funding.

#### **194. Risk Management: Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate** (Item 11)

*Mr Mark Scrivener, Head of Risk and Delivery Assurance was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Scrivener introduced the report which included 3 risks on the Corporate Risk Register and a summary of key risks from within the Growth, Environment and Transport directorate. Mr Scrivener explained that some of the target risk ratings had increased taking into account that some risks were outside the Council's direct control and unlimited resources were not available to manage them.
2. A Member asked about CRR0042 – *Border fluidity, infrastructure, and regulatory arrangements* – and whether there was any update, Mr Murphy said an announcement was expected from central government in August/September 2024 and Mr Jones said the Entry/Exit System would be discussed at the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on 7 March 2024.
3. A Member asked whether the Developers Contribution Guide would resolve issues relating to the financing of infrastructure, Mr Jones said there would always be a question around a developer's viability, but the guide aimed to strengthen the Council's position in securing the right infrastructure on the right sites at the right time.

RESOLVED to note the report.

#### **195. Kent & Medway Business Fund Bi-Annual Monitoring - Quarter 2 2023-24** (Item 12)

*Mr Martyn Riley, Project Manager, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Murphy paid tribute to Ms Susan Berdo and her team for their work in securing the funds for the next ten years following a suspension by government in late 2023.
2. Mr Riley introduced the report which summarised the results of KCC's monitoring returns from businesses that had received loans and equity from KCC managed government funded Business Investment Schemes, consisting of the current Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) scheme and the former Regional Growth Fund (RGF) schemes.

RESOLVED to note the report.

### **196. Update on Transition of Local Enterprise Partnership Responsibilities to Kent County Council**

*(Item 13)*

1. Mr Samson introduced the report, reminded Members of the areas of responsibility that were being transferred from government to Kent County Council for the Functional Economic Area of Kent & Medway. He said the Kent & Medway Economic Partnership (KMEP) would become the local growth board for Kent and Medway and would oversee economic growth activities in Kent and Medway based on the priorities and objectives set out in the Kent and Medway Economic Framework which is a strategy that will be recognised by government. Mr Samson said that some funding would be available from government to support the transfer of responsibilities to KCC for 2024/25.
2. A Member asked about democratic control and the balance of businesspeople and elected members on the board once the responsibilities had been transferred, Mr Samson said the guidance for LEP transition published at the end of 2023 by central government did not specify a requirement to have a certain public-private sector split, but ensuring the right balance of business membership would be discussed at future meetings of the KMEP and Kent Leaders. It was proposed that a KMEP Investment Panel would ensure full accountability for the use of government funding that might be announced.

RESOLVED to note the report.

### **197. Impacts of new border controls on Trading Standards activities**

*(Item 14)*

*Mr Steve Rock, Head of Trading Standards, was in attendance for this item.*

1. Mr Rock introduced the report and provided a presentation by way of a series of slides (attached to these minutes).
2. A Member asked about funding for the service at the border, Mr Rock said Port Health was responsible for funding the service in relation to food and the Council was responsible for feed with the costs (including officer time and analysis) being rechargeable to the importer.

3. Asked about the costs to the Council, Mr Rock said grant funding for product safety was received from the Office of Product Safety and Standards. Nothing had yet been received from Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs (DEFRA) and it was not possible to know what the level of feed or live animals would be.
4. Asked about the inspection process, Mr Rock said the checks were made on a percentage basis at the Border Control Post. There were financial implications for non-attendance and criminal penalties for failing to comply with some directions. Mr Rolfe said to get access to market the importers needed evidence that the goods had been through the control centre.

RESOLVED to note the report.

#### **198. Work Programme 2024**

*(Item 15)*

RESOLVED to note the Work Programme.

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**From:** Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment & Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee  
– 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024

**Key decision**      **24/00032**

**Subject:** New contracts for the provision of Post-Mortem Facilities for the Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, North East Kent, Central and South East Kent coroner areas

**Classification:**    **Part Unrestricted – Appendix A is Confidential - Paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972**

**Electoral Divisions:** All

**Summary:** This paper proposes award of a three-year contract (that can be extended for up to two years) for arrangements for the provision of mortuary and post-mortem (PM) services in the Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, North East Kent, Central and South East Kent coroner areas.

**Recommendation(s):** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to:

- 1) Issue new contracts, via direct awards, for the provision of Post-Mortem Facilities in Mid-Kent and Medway, Northwest Kent, and East Kent, to commence from 1 April 2024 for a period of 3 years (36 months) with the option of extending for up to a further 2 years (24 months)
- 2) Delegate authority to the Director for Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision
- 3) Delegate authority to the Director for Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Community and Regulatory Services to award extensions of contracts for commissioned services in accordance with the extension clauses within the contract (3 years + 2-year extension) as shown at Appendix B.

## 1. Introduction

1.1. The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 places a duty on Coroners to investigate deaths that are referred to them if they have reason to think that:

- The death was violent or unnatural;
- The cause of death is unknown; or

- The deceased died while in prison, police custody or another form of state detention.
- 1.2. In some cases, the Coroner will order a Post-Mortem (PM) to establish the cause of death, and in such cases, the deceased is taken to one of five NHS mortuaries across Kent and Medway. On behalf of the Kent Senior Coroners, KCC ensures access to body storage and PM facilities across the Kent coroner areas.
  - 1.3. The current contracts for PM facilities and staff expired on 31 March 2024. There is a need for these contracts to be renewed from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2024 to ensure continuity of this critical service. Provision of this service since 31<sup>st</sup> March has been undertaken by the five NHS trusts, on the basis of the previously agreed contract terms and PM rates. These arrangements will be formalised by the proposed contracts. The Coroners Service are in regular discussion with the relevant NHS trusts to ensure that the service can continue on this basis in the short term.
  - 1.4. Uncertainty relating to the Digital Autopsy (DA) project has delayed decision making with regards to the required contract period. Work has been undertaken to review and implement recommendations of the Fuller Inquiry into the service specification (these recommendations were not published until late November 2023).
  - 1.5. Contracts with Dartford and Gravesham, East Kent, Medway Maritime and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trusts for the provision of PM facilities have previously been awarded/extended on an annual basis, taking into account the potential opening of the Digital Autopsy (DA) Body Storage facility. Once operational, this facility could potentially significantly reduce the numbers of PM required through these Contracts. Further scoping work is required to progress this project; therefore this facility will not progress within the timescales expected. The DA project will not have an impact upon the initial term of this contract.
  - 1.6. Contracts with Dartford and Gravesham, East Kent, Medway Maritime and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trusts for the provision of PM facilities are required. This report sets out the needs of the two Kent and Medway Senior Coroners and the options and context for re-providing these services, before recommending an option for KCC to renew the contracts with the current providers for this critical service.

## **2. The needs of the Senior Coroners**

- 2.1. Senior Coroners are responsible for providing the coronial service for the KCC and Medway administrative areas. By virtue of The Coroners and Justice Act 2009, KCC is responsible for meeting the costs of the coroner service although A recharge arrangement is in place with Medway Council, to recoup some of the cost to provide the coroner service across this area.
- 2.2. KCC supports the Senior Coroners by putting in place contracts for the major areas of activity which includes the provision of body storage and PM facilities. In 2023, 6448

deaths were referred to the Senior Coroners, of which 3471<sup>1</sup> required a PM. The number of cases requiring PMs is consistent with previous years.

- 2.3. The NHS in Kent and Medway has always provided body storage and PM facilities to the Kent and Medway coroners alongside their own requirements for body storage for hospital deaths where the coroner is not involved. There are no private sector PM providers anywhere in England and Wales that could take on this work and there is no public mortuary facility in Kent or Medway. Each of the five mortuaries in Kent and Medway are already operating at full capacity for body storage and so would not be able to take on any additional PM work from each other in the absence of significant capital investment.
- 2.4. Commissioning the coronial work outside of Kent at other NHS sites is not an option for two reasons. First, the cost to KCC of transferring the deceased would be prohibitive. Second, the service has recent previous experience of using Greenwich Public Mortuary for a year when Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust did not renew its contract with KCC in 2013. The lesson learned from this is that procuring services at such a distance from the coroner area places an unsustainable strain on bereaved families, service costs and carbon emissions and therefore is not a viable option.
- 2.5. Continuing outside of a contracted arrangement puts the Council at risk of receiving an inconsistent service. For example, if NHS Trusts choose to dedicate their pathologists and body storage to their hospital deaths rather than community deaths, a reduced capacity would be available to KCC to carry out its statutory duty on behalf of the Senior Coroners. Without a contract in place, KCC cannot require the Trusts to provide capacity to carry out this service.

### 3. Options

#### **Option 1: Do nothing**

This is a statutory service, and unless contracts are put in place the system of coronial death investigation and certification in the Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, North East Kent, Central and South East Kent coroner areas will fail. The Council will also be at risk of receiving an inconsistent provision and quality of service, a lack of control over costs, and subsequent reputational ramifications.

#### **Option 2: Go out to tender - Competitive Tender Process**

There are no private sector organisations within this marketplace locally, and previous experience of mortuary use outside of Kent has not delivered a suitable service.

#### **Option 3: Use a framework or other viable contract mechanism.**

There are no known frameworks or other viable mechanisms for the provision of mortuary facilities in England and Wales.

#### **Option 4: One NHS Trust delivers all PMs.**

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<sup>1</sup> The overall number of deaths referred to the Senior Coroner has decreased since 2020 following the implementation of the non-statutory [national medical examiner system](#), operated by the NHS.

No single facility can accommodate the number of PMs required.

#### **4. Financial implications**

- 4.1. Without a contract renewal in place, there is a risk NHS Trusts can charge spot rates for the provision of mortuary services.
- 4.2. The financial implications of these proposed contract awards are set out in Annex A (exempt) of this report. Subject to negotiation, it is forecast that the cost to renew the contracts is within the current funding envelope, the 24/25 budget being £1,437,600. These Contracts are funded from the Coroner) Revenue Budget. The full maximum cost of the contract over the 5 years (3 years plus potential to extend for 2 years) is £7,188,000. This will be met from base budget allocation. As there is no available competition in this instance, information held on other Mortuary costs will be used to benchmark negotiated rates.
- 4.3. There is no guarantee of volumes under these contracts (with the exception of the agreement with East Kent NHS Trust, see point 4.4 below). Inflationary uplifts are to be negotiated individually with all Trusts (to be reviewed on an annual basis) and incorporated into Budget planning.
- 4.4. It should be noted that the current contract with East Kent NHS Trust is a fixed fee regardless of activity levels and is paid in six equal instalments, however the negotiations for the new contract will include payment based on activity levels. The contracts with Dartford and Gravesham, Medway Maritime and Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trusts are charged on a cost per PM basis.

#### **5. Legal implications**

- 5.1. The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 places a duty on Coroners to investigate deaths that are referred to them if they have reason to think that:
  - The death was violent or unnatural.
  - The cause of death is unknown; or
  - The deceased died while in prison, police custody or another form of state detention e.g., where a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Order (DoLS) is in place
- 5.2. In accordance with Regulation 12 of the Public Contract Regulations 2015 (PCR15), public contracts between entities within the public sector are excluded from the provisions detailed in the PCR15. This allows the Council to award contracts directly to the four NHS Trusts without the need to follow the competitive processes detailed in the regulations.
- 5.2. The Council does have an obligation to deliver Value for Money on behalf of the taxpayer. As part of the negotiation process, the Council will ensure consistency across the contract through amended pricing and specifications. This will ensure the service remains within the c.£1.4m budget (based on 23/24 cost).
- 5.3. To ensure transparency, the Council will publish a Contracts Finder Notice for each of the contracts detailing the value and duration.



## 6. Equality implications

- 6.1. The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) was updated in 2023 for this service in preparation for the new contracts. Should any issues arise, they will be dealt with in accordance with KCC policies and statutory requirements.

## 7. Data Protection implications

- 7.1. For the purposes of the coroner service, the two senior coroners are the data controllers. The GDPR does not apply to deceased persons, but information is collected during the course of coroner officer enquires that relates to the living. This includes details about next of kin, for example name, address, and telephone number. Sometimes this information is shared with other organisations for the specific purposes of the coroner's investigation, for example with the NHS. The contract contains a data sharing agreement that places a specific obligation on the provider to always comply with the requirement of the GDPR for the data they hold relating to next of kin. In addition, the service has published a privacy notice which explains what personal information it holds about service users, how it collects it, how it uses it and how it might share information.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1. KCC supports the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners by ensuring contracts are in place for body storage and for PMs to ensure they can discharge their statutory duties in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. There is a need for the contracts for PM facilities and staff to be extended to ensure continuity of this critical service.
- 8.2. There are no private sector PM providers anywhere in England and Wales to take on the Kent and Medway PM workload and no public mortuary in Kent or Medway. The five current mortuary sites are all operating at full body storage capacity and could not take on additional work from each other without significant capital investment. KCC is therefore left with no alternative but to award new PM contracts with the current providers until the Digital Autopsy facility opens.
- 8.3. This arrangement will allow the Coroner Service to better understand the provision and associated costs of running the contract for the Trusts. Awarding new mortuary contracts will also provide more time for KCC to determine the DA project's direction of travel, and what the relationship will be between these two services.

## 9. Recommendations

**Recommendation(s):** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to:

- 1) Issue new contracts, via direct awards, for the provision of Post-Mortem Facilities in Mid-Kent and Medway, Northwest Kent, and East Kent, to commence from 1 April 2024 for a period of 3 years (36 months) with the option of extending for up to a further 2 years (24 months)

2) Delegate authority to the Director for Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision

3) Delegate authority to the Director for Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Community and Regulatory Services to award extensions of contracts for commissioned services in accordance with the extension clauses within the contract (3 years + 2-year extension) as shown at Appendix B.

## **10. Appendices**

Appendix A: Exempt Confidential commercially sensitive information

Appendix B: Proposed Record of Decision

Appendix C: Equality Impact assessment: Renewal of contracts with the NHS for the provision of mortuary facilities and staff to carry out post mortems on behalf of the Kent and Medway Coroner Service

## **11. Contact details.**

### **Report Author**

Belinda Hooker, Acting Head of Coroner Service

03000 421971

[Belinda.Hooker@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Belinda.Hooker@kent.gov.uk)

### **Relevant Director:**

Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director for Growth and Communities

03000 412064

[Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Stephanie.Holt-Castle@kent.gov.uk)

By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

## DECISION NO:

24/00032

For publication

Key decision: YES

**Subject Matter / Title of Decision:** New contracts for the provision of Post-Mortem Facilities for the Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, North East Kent, Central and South East Kent coroner areas

### Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, I agree to:

- (i) ISSUE new contracts, via direct awards, for the provision of Post-Mortem Facilities in Mid-Kent and Medway, Northwest Kent, and East Kent, to commence from 1 April 2024 for a period of 3 years (36 months) with the option of extending for up to a further 2 years (24 months)
- (ii) DELEGATE authority to the Director for Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision
- (iii) DELEGATE authority to the Director for Growth and Communities, in consultation with the Cabinet member for Community and Regulatory Services to award extensions of contracts for commissioned services in accordance with the extension clauses within the contract (3 years + 2 year extension)

### Reason(s) for decision:

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 places a duty on Coroners to investigate deaths that are referred to them if they have reason to think that:

- The death was violent or unnatural;
- The cause of death is unknown; or
- The deceased died while in prison, police custody or another form of state detention.

in some cases, the Coroner will order a Post-Mortem (PM) to establish the cause of death, and in such cases, the deceased is taken to one of five NHS mortuaries across Kent and Medway. On behalf of the Kent Senior Coroners, KCC ensures access to body storage and PM facilities across the Kent coroner areas.

### Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision is being considered by members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 14 May.

### Any alternatives considered and rejected:

**Option 1: Do nothing** - This is a statutory service, and unless contracts are put in place the system of coronial death investigation and certification in the Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, North East Kent, Central and South East Kent coroner areas will fail. The Council will also be at risk of receiving an inconsistent provision and quality of service, a lack of control over costs, and subsequent reputational ramifications.

**Option 2: Go out to tender - Competitive Tender Process** - There are no private sector

organisations within this marketplace locally, and previous experience of mortuary use outside of Kent has not delivered a suitable service.

**Option 3: Use a framework or other viable contract mechanism** - There are no known frameworks or other viable mechanisms for the provision of mortuary facilities in England and Wales.

**Option 4: One NHS Trust delivers all PMs** - No single facility can accommodate the number of PMs required.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

.....  
signed

.....  
date

## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

#### EQIA Title

Renewal of contracts with the NHS for the provision of mortuary facilities and staff to carry out post mortems on behalf of the Kent and Medway Coroner Service

#### Responsible Officer

Rob Wilson - GT GC

#### Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)

Belinda Hooker - GT GC

### Type of Activity

#### Service Change

No

#### Service Redesign

No

#### Project/Programme

No

#### Commissioning/Procurement

Commissioning/Procurement

#### Strategy/Policy

No

#### Details of other Service Activity

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

#### Directorate

Growth Environment and Transport

#### Responsible Service

Coroner's service

#### Responsible Head of Service

Belinda Hooker - GT GC

#### Responsible Director

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

### Aims and Objectives

Kent County Council (KCC) is responsible for supporting the Senior Coroners for Kent and Medway to provide the coroner service to Kent and Medway residents.

The Coroner has a duty to investigate a death where there are reasons to suspect that:

- The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
- The cause of death is unknown;
- The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.

When a death is reported to the Coroner, he or she

- Establishes whether an investigation is required;
- If yes, investigates to establish the identity of the person who has died; how when and where they died and any information to register the death; and
- Uses information discovered during the investigation to assist in the prevention of other deaths where possible.

In some cases the Coroner will require a post mortem examination by a suitably qualified medical practitioner such as a Pathologist to find out the cause of death. This involves an invasive procedure to open and examine the body and in some cases body fluid and tissue samples will be taken for analysis. A new technique is becoming available in some part of the country (nearest Oxford and Birmingham)

whereby the deceased has a non invasive post mortem procedure, a computed tomography (CT) scan which in some cases but not all can establish the cause of death. This procedure is favoured by some religious groups and in such cases the Coroner is able to consider requests from next of kin ((NOK)/personal representative)) for a CT of the deceased. If the Coroner agrees to a CT scan, and it is not conclusive, the Coroner will order an invasive post mortem. By law the Coroner is not required to obtain consent to the post mortem examination from the NOK. The NOK cannot attend a post mortem but the coroner is legally required to tell the NOK where and when the post mortem will take place and the NOK may ask to be represented at the post mortem by a doctor of their choice. A Coroners Officer acting on behalf of the Coroner will explain this to the NOK and the reasons why the post mortem is necessary, and what happens after the post mortem. The NOK will also be sent a copy of the Guide to Coroner Services which is published by the Ministry of Justice. This gives an overview of coroners and investigations and the standards of service that can be expected.

The Coroner has physical control of the body (as evidence) from the time he/she/they have been informed of the death, until the time that all the necessary enquiries have been concluded, at which point the body can be released to the family. The Coroner’s control of the body is absolute (jurisdiction) and supersedes any claim on the body by the family, or for example any other organisations such as the police.

The NOK or a representative of their choice may be asked to formally identify the body and sometimes this will take place at the mortuary. This is usually done through a glass window rather than being in the same room. Viewings by the NOK are at the discretion of Coroner but are not normally allowed as the expectation is that viewings take place at the funeral directors premises after the coroner has released the body.

Although viewings are not the responsibility of the coroner, the coroner may require a formal identification to be made, usually by a family member for the purpose of a Coroners investigation and this will take place at the mortuary before the deceased can be released to the family (or personal representative) for the funeral.

On behalf of the Kent Senior Coroners, KCC is responsible for putting contracts in place for the provision of mortuary facilities, body storage and specialist staff to carry out post mortems to help establish the cause of death. The contracts for Post-Mortem Facilities for the Central & South East Kent, Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, and North East Kent coroner areas are due for renewal in April 2024.

#### Aims and Objectives

- Ensure statutory compliance by KCC and the Kent Senior Coroners
- Ensure best value in the use of public funds through a formal procurement process

#### Outcome

No major change - no potential for discrimination and all opportunities to promote equality are currently being taken in line with KCC policies and statutory requirement. Should any issues arise they will be dealt with in accordance with KCC policies and statutory requirements.

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) completed in 2021 has since been reviewed as part of the 2024 renewal. Nothing has changed since then, and no issues have been identified by the service.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

Coroner Service staff

NHS Trusts

Commissioning



<b>Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?</b>
Yes
<b>Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?</b>
Yes
<b>Section C – Impact</b>
<b>Who may be impacted by the activity?</b>
<b>Service Users/clients</b> Service users/clients
<b>Staff</b> No
<b>Residents/Communities/Citizens</b> No
<b>Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of Positive Impacts</b>
Race - If the Next of Kin attending an identification cannot speak English, this will already be known by the Coroner. There may be a family member or representative who can translate, if not the Coroners Officer can arrange for a translator to be present. Religion and belief - The Coroner is able to consider a request for a non-invasive post mortem on religious and belief grounds but is under no obligation to agree to it.
<b>Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions</b>
<b>19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for age?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of negative impacts for Age</b>
For the elderly and children, where it is deemed necessary and appropriate for them to attend a mortuary, they may need to be accompanied at an identification or viewing.
<b>Mitigating Actions for Age</b>
Next of Kin (NOK) are not allowed to attend a post mortem. There is no age restriction as regards attending an identification or a viewing although in the latter case, the presumption is for this to take place at the funeral director's premises. For the elderly and children, where it is deemed necessary and appropriate for them to attend, it is for the NOK, not the Coroner to arrange for them to be accompanied at an identification or viewing.
<b>Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age</b>
Belinda Hooker
<b>20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Disability?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of Negative Impacts for Disability</b>
There is a low risk of potential access restrictions to the mortuary.
<b>Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
The Coroners Officer will explain the access arrangements to the Next of Kin (NOK), and mortuary staff will always be on hand to assist if necessary. If for any reason there are any access restrictions these will be explained by the Coroners Officer
<b>Responsible Officer for Disability</b>
Belinda Hooker
<b>21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sex</b>

No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Race</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
Yes
<b>Negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
<p>1. If the Coroner agrees to a non invasive post mortem and it is not conclusive the Coroner is likely to order a full or partial invasive post mortem.</p> <p>2. For some faiths it is custom and practice to bury the deceased within 24-48 hours although in cases where the death is referred to the Coroner, this is not always possible as the need for the Coroner to complete his/her/their enquiries takes precedence.</p>
<b>Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<p>1. There is no appeal mechanism against a Coroners judicial decision to order an invasive post mortem other than by way of a Judicial Review through the courts.</p> <p>2. The Coroner will though make every effort to release the body as soon as possible after the post mortem examination</p>
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief</b>
Belinda Hooker
<b>25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>

<b>Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Yes
<b>Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
If the Next of Kin (NOK) attending an identification or a viewing is a carer, it is for the NOK to put alternative care arrangements in place during his/her absence.
<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
The Coroner is able to consider a request to meet any reasonable costs for putting alternative care arrangements in place, but only for an identification. If the NOK in discussion with the Coroners Officer raises the need for care dependency, the Coroners Officer will seek authority from the Coroner to reimburse reasonable care costs.
<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Belinda Hooker

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From: Clair Bell, KCC Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 14 May 2024

Subject: Coroners' Removals and Transfer Service Contract

Key decision 24/00033

Classification: Unrestricted

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** This report concerns the award of Contracts for Body Removals and Body Transfers that KCC puts in place on behalf of the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to:

- (a) Tender for the award of Contracts for the Coroners Removal and Transfer Service for the Kent and Medway coroners areas for an initial 3-year period, with an option to extend for up to 2 years;
- (b) Delegate authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision;
- (c) Delegate authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to Award Renewals of the current contracts in accordance with the current clauses within the contract for the period 00:00 on 22nd May 2024 to 23:59 on 31st December 2024 to accommodate the required procurement process as shown at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 places a duty on Coroners to investigate deaths that are referred to them if they have reason to think that:
  - The death was violent or unnatural.
  - The cause of death is unknown; or
  - The deceased died while in prison, police custody or another form of state detention e.g., where a Deprivation of Liberty Safeguard Order (DoLS) is in place.

- 1.2 When a death is reported to the coroner, he or she:
- establishes whether an investigation is required.
  - if an investigation is required, investigates to establish the identity of the person who has died; how, when, and where they died, and any information to register the death; and
  - uses information discovered during the investigation to assist in the prevention of other deaths where possible.
- 1.3 In some cases, the coroner will order a Postmortem (PM) to establish the cause of death. On behalf of the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners, KCC ensures access to body storage and PM facilities across the four Kent and Medway coroner areas. When a PM is necessary there is a requirement that the deceased be transported to a designated mortuary. KCC puts contracts in place on behalf of the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners for such transportation with funeral service providers.
- 1.4 The current contracts expire at 23:59 on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024. An extension period of approximately seven months is proposed to allow the procurement and governance process to take place, with a view to the new contracts commencing at 00:00 on 1<sup>st</sup> Jan 2025. The proposed procurement timescale allows market engagement activity to take place. TUPE is anticipated to apply to the current contracts; this period allows a suitable mobilisation period to manage any staff transfers as a result of the award of the new contracts.

## 2. Background

### The Current Service

- 2.1 There are two aspects to this service – Coroners’ Body Removals and Coroners’ Body Transfers.
- 2.2 **Coroners’ Body Removals.** The coroner may decide that a suitable practitioner is required, (normally a Pathologist), to examine the body and conduct a postmortem examination to help find the cause of death. In such cases the body needs to be transported from where it is lying to a designated mortuary pending further enquiries being made, or to hold a postmortem examination (PM). This movement of the body is usually referred to as a ‘Coroner’s removal.’
- 2.3 **Coroners’ Body Transfers.** In some cases, it is necessary to transfer the deceased from a designated mortuary to another designated mortuary either within Kent and Medway or outside Kent to more specialised mortuaries for example to London (child deaths) or Brighton (infectious cases) or to a mortuary where a Pathologist is available. This movement is usually referred to as a ‘Coroner’s Transfer.’
- 2.4 Historically the number of transfers was low, but due to the lack of Pathologists who are available to carry out Coroners’ PMs, KCC Coroners Service must transfer a much greater number of deceased to where the Pathologist is based rather than vice versa. This is because hospital based Pathologists are allowed by their NHS Trust employers to carry out Coroner PMs during Hospital Trust time but this is on the basis that this is a private arrangement between the Pathologist and the Coroner and so the Pathologist has to ‘make the time up’ to their employer including any travelling time.

2.5 Prior to the current Contracts, providers either fully or partially subsidised the service because they absorbed the costs as a loss leader on the basis that the family of the deceased may appoint them to carry out the funeral arrangements. This scenario would not always materialise meaning funeral directors were incurring the costs associated with the service, without the guarantee of recovering the costs of a removal. Suppliers now view this requirement as a separate business opportunity alongside the 'core' funeral business. Additional staff are employed to deliver this service.

2.6 The providers are required to perform the following services:

- 24 hours a day, 365 days of the year.
- For a coroner's body removal to be at the place of death within 1 hour of being directed to attend by Kent County Constabulary.
- For a coroner's body transfer, to have completed it within 48 hours of being directed to do so by a Coroners Officer.
- Bodies that require removal include deaths in the community and in hospitals without a designated postmortem facility and including open spaces, remote locations, houses, care homes, public highway, railway or water.

2.7 Historically KCC has procured these services from Funeral Directors who have the necessary vehicles, staff and professional expertise to provide the service. The removal of bodies is a service-critical function, a statutory responsibility of the County Council and, importantly should it fail it has a high risk of reputational damage to KCC, Medway Council and the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners. Should this service not be delivered, there would be a significant Public Health risk. Therefore, whilst price is important in the tender evaluation, other factors such as speed and quality of service, robustness of arrangements, and the proposed business model are also of importance.

### 3. Current arrangements

3.1 The tables below show the number of body removals and body transfers completed in 2023-24. This number can vary from year to year depending on the number of deaths reported to the coroners.

	Contract Area	Designated Mortuary	Volumes of Service
1 +2	Sevenoaks (A & B)	Tunbridge Wells Hospital	177
3	Dartford & Gravesham	Darenth Valley Hospital	292
4	Tunbridge Wells	Tunbridge Wells Hospital	146
5	Tonbridge and Malling	Tunbridge Wells Hospital	141
6	Medway	Medway Maritime Hospital	414
7	Maidstone	Medway Maritime Hospital	293
8	West Swale	Medway Maritime Hospital	179
9	East Swale	William Harvey Hospital	65
10	Ashford	William Harvey Hospital	223
11	Canterbury	William Harvey Hospital	299

12	Shepway	William Harvey Hospital	172
13	Thanet	QEQM Hospital	320
14	Dover NEK	QEQM Hospital	112
15	Dover CSEK	William Harvey Hospital	125

#### 4. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk

- **Direct Award** of Coroners' Removals and Transfer Service Contract (Discounted) – This approach is not compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and would bring significant risk of legal challenge. Lack of competition does not demonstrate compliance with the Council's Best Value Statutory obligations.
- **Do Nothing** (Discounted) – These Contracts support delivery of KCC's statutory responsibilities with respect to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Suitable contractual arrangements are required to ensure security of supply and service rates.
- **Use of External Procurement Framework** (Discounted) – There are no available Frameworks that can be used to procure these localised services.
- **Delivery of Transport Service In-House** (Discounted) – The Council has not provided an in-house transport service to date. The Service would require the availability of trained staff 24/7 365 days per year; detailed cost information would need to be established to understand the viability of this option. This option can be explored in the long term. There may be some potential for efficiencies through delivery across a wider geographical area. Should this option be considered in future, the proposed initial contract term should not impact potential to bring this service in house.

#### 5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 This requirement is funded from the Coroners Service revenue budget.
- 5.2 The proposed Contract extensions would be funded at the current contract rate (with CPI linked inflationary increase from April 2024, as per the terms and conditions).
- 5.3 Contract spend will vary depending on volumes required (and where these occur in the County). Based on historic spend, the anticipated total value for all Coroners' Removals and Transfer Contracts is c.£800,000k per year. The indicative Contract cost (based on historic volumes and spend to date during the current contract) is £2.4m (£4m should all potential extension periods be taken). Where the required spend has exceeded budgeted figures during the current contract, the Coroners Service revenue budget has been rightsized to meet this pressure (£37,000 for the financial year 2024-5).
- 5.4 Payment to Suppliers is made in arrears based on removals and transfers satisfactorily completed; financial risk to the Council is therefore limited.



- 5.5 Inflationary uplifts during the contract term will be based upon CPI (suitably capped). This is reflected in the Medium-Term Financial Plan.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 defines Kent County Council as the relevant authority for the four coroner areas covering Kent and Medway. As a result, KCC has a duty to provide such officers and other staff as are needed for the coroners to carry out their functions together with appropriate accommodation for the carrying out of those functions.
- 6.2 Legal advice is to be commissioned during procurement process of the substantive contract to ensure appropriate terms and conditions are in place.
- 6.3 All procurement activity will be conducted in accordance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015.

## **7. Equalities implications**

- 7.1 An EqIA has been completed for this critical service and is attached. It identifies that there is no potential for discrimination and all opportunities to promote equality are currently being taken in line with KCC policies and statutory requirement.

## **8. Other corporate implications**

None.

## **9. Governance**

- 9.1 The Director of Growth and Communities will inherit the main delegations via the Officer Scheme of Delegation, including approval to award the new contracts.

## **10. Conclusions**

- 10.1 KCC enables the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners to discharge their roles by ensuring contracts are in place for body removals and body transfers to ensure the Senior Coroners are able to discharge their statutory duties in accordance with the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. The current extension period expires on 21<sup>st</sup> May 2024 and following a Public Contracts Regulations compliant procurement process the Council plans to award contracts for a three-year period, with the option to extend the contracts for up to two years. A short-term extension period of approximately seven months is required ahead of that substantive award.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services on the proposed decision to:

- (a) Tender for the award of Contracts for the Coroners Removal and Transfer Service for the Kent and Medway coroners areas for an initial 3-year period, with an option to extend for up to 2 years;
- (b) Delegate authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision;
- (c) Delegate authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to Award Renewals of the current contracts in accordance with the current clauses within the contract for the period 00:00 on 22nd May 2024 to 23:59 on 31st December 2024 to accommodate the required procurement process as shown at Appendix A.

**11. Background Documents**

Appendix A - Proposed Record Of Decision  
Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

**12. Contact details**

Report Author:

Belinda Hooker  
Acting Head of Coroners' Service

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Relevant Director:

Stephanie Holt-Castle  
Director of Growth & Communities

Telephone number 03000 412064

Email address [stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:stephanie.holt-castle@kent.gov.uk)

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services

## DECISION NO:

24/00033

For publication

Key decision: YES

Subject Matter / Title of Decision: Coroners' Removals and Transfer Service Contract

### Decision:

As Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, I agree to:

- To TENDER for the award of Contracts for the Coroners Removal and Transfer Service for the Kent and Medway coroners areas for an initial 3-year period, with an option to extend for up to 2 years;
- DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, awarding, finalising the terms of and entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision;
- DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth & Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to Award Renewals of the current contracts in accordance with the current clauses within the contract for the period 00:00 on 22nd May 2024 to 23:59 on 31st December 2024 to accommodate the required procurement process

### Reason(s) for decision:

The Coroners and Justice Act 2009 places a duty on Coroners to investigate deaths that are referred to them if they have reason to think that:

- The death was violent or unnatural;
- The cause of death is unknown; or
- The deceased died while in prison, police custody or another form of state detention.

in some cases, the Coroner will order a Post-Mortem (PM) to establish the cause of death. On behalf of the Kent Senior Coroners, KCC ensures access to body storage and PM facilities across the Kent and Medway coroner areas. When a PM is necessary there is a requirement that the deceased be transported to a designated mortuary. KCC puts contracts in place on behalf of the Kent and Medway Senior Coroners for such transportation with funeral service providers.

### Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

The proposed decision is being considered by members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 14 May.

### Any alternatives considered and rejected:

- **Direct Award of Coroners' Removals and Transfer Service Contract.** – This approach is not compliant with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 and would bring significant risk of legal challenge. Lack of competition does not demonstrate compliance with the Council's Best Value Statutory obligations.

- **Do Nothing (Discounted)** – These Contracts support delivery of KCC’s statutory responsibilities with respect to the Coroners and Justice Act 2009. Suitable contractual arrangements are required to ensure security of supply and service rates.
- **Use of External Procurement Framework (Discounted)** – There are no available Frameworks that can be used to procure these localised services.
- **Delivery of Transport Service In-House (Discounted)** – The Council has not provided an in-house transport service to date. The Service would require the availability of trained staff 24/7 365 days per year; detailed cost information would need to be established to understand the viability of this option. This option can be explored in the long term. There may be some potential for efficiencies through delivery across a wider geographical area. Should this option be considered in future, the proposed initial contract term should not impact potential to bring this service in house

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

.....  
signed

.....  
date

## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

**EQIA Title**

SC23191 Coroners Removals and Transfer service

**Responsible Officer**

Rob Wilson - GT GC

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**

Belinda Hooker - GT GC

### Type of Activity

**Service Change**

No

**Service Redesign**

No

**Project/Programme**

No

**Commissioning/Procurement**

Commissioning/Procurement

**Strategy/Policy**

No

**Details of other Service Activity**

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**

Growth Environment and Transport

**Responsible Service**

Coroner's Service

**Responsible Head of Service**

Belinda Hooker - GT GC

**Responsible Director**

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

### Aims and Objectives

Kent County Council (KCC) is responsible for supporting the Senior Coroners for Kent and Medway to provide the coroner service to Kent and Medway residents.

The Coroner has a duty to investigate a death where there are reasons to suspect that:

- The deceased died a violent or unnatural death;
- The cause of death is unknown;
- The deceased died while in custody or otherwise in state detention.

When a death is reported to the Coroner, he or she

- Establishes whether an investigation is required;
- If yes, investigates to establish the identity of the person who has died; how when and where they died and any information to register the death; and
- Uses information discovered during the investigation to assist in the prevention of other deaths where possible.

The Coroner has physical control of the body (as evidence) from the time he/she/they have been informed of the death, until the time that all the necessary enquiries have been concluded, at which point the body can be released to the family. The Coroner's control of the body is absolute (jurisdiction) and supersedes any claim on the body by the family, or for example any other organisations such as the police.

On behalf of the Kent Senior Coroners, KCC is responsible for putting contracts in place for the provision for removals and transfers of the coroner's deceased.

There are two aspects to this service - Coroner Body Removals and Coroners Body Transfers.

Coroners Body Removals. The Coroner may decide that a suitable practitioner is required, (normally a Pathologist), to examine the body and carry out a post mortem examination to help find the cause of death. In such cases the body needs to be transported from where it is lying to a designated mortuary pending further enquiries being made, or to hold a post mortem examination (PM). This movement of the body is usually referred to as a 'Coroner's removal'.

Coroners Body Transfers. In some cases it is necessary to transfer the deceased from a designated mortuary to another designated mortuary either within Kent and Medway or outside Kent to more specialised mortuaries for example to London (child deaths) or Brighton (infectious cases) or to a mortuary where a Pathologist is available. This movement is usually referred to as a 'Coroner's Transfer'.

The contracts for removals and transfers is for Central & South East Kent, Mid Kent & Medway, North West Kent, and North East Kent coroner areas are due for renewal .

#### Aims and Objectives

- Ensure statutory compliance by KCC and the Kent Senior Coroners
- Ensure best value in the use of public funds through a formal procurement process

#### Outcome

No major change - no potential for discrimination and all opportunities to promote equality are currently being taken in line with KCC policies and statutory requirement. Should any issues arise they will be dealt with in accordance with KCC policies and statutory requirements.

The Equalities Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed in 2024 and no issues have been identified by the service.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

No

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

Coroner Service staff

Commissioning

Funeral Directors

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

Service users/clients

<b>Staff</b>
No
<b>Residents/Communities/Citizens</b>
Residents/communities/citizens
<b>Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of Positive Impacts</b>
Religion and belief - The Coroner is able to consider a request for a non-invasive post mortem on religious and belief grounds but is under no obligation to agree to it. Many faiths require the burial or cremation to happen within a defined time frame. The timely removal will support this.
<b>Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions</b>
<b>19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for age?</b>
No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Age</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating Actions for Age</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age</b>
Not Applicable
<b>20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Disability?</b>
No
<b>Details of Negative Impacts for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sex</b>
No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Race</b>

No
<b>Negative impacts for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable



<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
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Not Applicable
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From: Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee 14 May 2024

Subject: Decision to award contracts for Public Rights of Way Vegetation Clearance

Decision No: **24/00034**

Classification: **Unrestricted**  
**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** The vegetation clearance contracts for Public Rights of Way (PRoW) conclude at the end of the 2024 -5 financial year and new contracts need to be put in place. The likely expenditure will exceed £1m. A key decision is therefore required to enable the procurement to proceed and subject to a successful outcome to award contracts for the delivery of PRoW vegetation clearance work.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to:

- (i) AGREE the re-procurement and the award of new contracts for PRoW vegetation clearance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, for a further period of five years and an allowable extension of two years subject to performance; and,
- (ii) to DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions, including, but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

## 1. Introduction

1.1 The Public Rights of Way (PRoW) network extends to 4,312 miles (6995 Km) and with a small number of exceptions, is publicly maintainable highway. Control of vegetation growing from the surface of the highway (other than crops) is the responsibility of Kent County Council. The work is completed through a mixture of scheduled and ad-hoc responsive work. The scheduled work has been identified over many years through consultation with Parish Councils and analysis of public reports. Ad-hoc work is identified in response to public reports or as a result of inspection. Vegetation overgrowth is the single most reported issue, on the PRoW network, by the public.

- 1.2 The Asset Management Plan 2019 identified that the optimum length of vegetation clearance is 1758802m per annum, below which lengths of the network will be obstructed or unpleasant to use. Obstruction of, or interruption to, access results in an associated loss in public benefit and impact on businesses reliant on the visitor economy. The authority would fail to meet its statutory obligation to maintain the network. The length of PRoW cleared does vary reflecting changes to land use and the nature and length of the growing season. Inevitably with a warmer climate we are experiencing longer growing seasons.
- 1.3 Failure to deliver the optimum level of service in the short term would, in addition to the adverse impacts stated above, simply defer the activity with substantially greater costs being incurred at a later date in order to recover the position.
- 1.4 The PRoW and Access Service wishes to establish contract arrangements for vegetation clearance that provide access to an appropriate mix of suitably skilled small and medium sized enterprises. It is working with the Commercial and Procurement Team to achieve this.

## **2. Financial Implications**

- 2.1 Based on the current spending on PRoW vegetation clearance the anticipated revenue spend over the five years of the contract is £2.125M (£425K pa). Should the option to extend for a further two years be taken the anticipated spend would be £2.975M.
- 2.2 Grounds Maintenance Index 87 (GM87) is used to apply increases to address inflation throughout the length of the contract. Over the course of the current contract this has seen the cost of the contracts increase by approximately 40%; in the main in response to fuel price increases and particularly the fuel price shock in 2022/23. With the exception of 2023 the annual inflation increase has generally been around 6%.
- 2.3 Annual uplifts will need to be built in to the MTFP and funded through the GET revenue budget. The growth pressure for 24/25 is funded. However, if not funded in future years the pressures may only be met through reductions to the programme of vegetation clearance or diminution to maintenance programmes for public rights of way generally.
- 2.4 The proposed arrangement for vegetation clearance is term service contracts with the county divided into 10 lots. The value of individual contracts may be relatively low but given the contract duration of five years and the opportunity to extend for a further two it creates an ongoing commitment to vegetation clearance.
- 2.5 Should the County Council not be in a position to fund the work in future years it may be liable for compensation payments to the successful bidders. The value of any compensation payments reduces over the duration of the contract.

## **3. Policy Framework**

- 3.1 The commission accords with the County Council's Strategy "Framing Kent's Future"
- a) Levelling up Kent: Priority 1:– supporting ambitions to improve the health of Kent's population particularly promoting healthy behaviours.
  - b) Infrastructure for Communities, Priority 2: Invests in Kent's high-quality landscapes, and supports the choice of alternative travel options by prioritising the maintenance of accessible walking routes and cycle lanes
  - c) Environmental step change . Priority 3: Improve access for our residents to green and natural spaces especially in urban and deprived areas and through our Public Rights of Way network to improve health and wellbeing outcomes.
- 3.2 The proposed decision supports Securing Kent's Future: The procurement of vegetation clearance contracts seeks to secure best value in the delivery of what is a statutory function (the maintenance of the publicly maintainable highway). It seeks to deliver this work in the most efficient, economic and effective way, consistent with the prioritisation of the Council's best value duty. In that respect it is consistent with, and supports, Securing Kent's Future.
- 3.3 The commission supports a number of identified policies within the adopted Public Rights of Way Improvement Plan for Kent – 2018-2028. ( [Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#) **Appendix B**). The plan was produced following wide ranging public consultation and engagement. The importance of having well maintained rights of way was consistently raised by the public and other stakeholders as essential to achieve the positive outcomes for health, well- being, the rural economy and active travel.

#### 4. Procurement Proposals

- 4.1 To help inform the procurement of the PRow vegetation clearance contracts we have engaged with the market and particularly existing specialist Kent and East Sussex based small and medium enterprises.
- 4.2 The outcome of market engagement for vegetation clearance and preparation of the commercial case is a recommendation that the work be split into 10 lots with no individual supplier awarded more than three lots. The recommended contract duration of 5-7 years allows the service providers sufficient certainty to invest in specialist equipment and their labour force. It is expected that this will encourage more local SMEs to bid. The expectation, based on previous procurement, is that four contractors will deliver the contracts. The opportunity for businesses to tender for the work will be published on the Kent Business Portal.
- 4.3 Other options considered but discarded were:
- **Do nothing:** This is not an option. The County Council would not be delivering a minimum level of service to meet its statutory obligations. It would be at risk of third-party action to compel it to undertake the work and at risk of increased numbers of third-party injury claims. The long term costs of maintenance would be increased appreciably.

- **Single supplier contract:** Previous procurement rounds have failed to identify any single supplier that can deliver the levels of clearance required or compete on price other than through sub-contracting with significant implications for quality and reliability. Previous rounds of procurement have not identified a single supplier with the capacity to deliver the programme without sub-contracting much of the work, adding significant risk to the County Council in terms of performance and delivery.
- **Multi supplier framework:** The County Council would not be able to enter contracts of sufficient length that it would be financially and logistically fitting for suppliers. The use of similar frameworks for small works in the past has seen a rapid diminution in the contractors available through the framework.

4.3 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed for the commission; **Appendix C**. The EqIA identified a number of potential positive impacts from the commissioning and procurement exercise relating to the accessibility of the PRow network.

4.4 Given the potential aggregated spend over the duration of the contract, delegated authority is sought to allow the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions including, but not limited to, finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision.

## 5. Legal Implications

5.1 Maintenance of the PRow network is an obligation under the Highways Act 1980 section 41. The contracts contribute to meeting this obligation. Failure to undertake the work leaves PRow obstructed and unusable. There is a risk, should this be the case, that the Council could face action under the Highways Act 1980 sec 56 &/or 130A which, if successful, would result in the Council being compelled to act. Failure to undertake the activity would also increase the risk of third-party injury claims.

## 6. Conclusions

6.1 The County Council is under a statutory obligation to maintain the PRow network. In order to maintain the network the PRow and Access Service needs appropriate arrangements in place to manage vegetation on the network.

## 7. Recommendation(s)

### Recommendation(s):

7.1 The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services to:

- (i) AGREE the re-procurement and the award of new contracts for PRow vegetation clearance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, for a further period of five years and an allowable extension of two years subject to performance; and, Page 44

(ii) to DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions, including, but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision as shown at Appendix A.

## 8. Background Documents

- Appendix A: Proposed Record of Decision
- Appendix B: Rights of Way Improvement Plan [Rights-of-Way-Improvement-Plan-2018-2028.pdf \(kent.gov.uk\)](#)
- Appendix C: Equalities Impact Assessment

## 9. Contact details

Report Author: Graham Rusling  
Head of Service Public Rights of Way and Access  
03000 413449  
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Relevant Director: Stephanie Holt-Castle  
Director of Growth and Communities  
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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

**Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services**

**DECISION NO:**

24/00034

**For publication**

**Key decision: YES**

**Subject Matter / Title of Decision:** To award contracts for Public Rights of Way (PRoW) Vegetation Clearance

**Decision:**

As Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, I agree to:

- AGREE the re-procurement and the award of new contracts for PRoW vegetation clearance, in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, for a further period of five years and an allowable extension of two years subject to performance; and,
- DELEGATE authority to the Director of Growth and Communities to take other relevant actions, including, but not limited to finalising the terms of and entering into required contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary to implement the decision

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The vegetation clearance contracts for Public Rights of Way (PRoW) conclude at the end of the 2024 -5 financial year and new contracts need to be put in place. The likely expenditure will exceed £1m. A key decision is therefore required to enable the procurement to proceed and subject to a successful outcome to award contracts for the delivery of PRoW vegetation clearance work.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision is being considered by members of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee at their meeting on 14 May.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:**

.....  
signed

.....  
date

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KENT COUNTY COUNCIL'S

# RIGHTS OF WAY Improvement Plan



2018 - 2028

Page 49

# Foreword



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Mike Hill". The signature is written in a cursive style and is underlined with a single horizontal stroke.

Mike Hill OBE -  
Cabinet Member for  
Community and  
Regulatory Services

Welcome to Kent County Council's Rights of Way Improvement Plan (ROWIP). The plan sets out our objectives for Kent's Public Rights of Way (PROW) network and wider public access for the next 10 years.

I have been very pleased to see how the Public Rights of Way and Access Service and partners have managed to translate the previous plan into well informed and tangible projects. I have been called upon to cut the ceremonial ribbon on a number of occasions to celebrate projects that have contributed to the health and well-being of the public, supported the rural and visitor economy of Kent and provided alternative sustainable travel options to the car. All of these projects have contributed to delivering unparalleled access to Kent's wonderful and diverse countryside and coast.

This plan is founded on detailed research, analysis and consultation with the public and stakeholders. It sets out the very positive outcomes that are delivered through having an extensive 6,900 km of Rights of Way network, access to quality greenspace, the coast and as a high amenity alternative to footways and roads in the urban environment. The scale of the response received reflects the great value that Kent residents and stakeholders attach to being able to access the county's countryside and coast and the passion that they hold for it. It also reflects that the work of the PROW and Access Service over the past 10 years has been in the right direction, providing extensive improvements to the network. This plan provides a mandate to continue to build on these achievements over the next 10 years.

This plan is both ambitious and realistic about the challenges that Kent and wider society face. Delivery of the plan will contribute significantly to making Kent a healthy, prosperous and enjoyable place in which to live.

# Our Vision

*“To provide a high quality, well-maintained Public Rights of Way network, that is well used and enjoyed. The use of the network will support the Kent economy, encourage active lifestyles and sustainable travel choices that support health and wellbeing, and contribute to making Kent a great place to live, work and visit “.*



# Introduction

Kent County Council has a duty to prepare a ROWIP under Section 60 of the Countryside and Rights of Way Act 2000 and to update the plan every 10 years. The revision of the Kent ROWIP provides an opportunity to take a more integrated view of the value of the rights of way network in fulfilling the needs of the communities of Kent.

In the period 2007 – 2017 the County Council delivered a wealth of improvements to the PROW network despite the extremely challenging financial climate. This is a plan that aims to secure the best possible outcomes with the resource that is available, accepting that the current limitations on resources are set to continue. It seeks to address the future needs of Kent's PROW users through the delivery of a range of actions over the next decade.

Kent County Council's PROW and Access Service is committed to working to deliver the positive outcomes identified in the plan and has looked for innovative ways to improve the PROW network in the face of financial challenges. We aim to create a network that not only provides a safe, sustainable means of travel but also delivers the benefits that access to the network, countryside, coast and green spaces can make to improve the quality of life for Kent's residents and visitors.

The PROW network is free to all users regardless of age, race or gender and provides physical and mental health and wellbeing benefits to all. The plan will aim to encourage use of the network through the promotion of these important benefits.

The plan assesses the extent to which the PROW network meets the present and likely future need to the public in:

- **contributing towards more sustainable development;**
- **delivering active travel options;**
- **providing opportunities for exercise, leisure and open-air recreation.**

The plan will also look to address the accessibility issues and other barriers that the visually impaired, those with mobility problems and under-represented groups face when using the PROW network.





## Rights of Way Improvement Plan Process

The PROW and Access Service team have followed the statutory process to create the plan, following relevant guidance and advice. The plan was completed in five stages:

- 1) **Review of the ROWIP 2007 – 2017** (pages 8 – 9).
- 2) **Review of current policy, strategies, academic studies and completion of market research** (pages 10 – 17).
- 3) **Analysis of current provision, spatial data and future demand** (pages 18 – 29).
- 4) **Identification of key themes** (pages 6 – 7).
- 5) **Delivery Plan and Statement of Actions** (30 – 41).

The plan is therefore structured around the outcomes of each of these five stages. The research and analysis completed has given us further insight into the current needs and priorities of Kent's PROW network users. Six broad themes emerged, which are set out in the next section. The themes are not in order of priority or importance, each has a main objective and a number of actions and benefits which are detailed in the Delivery Plan – Statement of Actions.

The research and analysis has provided a strong validation for the work of the Service in delivering projects under the 2007-17 ROWIP. It tells us that the needs and priorities of Kent's PROW network users have not significantly changed since 2007.

# Key Themes



## Active lifestyles

The health and wellbeing benefits of physical activity are well recognised, especially when the activity takes place in areas of countryside and green space. This theme aims to encourage active lifestyles through making changes to the network to accommodate active travel and encourage leisure and recreational use.

We will aim to contribute towards tackling health issues and inequalities through improving access to the natural environment and green spaces.

We will promote use particularly in deprived areas where existing access is low and where there are poor health outcomes.



## Evolution of the network

The need for the PROW network to evolve and to meet the future demand from Kent's growing population was identified and is well understood. Well planned new provision, including green infrastructure is required to facilitate sustainable travel patterns, with the PROW network providing an important element of this infrastructure.

The PROW network is required to evolve not to only withstand the pressures from increased use but also to provide a high quality facility to encourage a modal shift to walking and cycling; in this way the PROW network is a key contributor to getting people out of their cars to take on more active travel for everyday journeys and for recreation and leisure.



## Knowing what's out there

Results from the market research showed that the most common barrier preventing use of the network is lack of information. People want to know where routes are and where they will take them.

We will continue to break down these barriers and encourage new users to the network as well as increasing current use, through targeting information, improving signage and improving provision around key leisure and recreational facilities.





## Well-maintained network

Maintenance was the most common theme to emerge from our market research when we asked our customers what issues they had encountered on the PROW network. Overgrown vegetation and poor maintenance were the top answers received from stakeholders, Kent residents and online groups. Poor maintenance acted as a significant barrier, stopping people from using the network, especially for a higher percentage of the older age groups (55+). With Kent's ageing population this is a barrier we as a Service will aim to reduce.

The well-maintained network theme will improve and increase the current maintenance of the network through further targeted vegetation clearance, signage and surfacing to encourage and increase use. Maintenance on locally important strategic routes will be prioritised.



## Rights with responsibilities

The PROW and Access Service has a statutory duty to ensure the network is recorded, protected and maintained. It is important that we work with the landowning community in ensuring statutory compliance and in delivering improvements to the network. We advise on and where appropriate, progress applications to amend the PROW network in the interest of the public and/or the landowner.

The PROW and Access Service will continue to promote responsible use by the public when exercising their rights.



## Efficient delivery

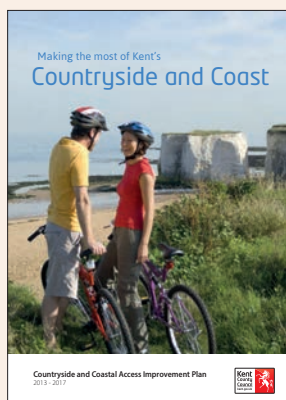
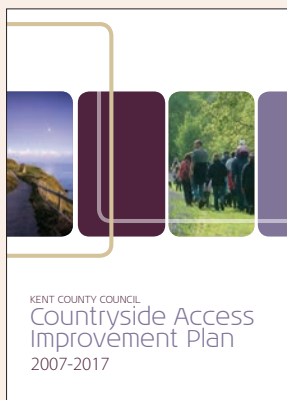
The review of previous ROWIP's and the analysis of market research has provided us with an insight of our customers' needs and priorities.

Access to new information and advances in available technology will help us build on the significant and innovative developments already made by the PROW and Access Service.

# Reflections on the delivery of ROWIPs 2007 -17

During the first phase of the production of this plan, we reviewed what had been achieved through the delivery of the award winning ROWIP 2007-2017 and the Countryside and Coastal Access Improvement Plan 2013 – 2017.

*A full report 'Review of the ROWIP 2007 – 2017' providing further details of the PROW and Access Service's achievements over the last decade forms part of the evidence base and is available online and on request.*



Adoption of asset management principles enabled better planned programmes of maintenance and resulted in lower levels of reporting for some elements of the asset.



Requirements attached to the regime of agricultural subsidies delivered higher levels of compliance by the agricultural community and reduced levels of reported obstructions to the PROW network by agricultural activity. Changes to the regime have the potential to deliver further benefits in the next plan period.



The adoption of a policy of least restrictive access and the removal of existing stiles, where this could be negotiated, has delivered a network that is now 70% stile free. This activity could be better targeted to deliver further improvements in accessibility.



The creation of coherent networks of higher status routes for horse riders and cyclists remains a significant challenge, particularly away from economic growth areas. Greater consideration needs to be given to using existing roads and verges to reduce the fragmentation of the network of bridleways, cycle tracks and byways.



There has been some truly innovative work completed to inform the public about the network and encourage use. In terms of securing health benefits, activity must be targeted at, and communicated in a way that encourages use by those communities where poor health outcomes are prevalent. We cannot place too great a reliance on on-line communication.



Housing and business development in the county placed significant pressure on the PROW and Access Service, but it also provided significant opportunities to secure improvements to the network, particularly connectivity, asset renewal and provision for higher rights users.



Nuisance use of PROW network is an issue raised by many stakeholders and users and generally reflects wider issues within society. There is a role for the Kent Countryside Access Forum in promoting understanding between different stakeholders and responsible use of PROW network by the public.



The Service will need to continue to embrace new technology and improve existing systems if it is to maintain or improve levels of customer service.

# Policy Context

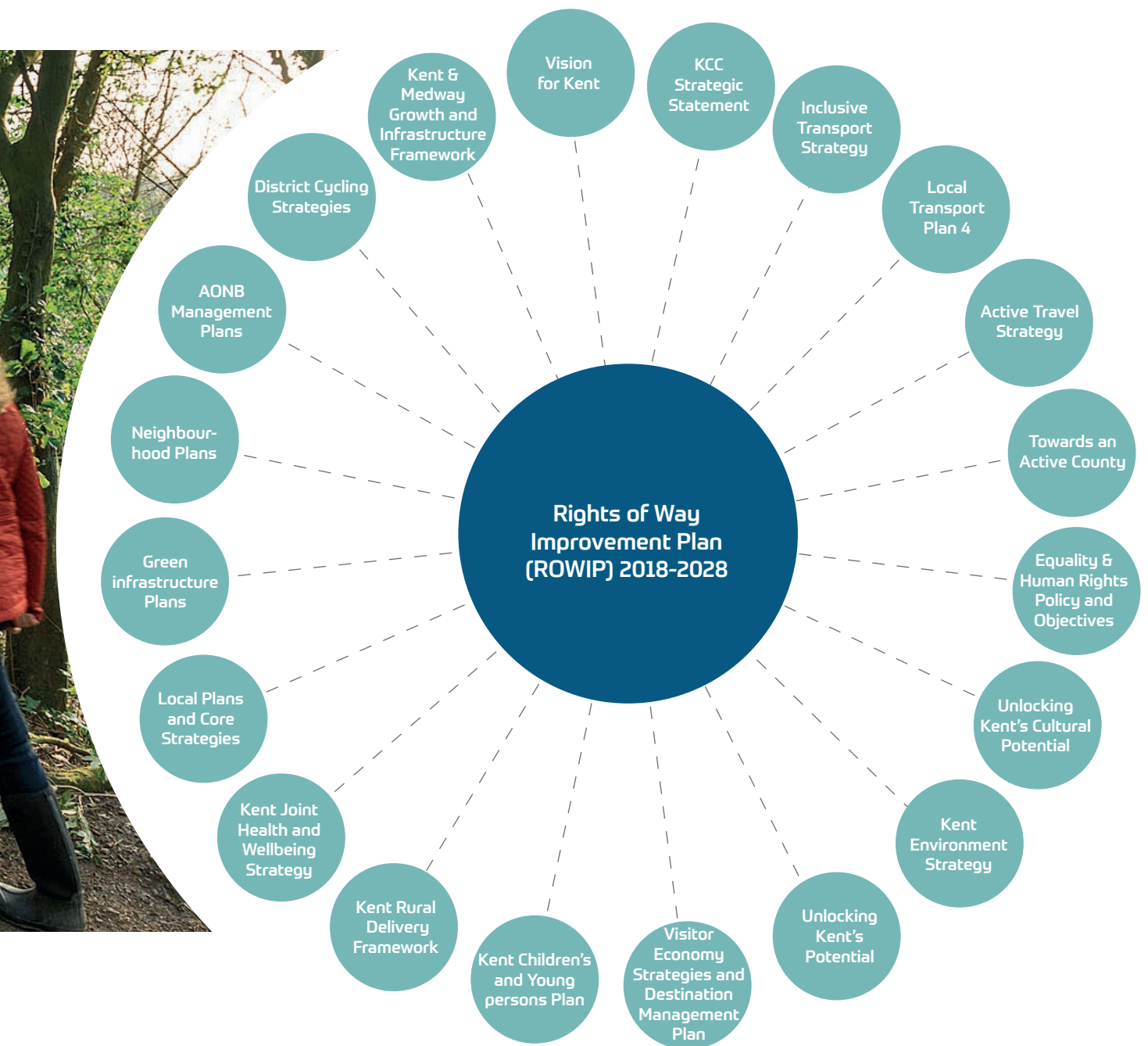
The importance of the PROW network, the countryside, riverside, coast and publicly accessible green space is recognised in many national and local strategies and is afforded strong protection in law. An estimated 4000 individual statutes, regulations and judgements have a direct relevance to its protection, use and development.



*The 'Strategy and Policy Review' provides a detailed overview of associated strategy and policy forms part of the evidence base available online and on request.*

## Delivering Kent's Priorities

Due to the wide-reaching work of the PROW and Access Service, the ROWIP directly contributes to the delivery of many Kent policies and strategies, some of these are Kent County Council's and others are those of partner organisations. The diagram below shows the policies and strategies that share common objectives to the ROWIP.



# Benefits of Using the Public Rights of Way Network



Credit: photojB/Sustrans

There is a large and growing body of evidence about the benefits of physical activity and access to green space and coast, of which the PROW network and access land are key components. The network provides important social, recreational and sustainable travel options which support Kent's economy. This section provides a summary of the evidence gathered from the Policy and Literature Review.

*The 'Policy and Literature Review' provides detailed information on the benefits of the PROW network, forms part of the evidence base and is available online and on request.*

## Health and Wellbeing

- Being physically active can help towards the prevention of at least 20 different chronic health conditions, including coronary heart disease, stroke, cancer, type 2 diabetes and mental health problems<sup>1</sup>.
- Physical inactivity costs Kent £306 million and 300 premature deaths each year<sup>2</sup>.
- NHS Digital statistics show 18,442 patients had a condition where obesity was a factor during 2016/17, compared to 14,032 the previous year - a 31% increase; around half of Kent's 1.5 million population are now said to be overweight or obese, creating huge pressure on the NHS<sup>3</sup>.
- Increasing evidence suggests that one of the most efficient ways to manage mental health issues is through physical activity, especially in the natural environment which is associated with greater feelings of revitalisation, increased energy and decreases in tension, confusion, anger, and depression<sup>4</sup>.
- The benefits of exercise in the natural environment happen almost immediately: only 5 minutes of exposure improves self-esteem and mood, irrespective of gender, age and health status<sup>5</sup>.
- Health and wellbeing outcomes have historically been poorly integrated with spatial planning, creating places that do not support people to improve their health through regular activity such as walking or cycling, or which contribute to poor health through high levels of road pollution, for example<sup>6</sup>.
- Health & wellbeing is also improved through regular horse riding<sup>7</sup>. It is particularly relevant to the under 16s and women over the age of 45 who would otherwise be sedentary. There is no significant difference in activity up until the age of 75.

The ROWIP has a significant role to play in helping to deliver health and wellbeing benefits and will aim to contribute to redressing some of the spatial planning deficiencies and health inequalities throughout Kent.

1 (Department of Health/Chief Medical Officers, 2011)

2 (UK Active, 2014)

3 (Kent Messenger Published 5th (April 2018))

4 (Thompson Coon, et al., 2011)

5 (Barton & Pretty, What is the best dose of nature and green exercise for improving mental health? A multi-study analysis, 2010)

6 (Barton H. , 2009), (Building Health Foundation, 2009)

7 (Barton H. , 2009), (Building Health Foundation, 2009)



## Sustainable Travel Encouraging Active Lifestyles

- Walking and cycling as a means of transport to reach a destination, termed 'active travel', allows people to be physically active as part of their daily lives.
- Active travel brings a range of health and wellbeing benefits (as detailed on page 12), reducing traffic congestion, air pollution and outputs of climate change gases.
- Physical activity is essential for healthy growth and development, it increases cognitive outcomes and school attainment, and improves social interaction and confidence<sup>8</sup>.
- In March 2018 the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) published new guidance relating to the importance of physical activity in the local environment and how the PROW and cycle network and public open space can help facilitate active lifestyles.
- A lack of routes, poor availability of information about routes, concerns over safety and the speed and convenience of motorised transport can all act as barriers to people choosing active travel.<sup>9</sup>

The ROWIP will aim to encourage active lifestyles through:

- better promotion of the existing network;
- addressing barriers that prevent use;
- working in partnership with planning authorities and developers to create well-designed, accessible environments that encourage active travel and walking, cycling and horse riding as leisure and recreational pursuits.

## Supporting Rural Economy and Economic Growth

- Kent's transport network is a vital element in facilitating economic growth and supporting the demands of a rising population.
- A well planned green infrastructure which promotes and encourages sustainable and active travel is required and the PROW network is a significant element of this.
- Working with local authorities and developers in the context of Local Plans and the Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (GIF) to identify growth areas and the infrastructure needed to accommodate this growth until 2031, we can work towards more sustainable travel patterns in Kent.
- Tourism is an important industry for Kent, with the total tourism value estimated at £3.6 billion in 2015, supporting just under 52,000 full time equivalent jobs<sup>10</sup>.
- Kent's landscape is a key tourist attractor: it offers one of the longest coastlines in the UK, two Areas of Outstanding Natural Beauty (AONBs) and the North Downs Way and England Coast Path national trails.
- The Natural England Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment (MENE) data indicates an average spend when visiting the countryside of £6.44 per visit; with an estimated total spend of £20bn in England between March 2014 and February 2015<sup>11</sup>.

The ROWIP can help contribute towards a robust infrastructure that enables development and encourage economic growth leading to regeneration and attraction of new businesses. The ROWIP has a significant role in supporting sustainable economic growth, directly contributing to transport, green infrastructure and open spaces; three areas identified in Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework as critical to support growth in the period to 2031.

The ROWIP as a statutory document can inform, support and add weight to policies within Local Plans and Neighbourhood Plans.

Sustainable rural leisure and tourism is a key way to support the socio-economic well-being of rural areas, providing jobs and supporting community services. The PROW network and the ROWIP has a critical role in this.

8 (All-Party Parliamentary Commission on Physical Activity, 2014)

9 (Lee & Moudon, 2004), (Kent County Council, 2017, Active Travel Strategy (draft))

10 Visit Kent (2016), Economic Impact of Tourism – Kent – 2015 Results.

11 Natural England – Monitor of Engagement with the Natural Environment Report, May 2017.

# Market Research & Stakeholder Engagement



Market research was used to gather information from our customers and stakeholders to understand their priorities and needs and how the network currently meets demand. The research also helped to determine how the network must evolve to meet future requirements for residents and visitors, providing services accessible to all people within the community. Through analysis of the information gathered, common themes emerged. These themes were used to guide the ROWIP's delivery plan and statement of actions.

*The 'Market Research and Stakeholder Report Summary' forms part of the evidence base and is available online and on request.*

## Key Findings

### PROW Use

- The top two most popular reasons for using the PROW and cycle network were: 'to go for a walk / run / cycle / be active / healthy' and 'visiting nature / wildlife'.
- Using PROW to take children to school or getting to work scored relatively low in our research with less than 10% using the network for this purpose. There is clearly potential to encourage increased use of the PROW network for this purpose, particularly given extensive and often high amenity PROW networks within urban areas.
- Our research showed that the vast majority of PROW users experienced positive feelings relating to vitality and happiness when using the network, showing how valuable the network is in improving our quality of life through health and wellbeing.

### Barriers to PROW Use

- The top three issues that were stopping PROW use were: overgrown vegetation, cleanliness / unpleasant environment and poor maintenance of paths.
- Lack of information acted as a greater barrier for the younger age groups than older demographic.
- There was a lower frequency of PROW use for those who indicated that they had a disability when compared to those who did not, with only 11% with a disability using the footpaths at least once a week compared to 38% of able bodied users.
- The older age groups (55+) found poor maintenance of stiles/gates and surface, overgrown vegetation and difficult terrain the biggest barriers.
- Fragmentation of the PROW network, especially for higher status routes, and the volume of motorised traffic on connecting highways raises safety concerns and makes the network inaccessible.
- In line with previous Sustrans research, we found that use of cycle path / tracks was higher amongst males (33%) when compared to females (22%). Sustrans have identified the need to provide cycle paths / tracks separated from traffic to get more women cycling.





### Encouraging PROW Use

- PROW non-users were less confident in their knowledge of PROW. In other words, there was a correlation between increased use of PROW and greenspace and the provision of information. Those with good access to online PROW information demonstrated higher levels of use for activities like horse riding, visiting viewpoints /attractions and geocaching. Findings showed that increased knowledge improved confidence and encouraged use.
- The top three answers to ‘what will encourage use of the PROW network’, related to information: knowing where routes will take me, knowing where routes are and improving signage and waymarking on routes.
- There was a correlation between age groups and the type of information they use; younger age groups 16 – 44 demonstrated a willingness to use phone apps, those over 55 used maps and guides.
- Factors identified to encourage use were: cutting back vegetation and improving cleanliness (removal of litter, animal fouling and graffiti). For the non-user groups the top two responses were ‘knowing where the routes are’ and ‘knowing where the routes will take me’.
- Improvements to the reporting system were highlighted through the research with 60% of the stakeholder group saying that improvements relating to customer service were needed. The top three methods chosen for reporting a problem on the network were online, by phone and using a phone app, with 51% of the non-stakeholders expressing a preference for making reports by phone.

### Evolution of the PROW Network

Through stakeholder engagement the following were identified as key ways in which the PROW network needs to evolve to meet future demands:

- Increase provision of traffic free routes as a safe and sustainable alternative to car travel.
- Provide links to places of work, schools and other amenities.
- Provide good circular and promoted routes for leisure and tourism.
- Remove barriers and replace stiles with gaps or gates.
- Introduce strategies and policies to ensure connectivity of the network through the consideration of PROW within new development and within transport plans.
- Protect, enhance, expand and integrate the PROW network. With the limited resources available, focus on priority routes which are promoted or provide primary access to amenities.



Credit: Cycling Projects (the national inclusive cycling charity)

### Blind, Partially Sighted and Limited Mobility Access

Through stakeholder engagement the following were identified as key ways in which the PROW network needs to evolve to meet future demands:

- Improvements to the physical network were identified, specifically:
  - Remove barriers where feasible.
  - Provide smoother, wider, all-weather surfaced routes with tactile entrances.
  - Use large, clear print signage on routes.
- Information facilitates informed decision making about route choice.

## Improving the Accessibility to Woodland including for Equestrians and Cyclists

Through stakeholder engagement the following were identified as key ways in which the PROW network needs to evolve to meet future demands:

- Resilient surfaces are required to sustain cycle and equestrian use and to avoid conflict between users.
- A strategic overview is required to identify opportunities for cyclists and equestrians, including consideration of new bridleway routes and better connections to other PROW and the wider highway network.
- The importance of well signed, well maintained routes with improved surfaces and no stiles.
- The provision of parking at accessible woodland sites is important for those that do not live close to woodlands.

The ROWIP will use the information gathered through the market research and engagement to enhance the identification of future projects most likely to deliver positive outcomes and to inform policy and design. We will continue to build on partnerships with stakeholders over the next 10 years; ensuring delivery is aligned to our customers' needs.

## Under-represented Groups

Studies have shown that people from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities, disabled people and younger age groups visit the countryside less frequently. The market research also showed an under representation for these specific groups. Details of the market research demographic results are included in 'The Current Network - Use and Provision' document.

*'The Current Network – Use and Provision' forms part of the evidence base and is available online and on request.*

## People with a Disability

The term disability covers a range of conditions and impairments, each condition or impairment has a different effect on the individual's confidence and ability to use the PROW network.

- The MENE research has shown that 18% of people with a disability never visit the natural environment, compared with 8% of the non-disabled population. Reasons for not visiting the countryside are related to their condition, with 'old age', 'poor health' and 'a physical disability' given by 92% of respondents.<sup>12</sup>
- Providing a network for people with different disabilities proves challenging, as different requirements often result in conflict between users e.g. where a tactile pavement required by a visually impaired user is unsuitable to a wheelchair user.
- The results from the market research showed that respondents who said they were 'confident and had a basic knowledge' were significantly lower amongst those who indicated that they have a disability.

The PROW and Access Service has a good record of working closely with disabled user groups making improvements to the network. We will continue to improve routes for different types of disabled users. Following initial contact during the analysis stage of the plan, we will keep communication open with specialist user groups to share information about newly accessible routes.

We will continue to liaise with these groups and organisations to ensure the design of schemes meets their needs. We will refine guidance for specific user groups, which we will share with planners and developers.



<sup>12</sup> Natural England Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment – 2015-2016. 'old age' 75%, 'poor health' 42% and 'a physical disability' 34%



### Under-represented Age Groups

- Other under-represented groups that are less likely to visit the countryside, are the younger and older age ranges.
- MENE research shows that those aged between 19 and 25 and those over the age of 65 were least likely to have visited the outdoors in the previous 7 days. The results from the market research also showed that the 16 – 24 age group were underrepresented.
- Market research results highlighted that younger age groups were less likely to be interested in using the PROW network or take alternative transport. It showed that a lack of information acted as more of a barrier for the younger age groups.

Breaking down barriers preventing use through better promotion, sharing of information and increasing knowledge & confidence of the PROW network will encourage these under-represented groups to visit the countryside. We will continue to provide information at gateways to the PROW network, such as country parks, to encourage wider exploration.

### Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic (BAME) Groups

- MENE research has shown that BAME populations who do visit the outdoors are more likely to visit urban locations and places closer to home.
- A higher proportion of Kent's ethnic population live in urban Dartford and Gravesend where the cost of travel, time and transport issues need to be considered when accessing the countryside. There is great value in designing housing developments where access to greenspace is available, and where access to established communities, the wider countryside and coast is retained or created.
- Overcoming barriers is key to encouraging use for these under-represented groups. The DEFRA report 'Outdoors for All?'<sup>13</sup> suggests various actions which include making sure promotional material is available in a range of formats and languages, avoiding stereotypes, working in partnership with a range of organisations and establishing community outreach organisations extending staff and volunteer awareness and diversifying the volunteer profile.

The PROW and Access service will continue to seek improvements in making information more accessible to increase knowledge & confidence for all under-represented groups.

# Current Resource, Provision and Use



## Public Rights of Way Resource

There are a range of resources that the PROW and Access Service has at its disposal including staff, allocated budget, volunteers, PROW asset and funding raised through external sources. In the case of the latter we have had success in securing funds for improvements to the network from developer contributions through requesting Section 106 Agreements, the Single Growth Fund, PASSAGE project, Tesco’s Bags of Help and the Heritage Lottery Fund.

## Staff and Volunteers

The PROW and Access Service has 22 full time equivalent staff members who are assisted by the Countryside Access Wardens, Kent Countryside Access Forum and various volunteers and volunteer groups who carry out a range of work from vegetation clearance, gate and step installation to completing surveys and historic research.

Volunteers are the eyes and ears in the communities of Kent and the Countryside Access Wardens are integral to the PROW and Access Service in helping keep the network free of obstructions and signposted. The Kent

Scheme is innovative and popular in that it allows volunteers to work in their own time and report back to us on their activity and findings.

## Partners

There are a wide range of organisations and services that are active in the management of Kent’s countryside and coast and have much to contribute towards the improvement of the PROW network. Partnership working with these organisations and services is key to the delivery of this plan.

Some of our key partners include Countryside Management Partnerships, Country Parks, District, Borough and Parish Councils, English Heritage, Explore Kent, Forestry Commission, High Weald AONB, Kent Downs AONB, KCC Highways Transportation and Waste, MOD, National Trust, Natural England, user and interest groups (listed in the glossary on page 43), Visit Kent and the Woodland Trust.

## Public Rights of Way Network

Like the rest of England and Wales, Kent has a network of paths which are protected in law and known as PROW. These paths form a unique resource freely available to the public to explore the countryside and coast and provide important links between and within Kent’s communities.

This section provides a summary of the current PROW network and access opportunities available to Kent’s residents and visitors, looking specifically at links to areas of green space, transport hubs and growth.

Kent has a 6900km network of public rights of way. The percentage of higher status paths including Byways, Restricted Byways and Bridleways is lower than the national average, with only 16.65% of the network available to equestrians and cyclists and less still, 5.5 %, available to carriage drivers and 3.35% to motor vehicles. The table below shows the total length of PROW network available at the time this document was written.

*A detailed overview ‘The Current Network (Use and Provision)’ forms part of the evidence base and is available online and on request.*

Current Provision	PROW Length (km)	Footpaths (km)	Bridleways (km)	Restricted Byways (km)	BOATs (km)
2017	6898	5748	764	149	231

## Public Rights of Way Asset

The PROW network asset comprises many elements, some of which are entirely the responsibility of the County Council, such as surface maintenance, fingerposts, waymark posts, safety barriers and many of the bridges. Other elements are the responsibility of landowners.

The value of the asset based on current replacement costs for those elements for which the County Council is responsible, is calculated at £108 million, with an annual capital and revenue requirement of £2.4 million to maintain the asset in an optimum condition.

The County Council formally adopted asset management principles for the management of the PROW network on the 8 February 2008. This approach has been beneficial in establishing the resources required to meet the County Council's statutory obligations in respect of:

- i maintaining the PROW network;
- ii identifying priorities for expenditure, and;
- iii allowing procurement decisions and the standards adopted for the asset to be rigorously tested so as to achieve best value.

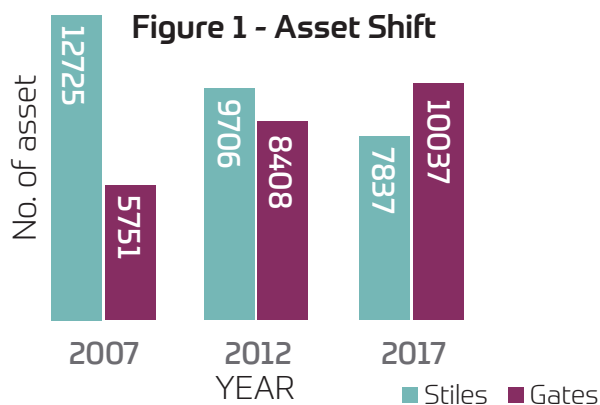
Key to the delivery of the positive outcomes set out in the ROWIP is the ability to take informed decisions about the PROW asset and where investment is best made to both comply with the County's statutory obligations and deliver the greatest return in respect of positive outcomes. It also enables informed decisions to be taken around design and investment commitments required to address pressure arising from climate change. The PROW and Access Service developed a simple cost benefit analysis tool, the 'Intelligent Investment Tool' to facilitate informed decision making.

*The 'PROW and Access Service's Asset Management Plan' is updated on a regular basis and forms part of the evidence base available online and on request.*

## Removing Barriers

The use of stiles on the network as a means of stock control acts as a barrier to PROW users. People with a wide range of mobility issues from wheelchairs users, ambulant disability, those who are elderly or those with young families may find stiles impassable or difficult to use.

Figure 1 highlights how this element of the PROW asset has changed over the last decade, with the number of stiles reducing and access to the network improving as a result.



## Access to Green Space

In addition to the PROW network, there are approximately 12,480 hectares of publicly accessible green space in Kent. Evidence around the health and wellbeing benefits provided by access to green space are well documented. Areas of accessible green space include Country Parks, Forestry Commission land, Woodland Trust land, Village Greens, Common Land and Open Access Land.

The Kent Nature Partnership's Health and Nature subgroup produced a natural green space needs assessment, which identified those areas where there is both a low prevalence of the population being physically active and a low level of natural green space provision.<sup>14</sup> The Marmot Review<sup>15</sup> also recognised the importance of good quality open and green space in tackling health inequality and recognised that the availability and quality of access to green space is not evenly distributed, with those in deprived urban areas often having less access to health-improving green space.



<sup>14</sup> (Bennett, Davies, Hodgson, Pett, & Witts, 2016)

<sup>15</sup> Fair Society, Healthy Lives (The Marmot Review) (2010)



## Access to the Coast

Following the introduction of the Marine and Coastal Access Act 2009, the County Council has been working in partnership with Natural England to establish the Kent stretches of the England Coast Path. This is a new National Trail walking route that will eventually circumnavigate the entire English coastline. In addition to the creation of a linear walking route, the project secures access rights for the public to explore beaches and land along the coastline – known as ‘spreading room’.

When the National Trail is complete, the path will be approximately 2,700 miles long, making it one of the longest promoted coastal walking routes in the world. Due to the scale of the project, the trail is being developed in stretches around the country. The first stretches of the Coast Path in Kent, between Ramsgate and Camber, were opened to the public on the 19 July 2016. This provided a 106 km (66 mile) trail, connecting coastal communities and bringing tourism opportunities to the region. Work is currently in progress to develop the remaining stretches of coast path along the North Kent coast, which are planned to be open to the public by 2020.

## Current Use and Value

The PROW and Access Service often uses ‘counters’ as a measure of the use of a route prior to and after improvement. There are further tools such as Outdoor Recreation Valuation (ORVal), Walkability and Propensity to Cycle tools that are also available.

## Welfare Value

The ORVal tool is a map-based web application. It provides further evidence of the value and benefits that are derived from publicly accessible space and the PROW network. ORVal shows usage and welfare values that are generated by accessible green space either as an individual site or as a region. The welfare refers to sense of wellbeing or utility that each person feels as a result of their experience. The welfare value for green space is the figure for the monetary equivalent of the welfare enjoyed by a person as a result of having access to green space. The welfare value can be used when applying cost-benefit analysis to assess future planning applications and projects that impact on the PROW network and other accessible green space. It is supported by DEFRA and endorsed by the Treasury.

## Physical Activity Data Tool

The physical activity data tool published by Public Health England in April 2018, presents data on physical activities including walking and cycling with the aim of helping to promote physical activity, develop understanding and support the benchmarking, commissioning and improvement of services. It also includes information on related risk factors and conditions such as obesity and diabetes.

## Kent Mental Health & Wellbeing Index

The Kent Mental Health & Wellbeing Index has been created from a wide range of aspects of wellbeing. Constructed at ward level, it provides an assessment of the relative assets and vulnerabilities of an area in respect of the mental health and wellbeing of the population within it.

In addition, the Propensity to Cycle Tool, Route Selection Tool and the Walking Route Audit Tool, as referenced in the Government’s technical guidance for local cycling and walking infrastructure, help gauge the likely or relative level of use and can assist in directing investment decisions.

These assessments and data tools combined with available mapping can be used to prioritise areas for future action and investment, based on levels of population deprivation, size and need. They can be used by the PROW and Access Service to support strategic decision making with regard to service provision and to identify projects which focus on preventative action and with potential to deliver greatest value in health and wellbeing benefits.

# Identifying Future Demand



It is important to look at how Kent's population is going to change in order to identify future demand and plan the Service's delivery over the next 10 years. This section summarises Kent's demographics, current travel patterns and growth and development areas and how the ROWIP intends to respond to the pressures and demands each place on the PROW network. What is clear is that if population in the county grows as predicted and house building keeps pace this decade will witness an unprecedented scale and pace of growth. Growth on this scale has the potential to bring with it increased demand and pressure on the PROW network.

*Further information on these areas are available in 'The Current Network (Use and Provision)', which forms part of the evidence base and is available online and on request.*

## Kent's Population Demographics

"All regions of England are projected to see an increase in their population size over the next decade, with London, the East of England and South East projected to grow faster than the country as a whole. The population is also ageing with all regions seeing a faster growth in those aged 65 and over than in younger age groups." Suzie Dunsmith, Population Projections Unit, Office for National Statistics.

Kent's population is predicted to increase at an accelerated rate to the rest of the country, with the older age groups making up a larger percentage of the population than the younger groups. The Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework forecast shows an estimated population of 2,127,600 by 2031; an increase of 396,300 people, equivalent to a 23% growth in population from 2011 to 2031<sup>16</sup>.

A predicted 178,600 homes are required in Kent between 2011 and 2031 to meet the housing demand.<sup>17</sup> A well-planned green infrastructure that protects important landscapes and access to amenities is key to creating sustainable communities. The demographics of Kent's population will also play an important role in making future decisions, targeting limited resources to deliver the best possible service to meet our customer's requirements and needs and deliver positive outcomes.

## Current Travel Patterns

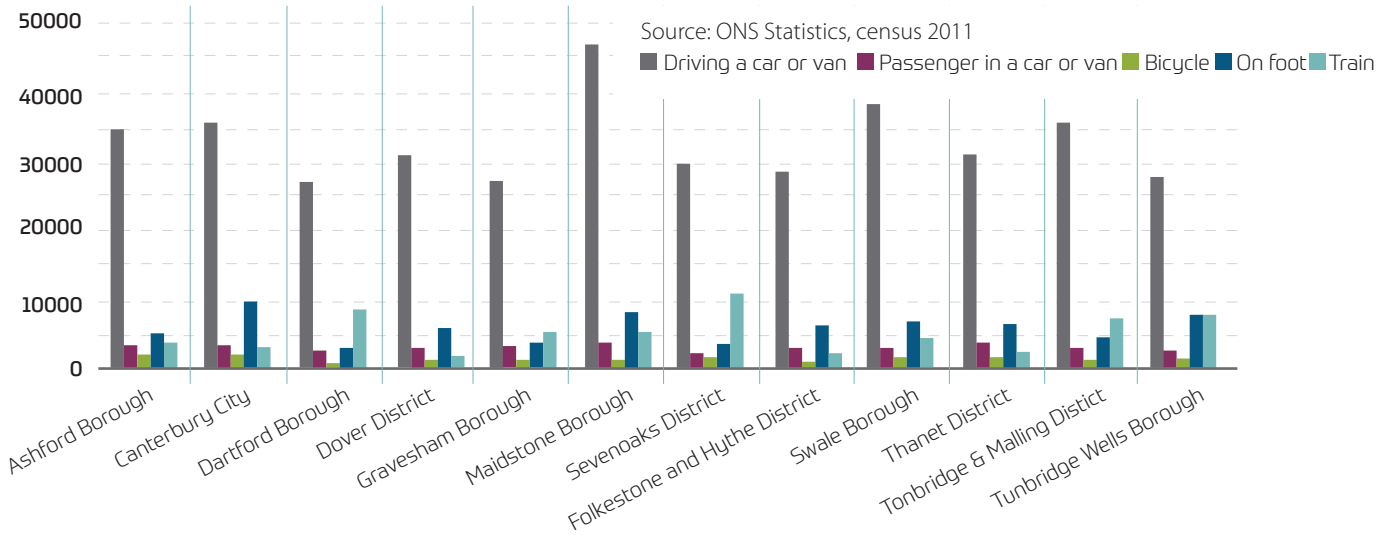
Information available from the Office for National Statistics (ONS) Statistics Census 2011 on the ways that Kent's residents reach work, provides an important insight into travel patterns and where the PROW and Access Service can help encourage more sustainable options. Figure 2 (page 22) focuses on five specific modes of transport used in Kent. Driving to work is by far the most common method used. Although walking to work is the second most popular method for seven of Kent's districts, the remaining districts' second choice was to travel to work by train.

The distance to work can affect the method of travel chosen; people are more inclined to choose walking or cycling for shorter distances. Figure 3 (page 22) shows the distance travelled to work in each of Kent's districts, for a journey that is less than 10km. Encouraging people to leave their cars at home and use active travel methods for shorter journeys will not only provide health and wellbeing benefits to the participant, but will also have a positive impact on the local environment, contributing to reduced road congestion and better air quality. The provision of links that provide access to work, school and facilities is an essential element of a well-planned green infrastructure to facilitate sustainable and active travel.

<sup>16</sup> Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (KCC) 2018 Update

<sup>17</sup> Kent and Medway Growth and Infrastructure Framework (KCC) 2018 Update

**Figure 2 - Method of travel to work**



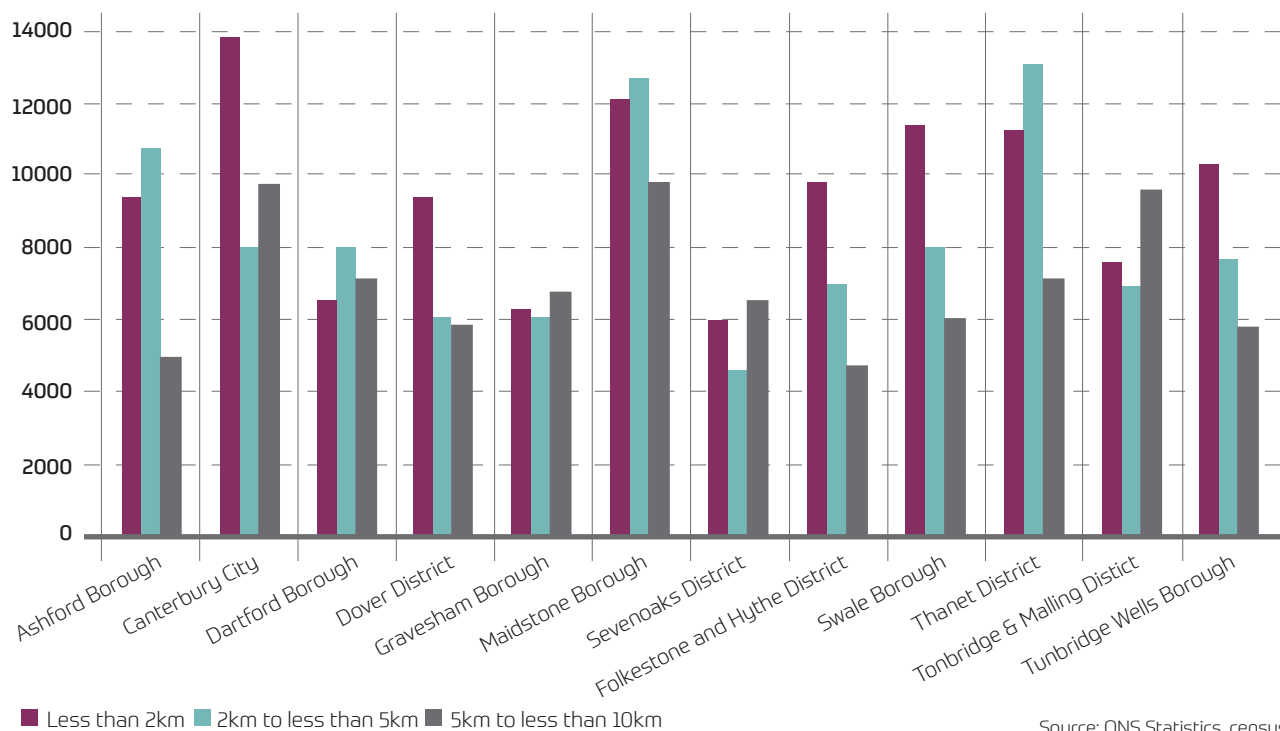
## Access to Public Transport

For longer distances, walking and cycling may not be feasible and other methods of travel including bus, car and train will need to be used. The PROW network still plays an important role in providing links to these modes of transport, such as bus and railway stations.

Figures 1 and 2 relate to current travel patterns. There will, no doubt over the duration of this plan, be a continued change to working patterns; increased home working and remote working facilitated by the role out of high-speed internet connections. The continued development and improvement of electric vehicles, autonomous vehicles and even electrically assisted bicycles may revolutionise travel choices.

Through the improvement of the existing PROW network to facilitate active travel for shorter journeys and improving links to transport hubs, we can work towards more sustainable travel patterns in Kent. The PROW and Access Service will use the available transport information to make informed decisions when responding to planning applications and developing provision in growth areas. We recognise there is the potential for a rapid change to working and travel patterns over the duration of this plan and may need to further develop policies as a result.

**Figure 3 - Distance travelled to work**



Source: ONS Statistics, census 2011





## **Growth Areas**

The PROW and Access Service will continue to work with planners and developers to secure PROW enhancements and improvements to the network over the next 10 years in growth areas and associated developments. We will continue to comment on and influence local planning documents, land allocation and master plans through to detailed applications. Comments will reflect National Planning Policy Framework 2018 paragraphs:

- 96 ‘Access to a network of high quality open spaces and opportunities for sport and physical activity is important for the health and well-being of communities’ and
- 98 ‘Planning policies and decisions should protect and enhance public rights of way and access, including taking opportunities to provide better facilities for users, for example by adding links to existing rights of way networks including National Trails’.

# Use of Spatial Data

The spatial data sets available to the PROW and Access Service have increased over the last 10 years:

This includes data on:

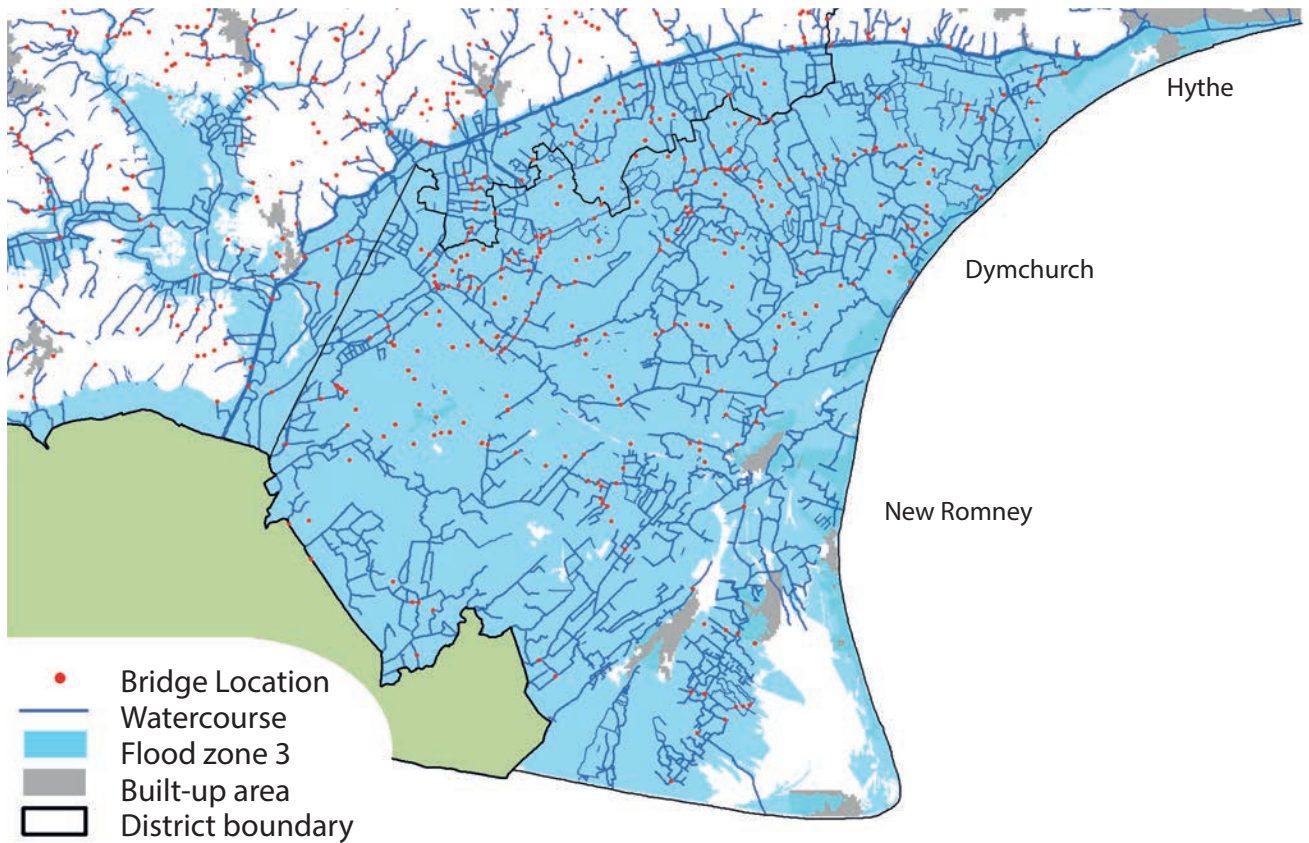
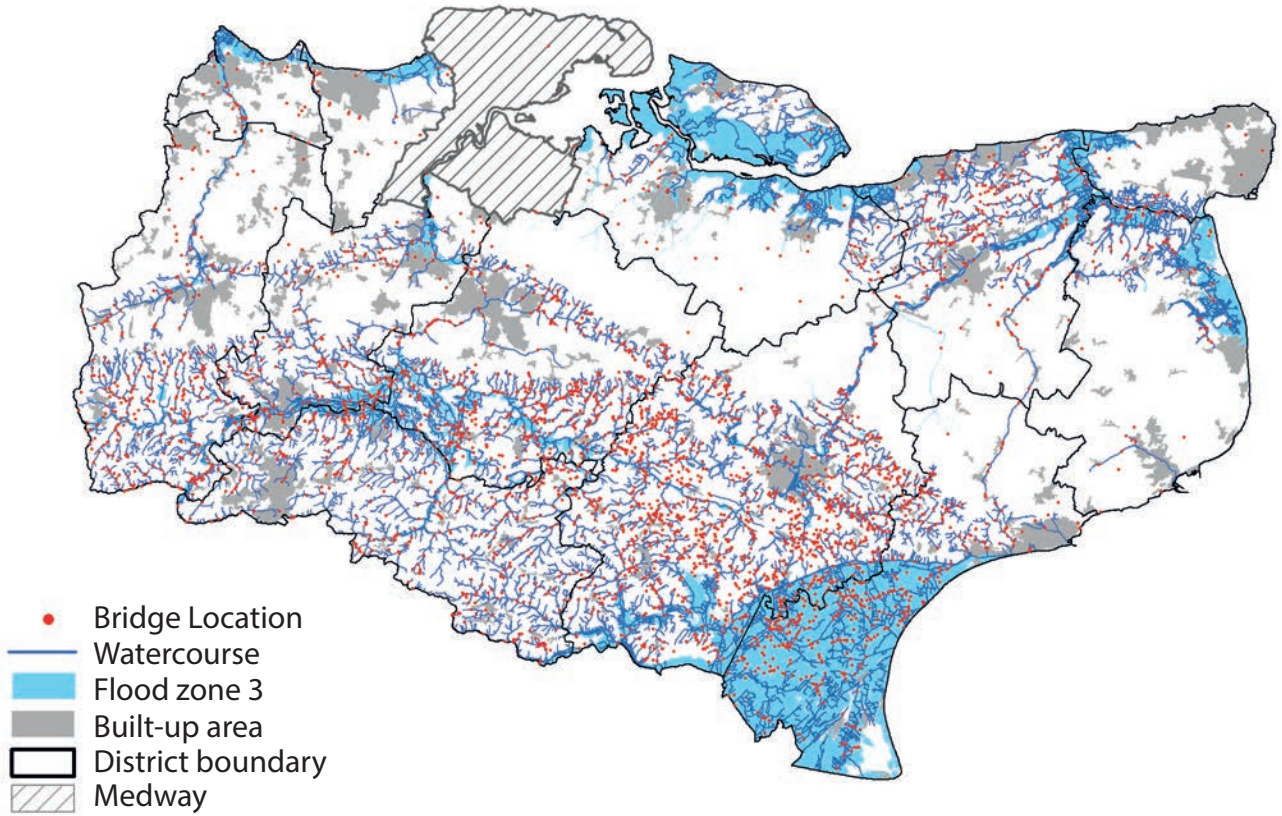
- The PROW network asset
- The PROW network
- Access Land
- Publicly accessible greenspace and coast
- Permissive access
- Highways
- Customer insight – MOSAIC.
- Health
- Multiple Index Economic Deprivation
- Travel patterns.
- Links to public transport
- Growth areas
- Flood zones
- Land use
- Points of interest
- Constraints – such as Sites of Special Scientific Interest and scheduled ancient monuments

This information can be harnessed to inform decision making about which projects are likely to deliver positive outcomes and how best to design them. Examples of how information that can be used to direct activity are as follows:



### Example 1: Safeguarding the PROW Asset

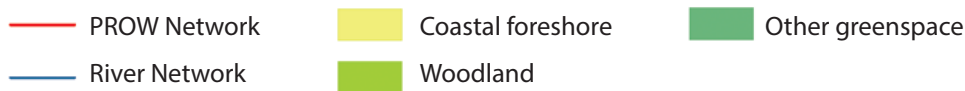
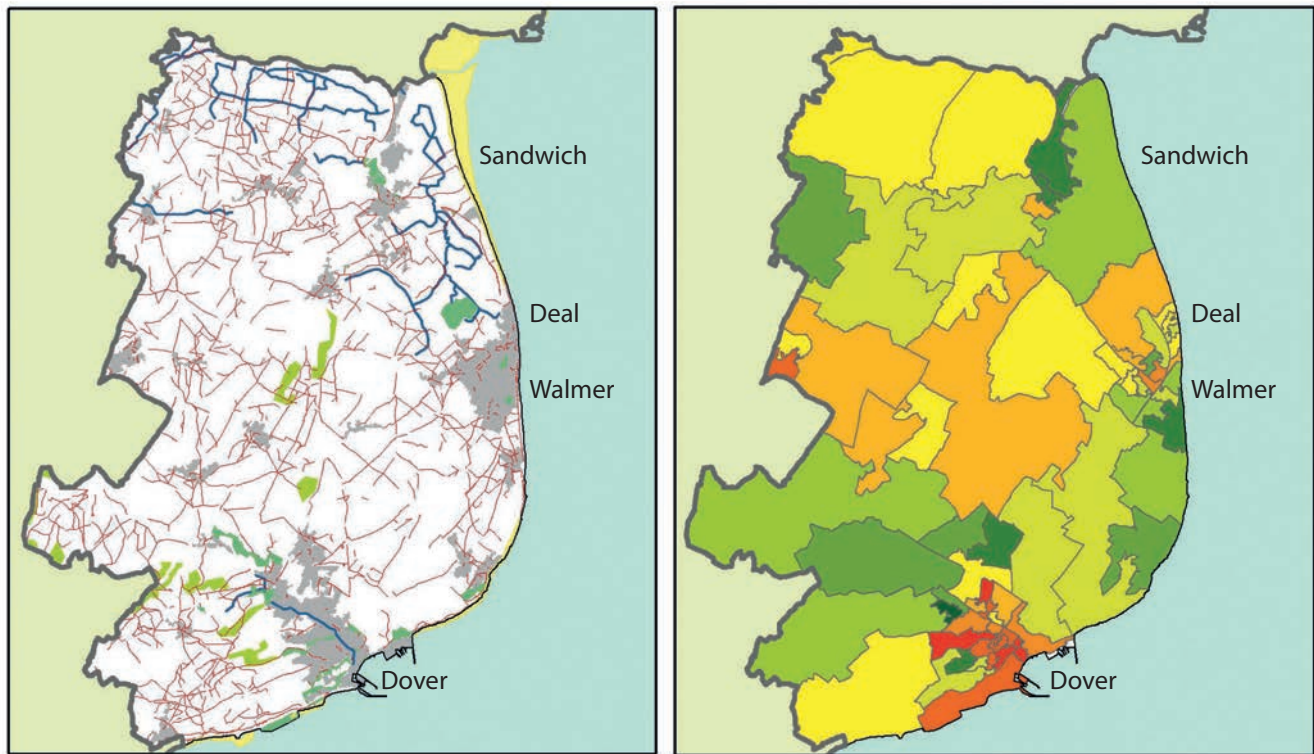
Using flood zone, watercourse mapping and spatial data showing the PROW bridge asset, we can identify those structures at greatest risk and direct activity to safeguard the asset through bridge anchoring, anti-scour works and other protective measures.



## Example 2: Tackling Health Inequalities through Access to Greenspace

Research has identified a correlation between areas where there is a low prevalence of the population being physically active and low levels of natural green space provision.<sup>18</sup> Good quality open and green space is important in tackling health inequality and it has been recognised that the availability and quality of access to green space is not evenly distributed.

### Dover District



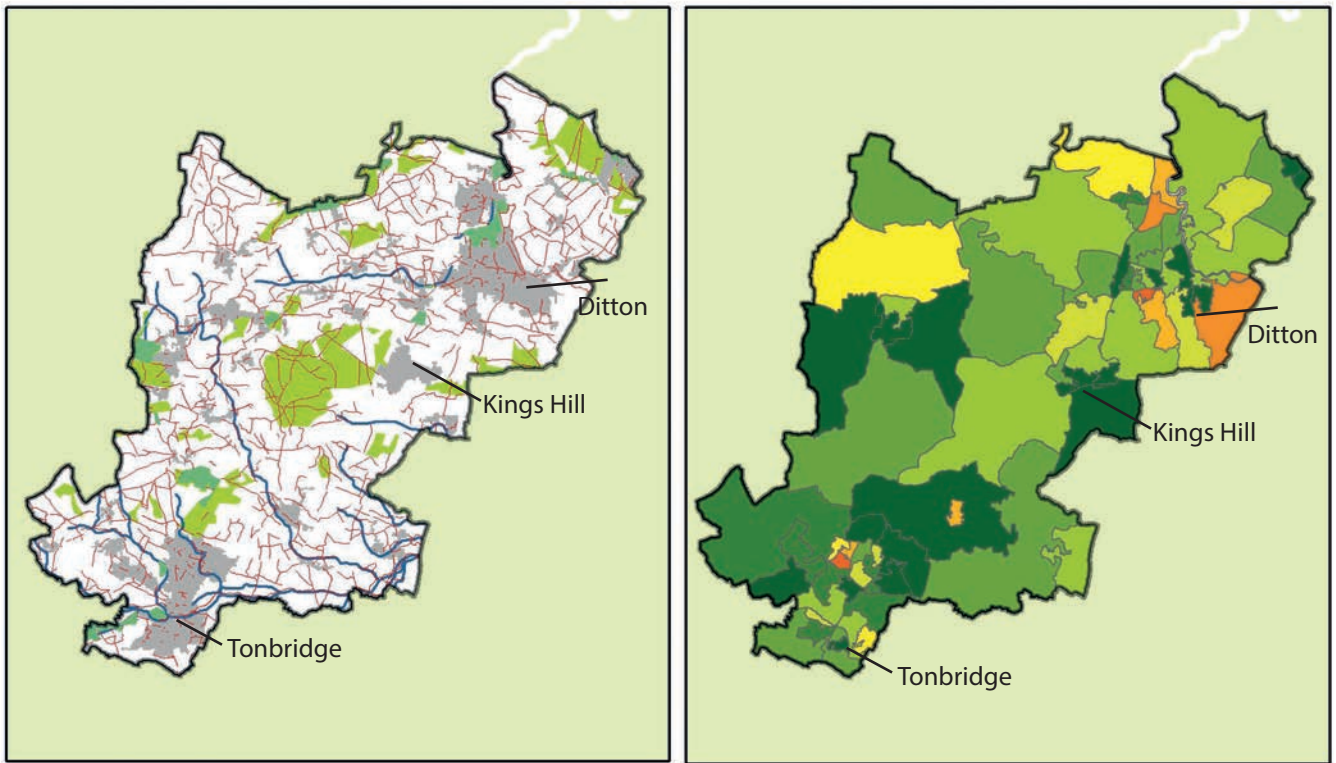
### Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2015)



<sup>18</sup>(Bennett, Davies, Hodgson, Pett, & Witts, 2016)

Mapping showing indices of multiple deprivation, access to open and green space and areas of poor health can be compared to inform decision making for future projects, programmes and planning responses, to help encourage active lifestyles and tackle health inequality in Kent.

### Tonbridge & Malling District



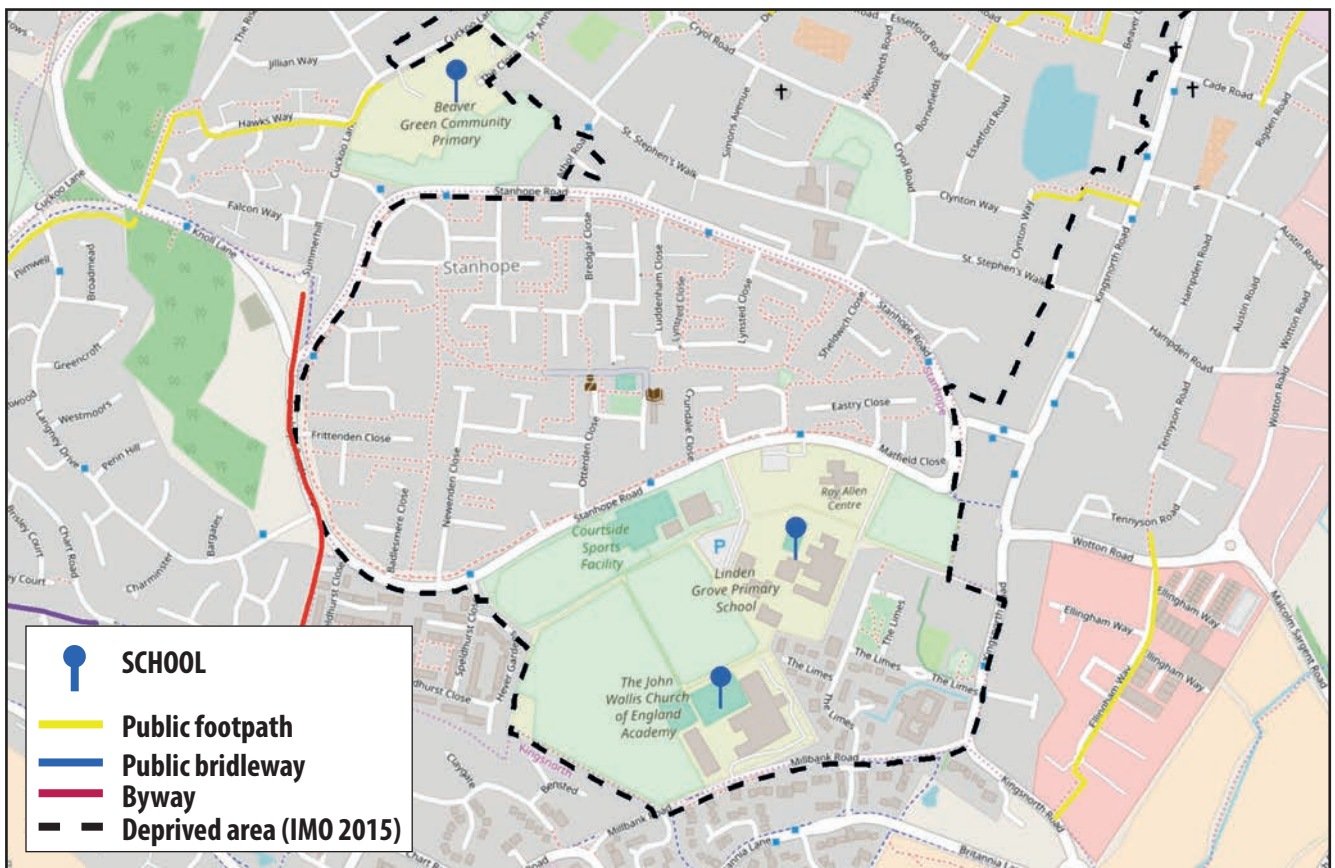
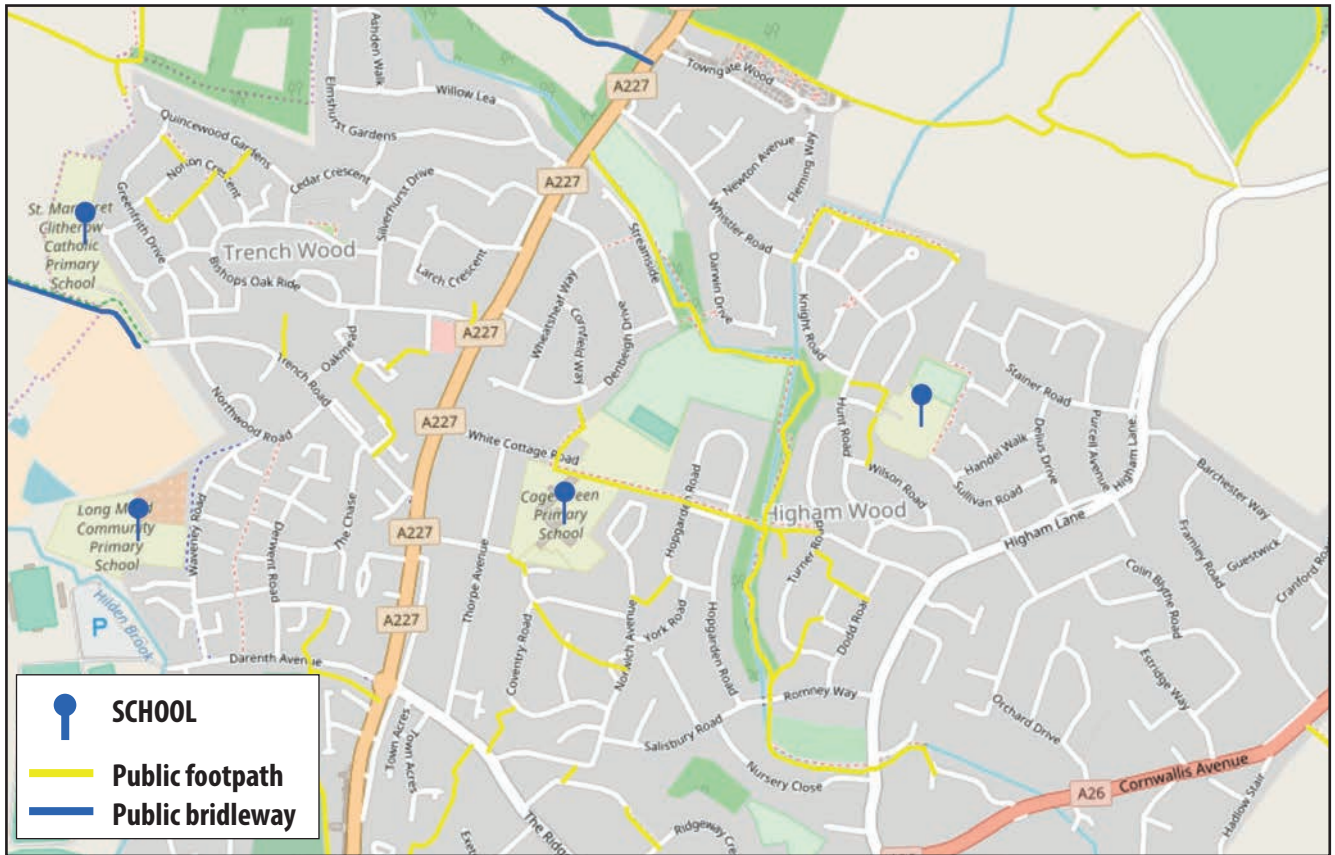
- PROW Network
- River Network
- Coastal foreshore
- Woodland
- Other greenspace

Indices of Multiple Deprivation (2015)



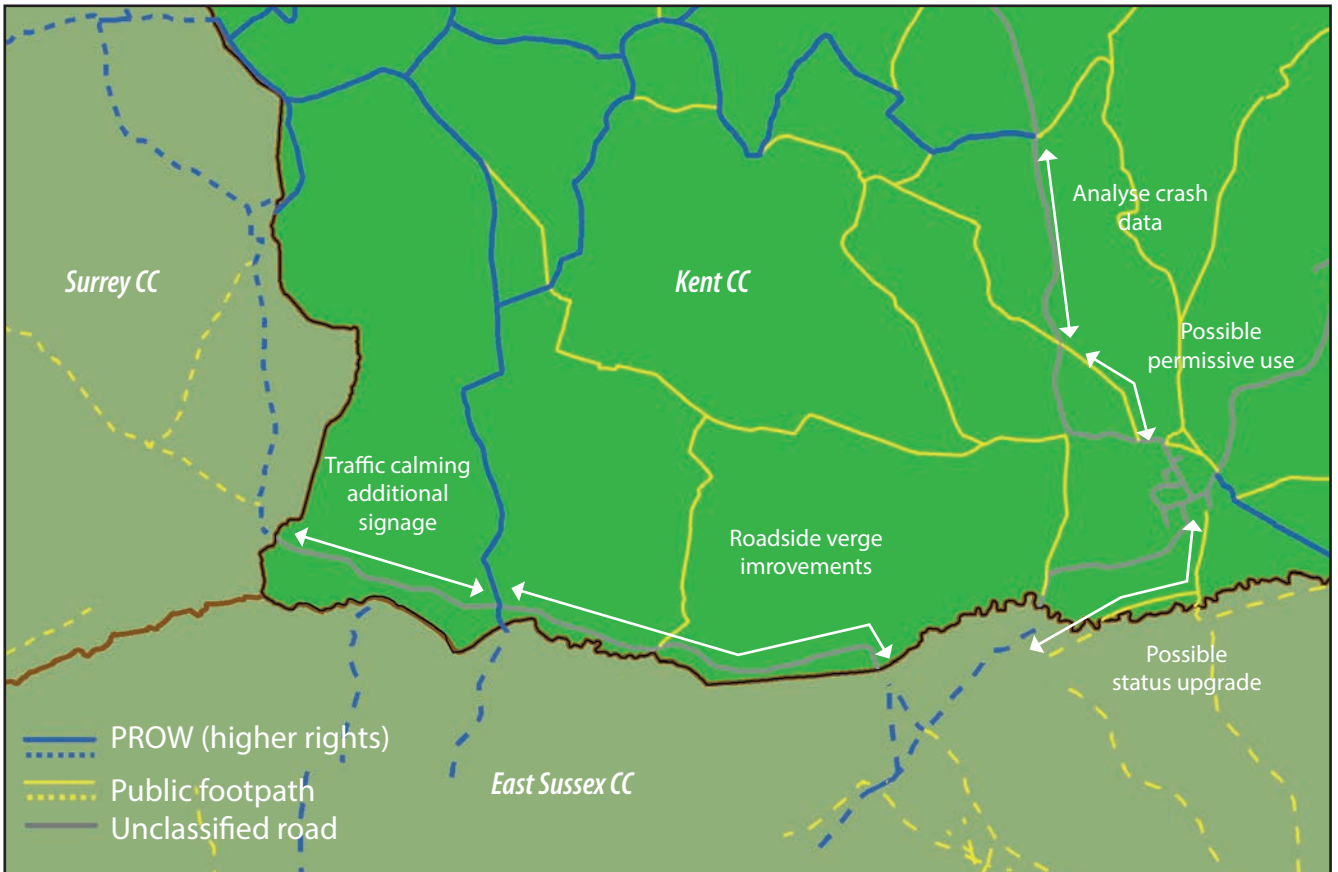
### Example 3: Encouraging Active Lifestyles

Using spatial data we can identify improvements, linking schools to the wider PROW and cycle network. Information can be further scrutinised to target specific schools and potential links to the network, encouraging active travel and healthy lifestyle choices. The provision and improvement of such links has the potential to unlock great benefits in areas of poor health outcomes.



### Example 4: Reducing Fragmentation of the Network and Improving Safety

The example map below demonstrates the power of spatial data in building up a picture of the 'missing links' that could deliver maximum benefit to connectivity. Using multiple datasets e.g. road data, crash statistics, cross-border assets etc. to build up an accurate picture of the local situation, allows the most appropriate options for delivering improvements to be identified. This may be improving the roadside verge; working to improve signage and traffic calming features; trying to establish behind the hedge routes; or, working for permanent or permissive upgrades to existing lower status paths.







# Delivery Plan / Statement of Actions




The ROWIP provides valuable insight into the needs and priorities of Kent's PROW network users, what they would like from the Service and how we can improve walking, equestrian and cycling opportunities in Kent. The six key themes that have emerged and the actions required to deliver them, sit well with the themes of the previous ROWIP and ensure the continuity of the service and the assurance that our previous work was well directed. The key themes are not in order of priority or importance, each has a main objective and set of actions that form the basis of the PROW and Access Service's 10 year delivery plan and statement of actions.

Decisions need to be made around how resources will be allocated to best meet our statutory obligations and deliver the improvements that the public desire. This is particularly important when budget and staff resources are under increasing pressure. There is a need to ensure that each programme or project delivers the greatest benefit and aligns most closely with Kent's relevant strategies and policies. Through producing the ROWIP, an evidence base has been developed to support this prioritisation, delivery plan and statement of actions. Evaluation of the plan's effectiveness is also crucial in ensuring that the service is fulfilling identified priorities and needs, both overall and on a project by project basis. The PROW and Access Service will quantify the outcomes and outputs of the plan through an annual review and report throughout the 10 years of the plan.

## Key for Benefits









-  Supports active travel (reducing congestion, outputs of climate change gases, noise and air pollution)
-  Increasing levels of activity leading to better physical and mental health and wellbeing
-  Supporting Kent's economy
-  Improved customer experience





## Key for Resource/Limitation

-  Deliverable with existing resource levels
-  Additional resource required
-  Potential for income generation or budget savings



















## Active lifestyles


Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource / Limitation	Key Partners
AL01	Increase Health and Wellbeing Benefits	<p>1.1 Target priority areas and deliver improvements to the network addressing health inequalities through increasing active travel and recreational activity.</p> <p>1.2 Prioritise maintenance on those PROW providing access to natural greenspace and public open space or where providing an accessible resource for community-based activities (walking groups, health walks).</p> <p>1.3 Improve connectivity and consider equestrian and other parking where reasonable to encourage recreational and leisure activity; including access to country parks, honey pot sites and other facilities of high leisure use, such as National Trails, promoted routes and routes within and leading to AONBs.</p> <p>1.4 Support volunteering in greenspace and on PROW network.</p> <p>1.5 Work with partners to support implementation of health improvement initiatives, such as Walking for Health, cycling and equestrian initiatives and GP referrals.</p> <p>1.6 Support schemes that will contribute to a reduction of air pollution, particularly in those areas where levels are high, and measures of deprivation and health are poor.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	<p>Active Travel Strategy Steering Group</p> <p>Countryside Access Wardens</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>Explore Kent</p> <p>Health Care Providers and Professionals</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>KCC Highways Transportation and Waste</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Kent Sport</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Local Schools</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>
AL02	Active Travel	<p>1.7 Support and influence local authority strategies and policies to ensure that active travel is firmly integrated into development planning.</p> <p>1.8 Work with developers to ensure active travel routes are incorporated and link to PROW / cycle networks, transport hubs and greenspaces.</p> <p>1.9 Provide motorised traffic free, safe walking, cycling and equestrian and routes linking to towns, urban and rural areas. Seek to provide longer distance links between urban centres.</p> <p>1.10 Remove barriers to active travel and recreation and promote routes and opportunities. For example promote recreational routes to introduce people to active travel and work with KCC's Active Travel Strategy Group to support work with children to develop bike skills, build confidence and encourage use.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	<p>Active Travel Strategy Steering Group</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>KCC Highways Transportation and Waste</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Local Schools</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>

AL03	Tackling Deprivation & Disadvantage	<p>1.11 Remove barriers for economically disadvantaged communities by encouraging the use of the network as a free-at-the-point-of-use resource for active travel, recreation and leisure use.</p> <p>1.12 Tackle health disadvantage by promoting access to the natural environment and green space, beyond urban areas, providing connectivity to nature and cultural landscapes.</p> <p>1.13 Utilise information available on health inequalities, areas of deprivation poor health, high air pollution, and current access to green space to support measures to focus efforts on the areas that will have greatest impact.</p> <p>1.14 Encourage active travel to schools through promotion and enhancing PROW and cycle networks, targeting areas of childhood obesity and deprivation affecting children.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	Active Travel Strategy Steering Group Developers Explore Kent Health Care Providers and Professionals KCC Country Parks KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Countryside Access Forum Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Kent Sport Local Schools Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups
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## Evolution of the network

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource / Limitation	Key Partners
EN01	Modal Shift to Cycling and Walking to Reduce Road Air Pollution	<p>2.1 PROW network to provide realistic traffic free alternative to the car especially for short journeys to keep towns moving at peak flow times. Provide routes to encourage walking &amp; cycling as a realistic mode of transport for utilitarian purposes as well as for leisure use.</p> <p>2.2 Improve and upgrade the PROW network where it links with amenities, public transport nodes, work and education to increase the attractiveness of walking, cycling and riding as an alternative to driving.</p> <p>2.3 Work with planners to secure PROW within green space and green corridors which actively ameliorate air pollution.</p> <p>2.4 Further develop policies and projects in line with changes in working and travel patterns over the duration of the plan.</p> <p>2.5 Work to secure higher status routes (bridleway, restricted byway) to provide access for the greatest range of users.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	Active Travel Strategy Steering Group Developers Explore Kent KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Countryside Access Forum Local Schools Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups













EN02	Improve Green Infrastructure	<p>2.6 Work with planners and developers to create a planned strategic green infrastructure which incorporates the PROW network to promote and encourage sustainable, active travel and provide opportunities for leisure and recreation.</p> <p>2.7 Work with stakeholders to create places where people are not impeded in undertaking physical activity, accessing nature and having low air pollution levels.</p> <p>2.8 Support improved communication with planning officers to ensure access is integrated into developments and best practice is applied.</p> <p>2.9 Maintenance and improvements will be designed to be in keeping with surrounding environment. For example a tarmac path would not be suitable choice through a woodland habitat.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Active Travel Strategy Steering Group Developers KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Countryside Access Forum Landowners Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups
EN03	Safe Travel	<p>2.10 Maintain the PROW network to support safe and easy travel.</p> <p>2.11 Work in partnership to provide new and upgraded routes in areas of evidenced need and to encourage use through well designed safe routes.</p> <p>2.12 Look to improve safety of railway and road crossings where possible, working with Highways and PROW partners.</p> <p>2.13 Maintain highway verges and unsealed unclassified highways to improve the connectivity of the PROW network.</p> <p>2.14 Identify and support policies and measures that seek to reduce traffic speed and volume where this will preserve or improve network connectivity for non-motor vehicle users.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Developers KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Kent Sport Kent Wildlife Trust Landowners Network Rail Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups
EN04	High Standard Good Design Routes	<p>2.15 Liaising with disabled user groups and organisations, use expert knowledge and experience to update existing Kent Design standards for specific user groups.</p> <p>2.16 Establish and share design standards for specialist users and incorporate these design standards where it is appropriate to do so for new and existing PROW. (A higher standard of maintenance programme will be required for such routes and can be applied when funding is available).</p> <p>2.17 Establish and share general good design standards and guidance for use for KCC and local authorities in developing the network including access to specialist engineering skills and knowledge base in the design, improvement and upgrade of PROW.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Developers KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Countryside Access Forum Landowners Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups





EN05	Strategic Overview	<p>2.18 Looking at the available PROW network and the barriers preventing use, take a strategic overview to provide more relevant shared use routes and better links and access to facilities where needed.</p> <p>2.19 Strengthen partnership working with stakeholders and planning bodies to make better sense of the network and provide a well maintained safe, pleasant environment based on customers priorities, needs and choices.</p> <p>2.20 Work closely with District/Borough and Parish Councils to ensure PROW input into Local and Neighbourhood Plans.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>EV</b>	<p>Active Travel Strategy Steering Group</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>KCC Highways Transportation and Waste</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>
EN06	Environmental Impact and Mitigation	<p>2.21 Identify climate change impact and mitigation measures.</p> <p>2.22 Use data available on air quality to prioritise projects and schemes to help towards improving the local environment.</p> <p>2.23 Identify flood risk areas and likely impact on PROW network and put in place mitigation measures.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>EV</b>	<p>Active Travel Strategy Steering Group</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>KCC Highways Transportation and Waste</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Environmental Strategy</p> <p>Kent Resilience and Emergency Planning</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>

## Knowing what's out there





Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource / Limitation	Key Partners
KT01	Maintain the Record	<p>3.1 Maintain and update the county's Definitive Map and Statement of Public Rights of Way, Register of Common Land and Village Greens and their associated schedules.</p> <p>3.2 Ensure that the Definitive Map and Statement are easily accessible.</p> <p>3.3 Encourage stakeholders to submit applications that ensure that rights of way are preserved prior to legislative changes which are due to come into force on 1 January 2026.</p>	   	<b>EV</b>	













KT02	Better Promotion	<p>3.4 Promote the benefits of active travel to encourage this type of use and relate it to the most popular response when we asked why PROW are used ( to go for a walk / run / cycle / be active / healthy)</p> <p>3.5 Promote specific types of network use, where there are suitable equestrian and cycle routes to encourage this type of use which is currently low.</p> <p>3.6 Working with key partners seek to improve promotion of PROW and cycle network, highlighting new and improved routes, shared use and higher status routes. Improve type of information available online i.e. destination, length and difficulty of route.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Active Travel Strategy Steering Group Countryside Access Wardens Explore Kent Health Care Providers and Professionals KCC Country Parks KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Countryside Access Forum Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Kent Sport Libraries Local Schools Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups
KT03	Sustainable Tourism	<p>3.7 Help to keep spend by visitors (e.g. walkers and cyclists) in the local and rural areas through linkages with local businesses, thereby supporting Kent's small business sector.</p> <p>3.8 Develop access which does not conflict with nature conservation interest and support mitigation measures which may require recreational pressure to be diverted from sensitive sites.</p> <p>3.9 Provide information to help support community led tourism.</p> <p>3.10 Increase length of stay through packaging, linking and developing new products (e.g. new routes or new promoted routes). Promote the resource widely to target short break audiences.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Explore Kent KCC Country Parks Kent Countryside Access Forum Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Libraries Local Businesses Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups Visit Kent
KT04	A Strong Brand for Kent (Encouraging visits to Kent)	<p>3.11 Use PROW and countryside access to strengthen <i>Kent – The Garden of England</i> brand of Kent as a whole and in local areas.</p> <p>3.12 Maintain primary promoted routes to a high standard to safeguard Kent's high-quality reputation for countryside access.</p> <p>3.13 Developing new products (e.g. new routes or new promoted routes) taking a strategic view of Kent's needs and markets.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Explore Kent KCC Country Parks Kent Countryside Access Forum Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Libraries Local Businesses Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups Visit Kent

KT05	Promotion of National Trails	<p>3.14 Establish trail partnership for England Coast Path.</p> <p>3.15 Promote National Trails, North Downs Way and England Coast Path as visitor destinations.</p> <p>3.16 Using external funding Improve National Trail branded signage.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	<p>Explore Kent</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Libraries</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p> <p>Visit Kent</p>
KT06	Grow New Markets	<p>3.17 Improving priority routes which facilitate horse riding, cycling and walking for more targeted tourist leisure and recreational use.</p> <p>3.18 Support development of growing sectors such as adventure sports and active leisure.</p> <p>3.19 Create bespoke and “off the peg” walking itineraries for domestic and overseas markets. Promote the Kent Countryside North Downs Way as a viable day, short break or rural tourism destination.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	<p>Explore Kent</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Libraries</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p> <p>Visit Kent</p>
KT07	More Accessible Information / Increasing Knowledge & Confidence	<p>3.20 Tailor information to reach the widest range of customers (online, phone apps, maps and guides), including specific groups, young to old age groups and visually impaired and disabled user groups.</p> <p>3.21 Reach specific groups that lack confidence and knowledge of PROW such as the non-users, under-represented age groups and those that indicate they have a disability.</p> <p>3.22 Target approach to reach PROW non -users, improving accessibility of information to spark interest in walking / cycling and horse riding, increase knowledge and confidence to encourage use.</p> <p>3.23 Make information more accessible for BAME groups and ensure promotional material will be appropriately targeted to BAME groups and provided in alternative formats and languages as necessary.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	<p>The Duke of Edinburgh’s Award</p> <p>Explore Kent</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>KCC Youth Services</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Libraries</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p> <p>Visit Kent</p>





KT08	Keep Communication Open	<p>3.24 Retain community involvement as a key element of service delivery.</p> <p>3.25 Liaise with planning authorities and developers, look at key development areas and potential gains to the network specific to each group.</p> <p>3.26 Provide updates about specific improvements to user groups.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£√</b>	<p>Explore Kent</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>KCC Youth Services</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Libraries</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p> <p>Visit Kent</p>
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## Well-maintained network
















Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource / Limitation	Key Partners
MN01	Better Network for Leisure and Daily Use	<p>4.1 Further improve the performance of the vegetation clearance contract across the county. (A higher standard of maintenance will be required for higher priority routes, which can be applied when funding is available).</p> <p>4.2 Work with local authorities and volunteers to target activity to improve the amenity of urban routes, remove litter, graffiti and dog fouling which acts as barrier to use.</p> <p>4.3 Target surface maintenance programmes to encourage the use of PROW for daily walking, cycling, riding especially in urban areas and for short journeys. Prioritise those routes particularly suited to wider use of the network.</p> <p>4.4 Improve general fingerpost and waymarking maintenance to encourage use and build confidence, prioritising areas with high leisure use. Promote and provide better signed circular routes to increase confidence in wider use.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£√</b>	<p>Contractors</p> <p>Countryside Access Wardens</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Landowners</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>

MN02	A Strong Brand for Kent  (Priority routes include promoted routes and links to key facilities)	4.5 Maintain National Trails, trail corridors and promoted routes to a high standard to safeguard Kent's high-quality reputation in countryside access.  4.6 Maintain high priority routes to facilitate horse riding, cycling and walking for more targeted tourist leisure and recreational use.	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	Explore Kent KCC Country Parks Kent Countryside Access Forum Kent Downs and High Weald AONB Libraries Local Businesses Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups Visit Kent
MN03	PROW Asset Management Plan	4.7 Use the PROW Asset Management Plan approach to make informed decisions for programme and project delivery.  4.8 Annually review and update the PROW Asset Management Plan throughout the 10 year plan, reflecting network and structure inspections and public reports.	   	<b>£V</b>	
MN04	The Intelligent Investment Tool	4.9 Use the Intelligent Investment Tool, a simple cost benefit analysis approach to make informed decisions for programme and project delivery.  4.10 Annually review and update the Intelligent Investment Tool throughout the 10 year plan.	   	<b>£V</b>	





## Rights with responsibilities




Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource / Limitation	Key Partners
RR01	Provide Advice on PROW Network	5.1 Provide advice and guidance to landowners.  5.2 Liaise with Planning Authorities and Parish Councils to provide advice on Local Plans and the inclusion of PROW improvement projects and provision in Neighbourhood Plans.  5.3 Attend meetings and workshops for large developments getting PROW input into the overall site design at early stage.  5.4 Provide advice on planning applications.  5.6 Advise on, and, where appropriate, progress orders to amend the PROW network in the interest of the public and or the landowner.	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£V</b>	Country, Land and Business Association Developers KCC Highways Transportation and Waste Kent Countryside Access Forum Landowners Land Managers National Farmers Union Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups











RR02	Negotiate Improvements	<p>5.7 Work with landowners to deliver improvements to the PROW network to increase accessibility and encourage active travel and active recreation, leisure use and the local economy.</p> <p>5.8 Secure any opportunities that arise from changes to the regime of agricultural and land management subsidies.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Country, Land and Business Association Kent Countryside Access Forum Landowners Land Managers National Farmers Union Parish Councils Planning Authorities User and Interest Groups
RR03	Compliance	5.9 Work with landowners to ensure higher levels of compliance with their obligations in respect of PROW. Take enforcement action where required to ensure PROW is open and available to the public.	  	<b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Country, Land and Business Association Landowners Land Managers National Farmers Union
RR04	Increase Accessibility of the PROW Network	<p>5.10 Continue to uphold our policy of least restrictive access.</p> <p>5.11 Utilise new data showing how many stiles are present on each route to target removal for the greatest impact.</p> <p>5.12 Seek to reduce the number of barriers to use such as steps and narrow gates.</p>	   	<b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Country, Land and Business Association Landowners Land Managers National Farmers Union User and Interest Groups
RR05	Promote Responsible Use	<p>5.13 Working with key partners to prevent conflict between different user groups.</p> <p>5.14 Work towards and support responsible use of the network to address local issues such as anti-social behaviour and dog fouling.</p> <p>5.15 Support measures designed to prevent or reduce anti-social and criminal behaviour while preserving public access.</p> <p>5.16 Working with stakeholders to minimise impact of use on sensitive areas i.e. SSSI and scheduled monuments.</p>	   	<b>E✓</b>	All Partners

## Efficient delivery

Ref Code	Objective	Action	Benefit	Resource / Limitation	Key Partners
ED01	Volunteers	<p>6.1 Continue to develop the Countryside Wardens Scheme expanding the roles of individual wardens.</p> <p>6.2 Link with Sustrans Rangers to ensure that the cycling network is adequately covered.</p> <p>6.3 Continue to develop volunteer programmes that support the delivery of the objectives of the ROWIP.</p>	   	<b>EgE</b> <b>E+</b> <b>E✓</b>	Countryside Access Wardens Explore Kent Kent Countryside Access Forum Landowners Land Managers Parish Councils User and Interest Groups

ED02	Improved Customer Service	<p>6.4 Through feedback identify improvements relating to customer service.</p> <p>6.5 Deliver the needs of customers through developing new routes and improvements in areas of demand using data from CAMS and MOSAIC.</p> <p>6.6 Continue to make improvements to reporting system in line with customer requests identified through review process.</p> <p>6.7 Provide the customer with a range of methods of reporting an issue to the appropriate body.</p>	 	<b>EV</b>	<p>Countryside Access Wardens</p> <p>Explore Kent</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>
ED03	Increase Awareness of ROWIP	6.8 Raise awareness of the ROWIP to customers, non- users of the network and stakeholders.	   	<b>EV</b>	All Partners
ED04	Working in Partnership	<p>6.9 Strengthen partnership working with key stakeholders including land managers, planning bodies, local authorities and Parish Councils to make better sense of the network and provide a well maintained safe, pleasant environment.</p> <p>6.10 Work in partnership with neighbouring County Councils' to ensure cross county boundary improvement projects take place where they provide benefits to the local communities.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>EV</b>	All Partners
ED05	PROW Network Links to Encourage Sustainable Travel	<p>6.11 Utilise the available transport information to make informed decisions when responding to planning applications and developing green infrastructure for growth areas.</p> <p>6.12 Establish potential links to the highway network. Make information available to Officers to assist with making informed decisions on planning applications and other projects.</p> <p>6.13 Use fragmentation analysis to identify where higher status routes link to quieter, less well used roads to improve network connectivity.</p> <p>6.14 Establish potential links on road verges, where quieter roads are not available.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>EV</b>	All Partners
ED06	Programme and Project Assessment	<p>6.15 Consider various data tools and data sets when assessing programmes and projects and when responding to development consultations. Including ORVal Welfare Value, Physical Activity Data Tool.</p> <p>6.16 In identifying programmes and projects that deliver the objectives of this plan, design will, where feasible include targets that are measurable.</p>	   	<b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>EV</b>	

ED07	Secure Additional Funding	<p>6.16 Seek to maintain and improve the delivery of the PROW and Access Service through charging for activity where admissible.</p> <p>6.17 Seek additional funding to maintain the current network and deliver targeted improvements to routes in line with the ROWIP.</p> <p>6.18 Seek opportunities to work jointly to secure funding for key promoted routes, National and International trails.</p>	   	<p><b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b></p>	<p>Active Travel Strategy Steering Group</p> <p>Developers</p> <p>Explore Kent</p> <p>KCC Country Parks</p> <p>KCC Highways Transportation and Waste</p> <p>Kent Countryside Access Forum</p> <p>Kent Downs and High Weald AONB</p> <p>Local Businesses</p> <p>Parish Councils</p> <p>Planning Authorities</p> <p>User and Interest Groups</p>
ED08	Operational Policy	<p>6.19 Review operational policies and priorities in light of the adopted policies and objectives in this plan.</p> <p>6.20 Periodically review operational policies in response to legislative change.</p> <p>6.21 Provide PROW Officers and volunteers with the training necessary to ensure effective delivery of PROW operations.</p>	   	<p><b>Eg£</b> <b>£+</b> <b>£√</b></p>	

# Glossary

AONB	Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty
BAME	Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic
BOAT	Byway Open To All Traffic
CAMS	Countryside Access Management System
CAW	Countryside Access Warden
CROW	Countryside Rights of Way Act 2000
DEFRA	Department for Environment, Food & Rural Affairs
DH	Department of Health
DMS	Definitive Map and Statement
ECP	England Coast Path
EH	English Heritage
FC	Forestry Commission
KCAF	Kent Countryside Access Forum
KCC	Kent County Council
LTP	Local Transport Plan
MENE	The Natural England Monitoring Engagement with the Natural Environment
MOD	Ministry of Defence
MOSAIC	Mosaic is Experian's powerful cross-channel consumer classification designed to help understand the demographics, lifestyles, preferences and behaviour of the UK adult population in great detail
NDW	North Downs Way
NE	Natural England
NHS	National Health Service
NICE	National Institute for Health and Care Excellence
NT	National Trust
ONS	Office for National Statistics
ORVal	Outdoor Recreation Valuation tool
PROW	Public Rights of Way
ROWIP	Rights of Way Improvement Plan
SSSI	Site of Special Scientific Interest
TRO	Traffic Regulation Order
WHI	Walk for Health Initiative

## Stakeholders, User and Interest Groups

The list below includes user and interest groups (this is by no means a complete list).

AUK	Age UK
BHS	British Horse Society
BDS	British Driving Society – representative body for carriage driving
CLBA	Country Land and Business Association
CP	Cycling Projects (the national inclusive cycling charity)
CUK	Cycling UK
DR	Disabled Ramblers
KAB	Kent Association for the Blind
KCAF	Kent Countryside Access Forum
KWT	Kent Wildlife Trust
LARA	Motorised Organisations' Land Access and Recreation Association
OSS	Open Spaces Society
NFU	National Farmers Union
RA	Ramblers
SE	Sport England
SUSTRANS	Sustainable Transport Charity
TRF	Trail Riders Fellowship
U3A	Groups University of the Third Age
WT	Woodland Trust
WW	Wheels for Wellbeing

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Photos: EXPLORE KENT



## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

**EQIA Title**

Public Rights of Way Vegetation Clearance

**Responsible Officer**

Graham Rusling - GT GC

**Approved by (Note: approval of this EqIA must be completed within the EqIA App)**

Tom Marchant - GT GC

### Type of Activity

**Service Change**

No

**Service Redesign**

No

**Project/Programme**

No

**Commissioning/Procurement**

Commissioning/Procurement

**Strategy/Policy**

No

**Details of other Service Activity**

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**

Growth Environment and Transport

**Responsible Service**

GC - Public Rights of Way and Access Service

**Responsible Head of Service**

Tom Marchant - GT GC

**Responsible Director**

Stephanie Holt-Castle - GT GC

### Aims and Objectives

The outcome required from this project is that suitable arrangements are in place for the clearance of vegetation on the PROW network that:

- Are efficient,
- Represent best value to the public of Kent,
- Support the health and well-being of residents and visitors,
- Deliver well maintained routes by executing work on time, to budget and specification,
- Able to provide a timely response to emergencies,
- Are sufficiently flexible to adapt to increased or decreased volumes of work,
- Support Kent's rural economy,
- Are environmentally sound.
- Deliver programmes of maintenance that deliver the greatest positive outcomes for the users of the PRoW Network.

Success of the project will see the establishment of a contractor supply chain with the capability to deliver the above outcomes.

The initial screening has indicated no negative impacts and positive impacts for those sharing protected characteristics in respect of age, disability, pregnancy & maternity , carers responsibilities.

## Section B – Evidence

**Do you have data related to the protected groups of the people impacted by this activity?**

Yes

**It is possible to get the data in a timely and cost effective way?**

Yes

**Is there national evidence/data that you can use?**

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

**Who have you involved, consulted and engaged with?**

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-28 and associated policies, the Asset Management Plan and individual scheme plans have been thoroughly researched using a combination of the following.

In preparation for the Rights of Way Improvement Plan 2018-28

- MOSAIC profiling of the Services customers.
- Customer surveys
- Focus groups
- Analysis of national and local evidence, research and policy
- Market reseach.

- There is regular engagement with Parish and Town Councils in respect of the programmes of vegetation clearance.

All informed the ROWIP 2018-28 EQIA.

**Has there been a previous Equality Analysis (EQIA) in the last 3 years?**

No

**Do you have evidence that can help you understand the potential impact of your activity?**

Yes

## Section C – Impact

**Who may be impacted by the activity?**

**Service Users/clients**

Service users/clients

**Staff**

Staff/Volunteers

**Residents/Communities/Citizens**

Residents/communities/citizens

**Are there any positive impacts for all or any of the protected groups as a result of the activity that you are doing?**

Yes

**Details of Positive Impacts**

Yes: The outcome of the procurement exercise is that the Public Rights of Way and Access Service will have in place effective arrangements for the clearance of vegetation for the Public Rights of Way Network in Kent.

The Rights of Way Improvement Plan ( the principal strategy and policy document for the delivery of the Service) has a number of policies designed to improve the accessibility of the public rights of way network. In delivering vegetation clearance programmes the network will be more accessible to, and safer for: the young & elderly and carers. those with ambulant disabilities or visual impairment.



<b>Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions</b>
<b>19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for age?</b>
No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Age</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating Actions for Age</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age</b>
Not Applicable
<b>20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Disability?</b>
No
<b>Details of Negative Impacts for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Disability</b>
Not Applicable
<b>21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sex</b>
No
<b>Details of negative impacts for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Sex</b>
Not Applicable
<b>22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender</b>
Not Applicable
<b>23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Race</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race</b>
Not Applicable
<b>24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Religion and belief</b>

Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Religion and belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief</b>
Not Applicable
<b>25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation</b>
Not Applicable
<b>26. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Pregnancy and Maternity</b>
Not Applicable
<b>27. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Marriage and Civil Partnerships</b>
Not Applicable
<b>28. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
No
<b>Negative impacts for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable
<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Not Applicable

**From:** Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development  
Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 14 May 2024

**Subject:** Performance Dashboard

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Summary:**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Performance Dashboard shows the performance of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) and activity indicators for Quarter 3 of 2023/24.

17 of the 22 KPIs achieved target and are RAG rated Green. Five KPIs were below target but did achieve floor standard and are RAG rated Amber. No KPIs were below floor standard.

KPIs and targets proposed for reporting 2024/25 performance are included in this report.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the performance report for Quarter 3 of 2023/24 and COMMENT on the KPIs and targets proposed for 2024/25.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1. Part of the role of Cabinet Committees is to review the performance of those functions of the Council that fall within its remit. To support this role, Performance Dashboards are regularly reported to each Cabinet Committee throughout the year, and this is the first report for the 2023/24 financial year.

**2. Performance Dashboard**

- 2.1. The current Growth, Economic Development and Communities Performance dashboard provides results up to the end of December 2023 and is attached in Appendix 1.
- 2.2. The Dashboard provides a progress report on performance for the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for 2023/24. The Dashboard also includes a range of activity indicators which help give context to the KPIs.
- 2.3. KPIs are presented with RAG (Red/Amber/Green) alerts to show performance in the Quarter. Details of how the alerts are generated are outlined in the Guidance Notes, included with the Dashboard in Appendix 1.

### **3. Growth & Communities - Economy**

- 3.1. The number of properties brought back to use through No Use Empty (NUE) over the 12 months to December 2023 was 509, which is well above the target of 400. The target for the number of businesses assisted via the Kent and Medway Growth Hub was exceeded for those provided with both light/medium and intensive support.

### **4. Growth & Communities - Libraries, Registration and Archives (LRA)**

- 4.1. Libraries welcomed 740,186 visitors during Quarter 3, an increase of 6.4% on the same period last year. Attendance at events and activities in particular has increased (by 20%) highlighting the demand for people coming together. While physical issues have decreased slightly by 1.8%, this is more than balanced out by the growing take-up of the e-offer, with a 6.3% increase in e-book loans, 33.9% in e-audiobooks, 3% in e-newspapers and 219% in e-magazines.
- 4.2. Kent Archives welcomed just over 670 researchers during Quarter 3, an increase of 38% on the same period last year. Despite the continued increase in physical usage of the service, remote enquiries also continue to rise, increasing by 11% on Quarter 3, 2022/23. The Archive Distance Enquiry survey was carried out from November 2023, and yielded a customer satisfaction rating of 100% for the service, reflecting customer satisfaction.
- 4.3. Death registrations have fallen by 10% from last year, when they were particularly high in number, and are back to pre-pandemic levels with 4,045 appointments delivered during Quarter 3. Similarly, birth registrations have levelled out, also falling by 10% from last year with a total of 3,982 appointments delivered.
- 4.4. Ceremony figures naturally drop during Quarter 3 and there were 2% fewer ceremonies than Quarter 3, 2022/23, with numbers more akin to pre-Covid levels. The 1,385 ceremonies that were delivered included 98 Citizenship Ceremonies, a much higher number than previous years due to the increasing popularity of the individual ceremonies offered at Bexley (but delivered by KCC) for the past few years and at Oakwood House since June 2023. Kent welcomed a total of 856 new citizens to the United Kingdom during Quarter 3, an increase of 30% on the same period last year.

### **5. Growth & Communities – Strategic Development and Place**

- 5.1 For Quarter 3, a total of 51 planning applications were received. Twenty-one s106 legal agreements have been completed securing a total of £30.5m, an 87.4% success ratio against the amounts originally requested. The KPI figure is slightly down due to viability issues at the Nicholls Quarry application in Hythe. For this application, the education contribution requests are subject to a viability review mechanism and as such are not recorded as being secured.
- 5.2 Most indicators for other services in Growth & Communities have met or exceeded target and are RAG rated Green. Five KPIs failed to meet target but did achieve floor standard, so are RAG rated Amber.

- 5.3 The percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online remains slightly below target. The second PRoW KPI, which is the median number of days to resolve priority PRoW faults improved and met target, moving from a RAG rating of Red to Green.
- 5.4 The percentage of cases progressed for initial coronial decision within two working days of notification of a death remains Amber, with delays being contributed to by the time taken to receive information from the NHS.
- 5.5 The percentage of schools with the highest numbers of children eligible for free school meals engaging with the Kent School Games remains below target. This is likely due to budget pressures leading to a reduction in the number of Teaching Assistants who are key in enabling pupils to attend off-site events.

#### **6. Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the performance report for Quarter 3 of 2023/24 and COMMENT on the KPIs and targets proposed for 2024/25.

Contact details:

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# **Growth, Economic Development and Communities Performance Dashboard**

## **Financial Year 2023/24**

### **Results up to end of December 2023**

Page 101

Produced by Kent Analytics

## Guidance Notes

### RAG RATINGS

Results in this report show either quarterly data or Year to Date (YTD) values.

GREEN	Target has been achieved
AMBER	Floor Standard* achieved but Target has not been met
RED	Floor Standard* has not been achieved

\*Floor Standards are the minimum performance expected and if not achieved must result in management action

### Activity Indicators

Activity Indicators representing demand levels are also included in the report. They are not given a RAG rating; instead, they are compared with previous year or tracked within an expected range represented by Upper and Lower Thresholds. The Alert provided for Activity Indicators is whether they are in expected range or not. Results can either be in expected range (**In Line**) or they could be **Above** or **Below**.



## Key Performance Indicators Summary

<b>Economy</b>	RAG
ED05: Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty	GREEN
ED10: Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract	GREEN
ED11: Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via the Growth Hub contract	GREEN

<b>Libraries, Registrations and Archives (LRA)</b>	RAG
LRA06: Customer satisfaction with Registration Services	GREEN
LRA15: Total number of customers attending events in Libraries and Archives	GREEN
LRA12: Customer satisfaction with libraries	GREEN
LRA13: Customer satisfaction with archives	GREEN

<b>Strategic Development and Place</b>	RAG
ED08: Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought	AMBER
DT14: Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	AMBER

<b>Strategic Development and Place (continued)</b>	RAG
EPE16: Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-month figure)	GREEN
CST01: Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews implemented by target date.	GREEN
CST02: % of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review attendees rating the event as very good or excellent	AMBER
CST03: Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support	GREEN
COR01: Percentage of cases progressed for initial coronial decision within 2 working days of notification of a death	AMBER
KCP01: Kent Country Parks aggregate average star ratings from Google, Trip Advisor and Facebook	GREEN
KSS01: Number of work experience hours of science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM)	GREEN
PAG01: Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	GREEN
PP01: Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Public Protection	GREEN
PP02: Percentage of trader applications to Public Protection's 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days	GREEN
AKM01: % of schools with highest numbers of children eligible for free school meals engaging with the Kent School Games	AMBER
AKM02: Number of people attending and engaging with training and learning opportunities facilitated by Active Kent & Medway	GREEN
TS04: Percentage of businesses rating Trading Standards advice (Primary Authority and Pay as You Go) as Very Good or Excellent	GREEN

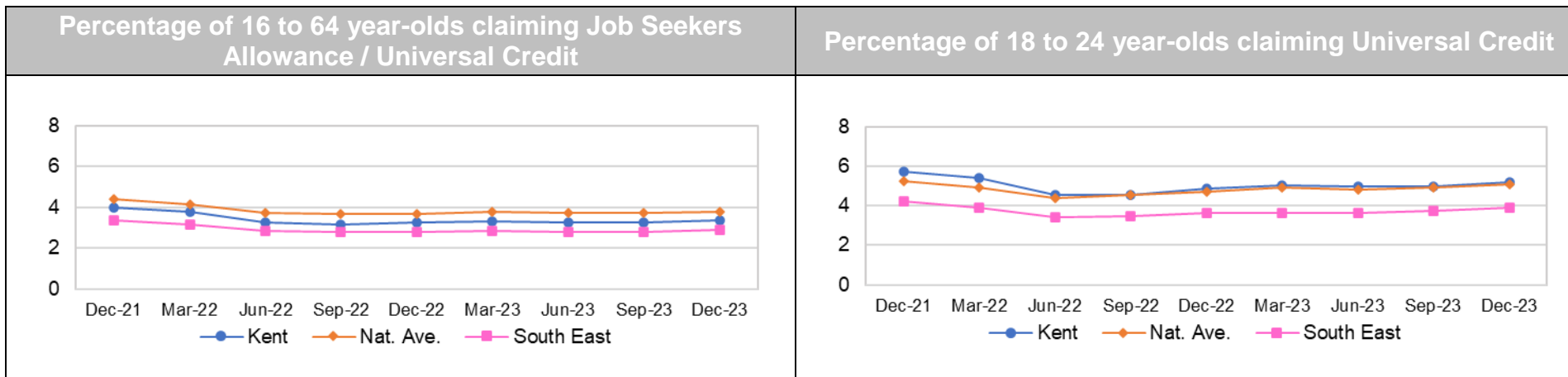
Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities - Economy	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Derek Murphy

Ref	Performance Indicators	Dec-22 (Q3)	Mar-23 (Q4)	Jun-23 (Q1)	Sep-23 (Q2)	Dec-23 (Q3)	RAG	Target	Floor
ED05	Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty (rolling 12 months)	420	418	388	395	509	GREEN	400	350
ED10	Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract (Year to Date)	1,326	1,722	261	552*	783	GREEN	512	461
ED11	Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via the Growth Hub contract (Year to Date)	86	140	30	65*	104	GREEN	51	45

\* These figures differ from those previous reported for Quarter 2, following the discovery of a calculation error for that Quarter.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities - Economy	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Derek Murphy

Context indicators



Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Libraries, Registrations and Archives	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Clair Bell</b>

### Quarterly KPIs

Ref	Performance Indicators	Dec-22 (Q3)	Mar-23 (Q4)	Jun-23 (Q1)	Sep-23 (Q2)	Dec-23 (Q3)	RAG	Target	Floor
LRA06	Customer satisfaction with Registration Services	94%	95%	95%	94%	<b>99%</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	95%	90%
LRA15	Total number of customers attending events in Libraries and Archives	31,622	44,272	41,969	53,015	<b>42,341</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	37,000	33,400

Dec-23 (Q3): LRA06 – 87 customers were surveyed, 86 were satisfied.

The numbers surveyed for Quarter 3 are lower than usual because this only includes responses for Citizenship ceremonies. There have been issues with the new registration booking system, which meant customer email addresses for sending out the birth, death and ceremony surveys were not available this Quarter. However, because Citizenship customer email addresses are received manually, it was possible to send out surveys to these customers.

### Annual KPIs

Ref	Performance Indicators	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24	RAG	Target 2023/24	Floor 2023/24
LRA12	Customer satisfaction with libraries	94%	83%	94%	<b>94%</b>	TBC	<b>GREEN</b>	90%	85%
LRA13	Customer satisfaction with archives	96%	No Survey	97%	98%	<b>100%</b>	<b>GREEN</b>	95%	90%

2022/23: LRA12 – 5,974 customers surveyed, 5,642 satisfied; 2023/24: LRA13 – 81 surveyed, 81 satisfied.

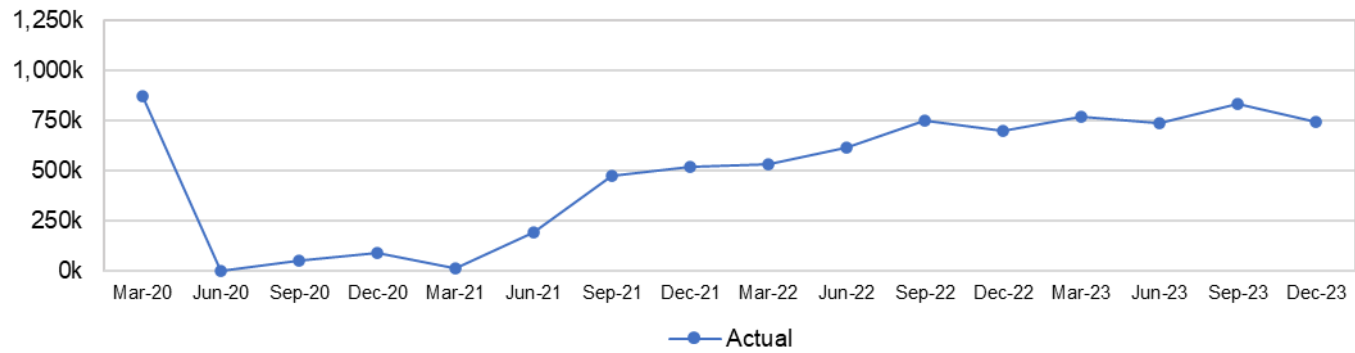
Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Libraries, Registrations and Archives	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Clair Bell</b>

Ref	Activity Indicators (Quarterly totals)	Dec-22 (Q3)	Mar-23 (Q4)	Jun-23 (Q1)	Sep-23 (Q2)	Dec-23 (Q3)	Value vs Expected	Expected Activity	
								Upper	Lower
LRA01	Number of visits to libraries (including mobiles) (000s)	696	771	736	831	<b>740</b>	In line	745	674
LRA02	Total number of books issued (includes audio- and e-books) (000s)	1,293	1,331	1,324	1,532	<b>1,407</b>	Higher	1,402	1,268
LRA25	Number of archive enquiries answered	1,859	2,479	1,915	2,398	<b>2,198</b>	Higher	1,980	1,790

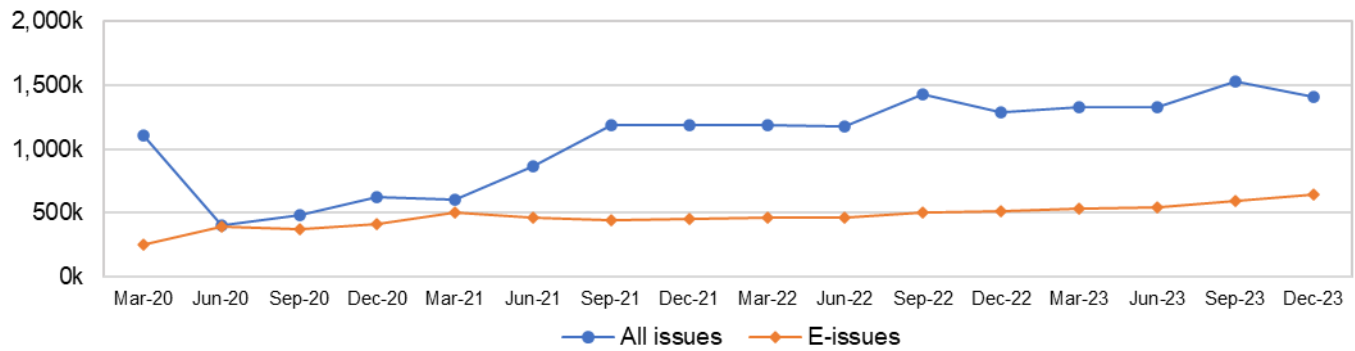
LRA02 - Physical issues have decreased slightly by 2% on Quarter 3 last year, but e-issues continue to increase significantly, with a 25% increase over the same period, resulting in a 9% increase overall for total issues. This is due to the continuing uptake of e-books e-audiobooks, e- magazines and e-newspapers.

LRA25 - Traditionally LRA services experience a dip during Quarter 3 which is our quietest period of the year, and this is factored into our forecasting. Positively, Archive services maintained their momentum after an exceptionally busy summer, with an increase of 38% in Search Room (physical) enquiries. We would expect to see remote enquiries decreasing as more customers return to the physical service, but in fact these have increased by 11% on the same period last year. This highlights how people are increasingly engaging with our Archive service and the level of interest in Kent history.

**Total number of physical visits to Kent libraries**



**Total number of book issues from Kent libraries**



Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Strategic Development and Place	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Clair Bell</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Dec-22 (Q3)	Mar-23 (Q4)	Jun-23 (Q1)	Sep-23 (Q2)	Dec-23 (Q3)	YTD 23/24	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
ED08	Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought	99.9%	81%	99.7%	99.6%	87.4%	<b>95.2%</b>	AMBER	98%	85%
DT14	Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	94%	89%	87%	87%	89%	<b>88%</b>	AMBER	90%	80%
EPE16	Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-month figure)	25	*	30	26	<b>20</b>	**	GREEN	20	25
CST01	Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews implemented by target date.	83%	95%	85%	95%	91%	<b>91%</b>	GREEN	70%	63%
CST02	Percentage of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review (DHR) Seminar attendees rating the event as Very Good or Excellent.	86%	***	***	79%	84%	<b>80%</b>	AMBER	85%	76.5%
CST03	Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support	New indicator		67%	73%	75%	<b>71%</b>	GREEN	70%	65%

\* No data available due to a software issue

\*\* No Year-to-Date figure as this is a Rolling 12-month indicator

\*\*\* No seminars were held.

Dec-23 (Q3): ED08 - £30.5m secured; DT14 – 1,145 faults reported, 1,019 were online; EPE16 – 58 priority faults resolved; CST01 – 58 actions, 53 completed by target date; CST02 – 19 reviews, 16 were very good or excellent; CST03 – 147 service users were surveyed, 110 service users reported feeling safer.

ED08 - The KPI figure is slightly down due to viability issues at the Nicholls Quarry application in Hythe. For this application, the education contribution requests are subject to a viability review mechanism and as such are not recorded as being secured.

DT14 – The 90% target is challenging and performance remains close but not meeting target. When an issue is perceived as urgent (such as those relating to flooding, winter storms and tree damage) there is a greater likelihood of this being reported through a phone call, perhaps due to the reassurance of talking to a person.

CST02 – Although the target was missed for those rating the seminars as very good or excellent, if those who rated it as good are also included then the percentage increases to 96%, showing a high level of satisfaction overall.



Division	Director	Cabinet Member
<b>Growth &amp; Communities</b> – Strategic Development and Place	<b>Stephanie Holt-Castle</b>	<b>Clair Bell</b>

Ref	Performance Indicators	Dec-22 (Q3)	Mar-23 (Q4)	Jun-23 (Q1)	Sep-23 (Q2)	Dec-23 (Q3)	YTD 23/24	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
COR01	Percentage of cases progressed for initial coronial decision within 2 working days of notification of a death.	72%	66%	78%	73%	78%	76%	AMBER	83%	72%
KCP01	Kent Country Parks aggregate average star ratings from Google, Trip Advisor and Facebook	4.6	4.5	4.6	4.6	4.6	4.6	GREEN	4.6	4.0
KSS01	Number of work experience hours of science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) delivered by Kent Scientific Services (KSS) for Kent students in the 16-24 age range.	148	0	214	45	370	629	GREEN	225	203
PAG01	Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	81%
PP01	Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub supported by Public Protection	100%	100%	*	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	90%	80%

\* No return for this Quarter due to a reduction in referrals of people who have been scammed.

Dec-23 (Q3): COR01 – 1,502 cases, 1,170 progressed within 2 working days; PAG01 – 38 planning applications, all of which met DLUHC performance standard.

COR01 – The coroner service is reliant on information from the NHS particularly to progress cases and while the NHS continues to be under pressure, the information is not always provided quickly enough to meet the 2-day target. This has been exacerbated by the recent and current NHS and doctors strikes and the piloting of the Medical Examiner system by the NHS. The Coroner Service has been experiencing winter pressures earlier this year which has been exacerbated by extended staff absences and staff vacancies for which we are currently recruiting for.

Division	Director	Cabinet Member
Growth & Communities – Strategic Development and Place	Stephanie Holt-Castle	Clair Bell

Ref	Performance Indicators	Dec-22 (Q3)	Mar-23 (Q4)	Jun-23 (Q1)	Sep-23 (Q2)	Dec-23 (Q3)	YTD 23/24	YTD RAG	Target	Floor
PP02	Percentage of trader applications to Public Protection’s ‘Trading Standards Checked’ scheme processed within 10 working days.	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	81%
AKM01	Percentage of schools with the highest numbers of children eligible for free school meals engaging with the Kent School Games	54%	55%	42%	48%	45%	45%	AMBER	55%	45%
AKM02	Number of people attending and engaging with training and learning opportunities facilitated by Active Kent & Medway	163	153	306	361	211	878	GREEN	750	675
TS04	Percentage of businesses rating Trading Standards advice (Primary Authority and Pay as You Go) as Very Good or Excellent	100%	92%	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	90%	82%

Page 112

Dec-23 (Q3): PP01 – 33 people supported. PP02 – 81 trader applications processed; AKM01 – 17 schools with high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals engaged with Kent school games; TS04 – 12 out of 12 businesses have rated trading standards advice as very good or excellent since the start of the year.

AKM01 – Schools with the highest numbers of children eligible for free school meals are the target audience for invites to Kent School Games events. These schools are the hardest to engage and have additional challenges that can prevent them from participating, including pressures on staffing numbers and transport costs. To ensure that events can still go ahead if numbers are low, invites are extended wider to other schools (who sit outside of the top 30% of schools where pupils are eligible for free school meals) but they are asked to target their least active pupils and those eligible for free school meals; these schools are not included in the KPI calculation.

## G&C Proposed KPIs and Activity indicators for 2024/2025

### Growth and Communities

#### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Floor	2023/24 YTD (Q3)	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor
EC05	Number of homes brought back to market through No Use Empty (Rolling 12 months)	400	350	509	400	360
DC08	S106 Developer contributions secured against total contributions sought	98%	85%	95%	98%	85%
EC10	Businesses assisted via Kent and Medway Growth Hub contract (light and medium touch)	683	615	783	Targets and Floors for these indicators are dependent on level of funding still to be agreed	
EC11	Businesses assisted through intensive support provided via Growth Hub contract (high intensity)	68	60	104		
EC (NEW1)	Number of visitor economy businesses supported (through visitor economy and inward investment contract)	New indicators				
EC (NEW2)	Number of inward investment projects secured (through visitor economy and inward investment contract)					
EC (NEW3)	Number of jobs created or safeguarded (through visitor economy and inward investment contract)					
PROW14	Percentage of Public Rights of Way (PRoW) faults reported online	90%	80%	88%		
PROW16	Median number of days to resolve priority faults on public rights of way network (rolling 12-month figure)	20	25	20	15	24
CST01	Percentage of local actions from completed Domestic Homicide Reviews implemented within six months of publication date.	70%	63%	91%	75%	68%
CST02 (Revised)	Percentage of Lessons Learnt Domestic Homicide Review Seminar attendees rating the event as Good, Very Good or Excellent.	85%	76.5%	96%	90%	81%

Ref	Indicator description	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Floor	2023/24 YTD (Q3)	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor
CST03	Percentage of service users who report feeling safer due to warden support.	70%	65%	71%	70%	65%
COR01	Percentage of cases progressed for initial coronial decision within 2 working days of notification of a death.	83%	72%	76%	83%	76%
KSS02 (NEW)	Percentages of priority 1 food, feed and consumer products sample tests reported to clients within 5 working days	New indicators			93%	88%
KSS03 (NEW)	Percentage of external independent proficiency tests rated as "good" or "satisfactory" with a statistical Z score of 2 or less.				75%	67%
PAG01	Percentage of planning applications determined to meet DLUHC performance standards	100%	81%	100%	100%	90%
PAG02	Percentage of statutory planning consultee responses submitted to the local planning authority within 21 days (Minerals & Waste)	New Indicator			90%	80%
CP01	Percentage of the most vulnerable victims of scams recorded on the National Scams Hub visited and supported by Community Protection	90%	80%	100%	90%	80%
CP02	Percentage of trader applications to Community Protection's 'Trading Standards Checked' scheme processed within 10 working days.	100%	81%	100%	100%	90%
TS04	Percentage of businesses providing feedback after receiving business advice by Trading Standards and rating it as Very Good or Excellent.	90%	82%	100%	90%	82%
LRA06	Customer satisfaction with Registration services	95%	90%	99%	96%	91%
LRA12	Customer satisfaction with Libraries	90%	85%	94% (22/23)	94%	89%
LRA13	Customer satisfaction with Archives	95%	90%	100% (23/24)	98%	93%
LRA15	Total number of customers attending physical and virtual Libraries and Archives events	168,500	152,400	137,325	210,200	190,100

Ref	Indicator description	2023/24 Target	2023/24 Floor	2023/24 YTD (Q3)	2024/25 Target	2024/25 Floor
LRA17 (New)	Number of volunteer hours adding extra value to the service	New indicator			31,100	27,900

Activity indicators

Indicator description
Percentage of population aged 16 to 64 in employment
Percentage of population aged 16 to 64 claiming JSA

Ref	Indicator description	Threshold	Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	2024-25 Target
LRA01	Number of visits to libraries (including mobiles) (000s)	Upper	789	896	793	867	3,345
		Lower	714	811	717	784	3,026
LRA02	Number of items issued (including all e-books and e-audiobooks) (000s)	Upper	1,492	1,716	1,486	1,572	6,266
		Lower	1,350	1,553	1,345	1,422	5,670
LRA04 (NEW)	Number of wedding, civil partnership and citizenship ceremonies carried out by KCC Officers	Upper	2,200	3,000	1,400	1,000	7,600
		Lower	2,000	2,800	1,300	900	7,000

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**From:** Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 14 May 2024

**Subject:** Kent County Council's support for Apprenticeships, Community Learning and Skills in the context of the Kent economy

**Classification:** **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of report:** N/A

**Future Pathway of report:** N/A

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** This report describes Kent County Council's support for apprenticeships, community learning and skills in the context of the Kent economy and KCC's Strategic Aims and makes suggestions for action to be taken to improve the effectiveness of the apprenticeship programme, reduce the numbers of the economically inactive, raise skills levels and improve job prospects.

According to the most recently available statistics, in December 2022 60 per cent of Kent's population was aged 16 to 64 ("working age"): The statistics for December 2023 will be available later in April.

Of the 951,000 of this working age population, 79.4 per cent are categorised as "economically active" and 20.6 per cent as "economically inactive".

Of the 195,899 economically inactive 16- to 64-year-old people, 52,200 are "students", 45,000 are defined as "sick", 39,200 are "retired", 36,200 are "looking after someone else or their home", 5,800 are on "government training schemes", and 20,200 are uncategorised.

Of the 727,100 "in employment", 602,100 are employees and 119,200 are self-employed.

The relevant Strategic Aims adopted by the County Council are to support the Kent economy, support the most vulnerable children and families in the county, promote healthy, creative and active communities, and to offer an inclusive curriculum which widens participation.

As these aims are shared across different teams in the County Council, the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee and the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force will also discuss this report.

This report and its accompanying slides describe the actions being taken to meet the current challenges to delivering KCC's strategic aims.

**Recommendation:**

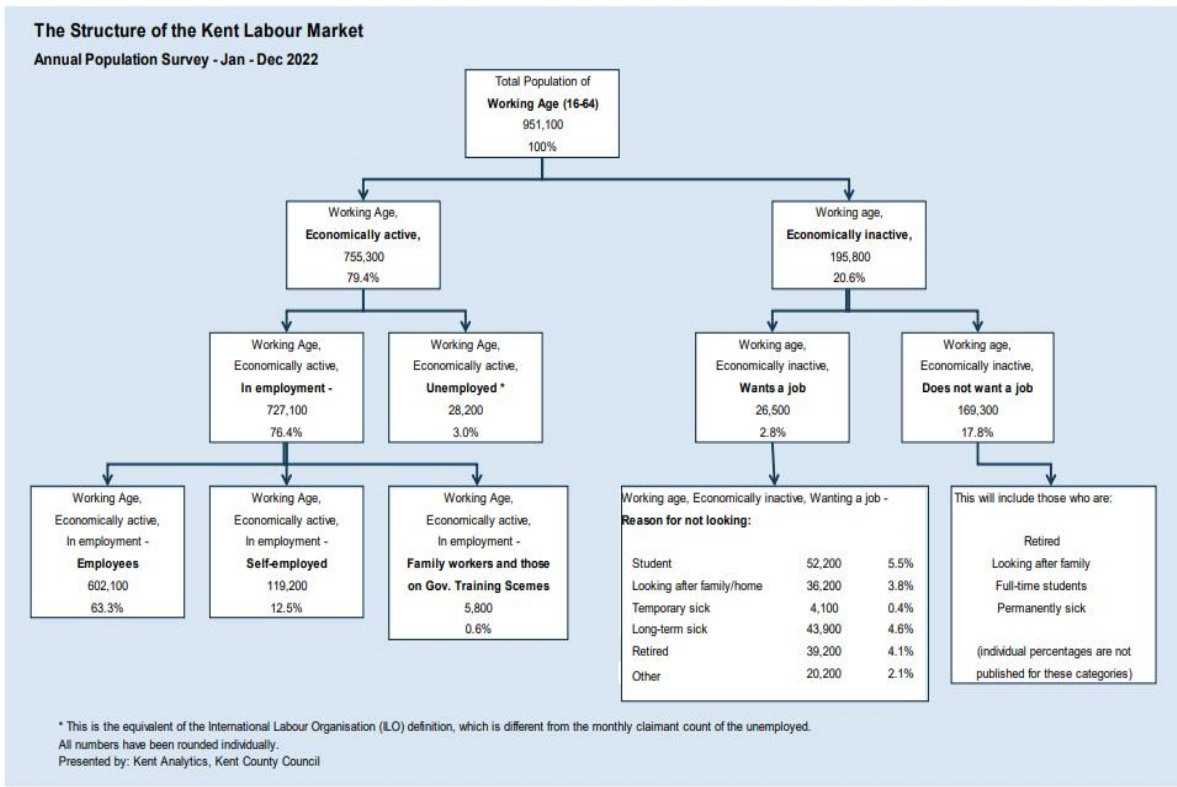
The Cabinet Committee is asked to COMMENT on the suggested actions being taken to meet current challenges

**1. Background**

- 1.1 In 2022 Kent had a lower percentage of residents with qualifications at level 4 and above (41.1 %) than the England national average (45.1%). The conventional measure of productivity is “gross value added” per filled job: productivity in Kent is approximately 6 percentage points lower than the England average. This corresponds to the lower average income level in Kent compared to the rest of England.
- 1.2 There are significant differences between productivity in the 12 Kent districts: the productivity average in West Kent is 10 per cent above the national average and East Kent is 20 per cent below it. Overall, Kent also underperforms its neighbours in the Southeast of England. More productive jobs generate higher levels of pay locally, and this is associated with higher living standards and better health outcomes.
- 1.3 Kent also has a workforce “skills deficit”: Workforce qualifications at intermediate and higher qualification levels in Kent lag behind the national average. At Level 2 (GCSE grades 4 to 9 or C to A\*), attainment levels are higher than the national average but at Level 3 (A levels) there is a 2.5 percentage points gap, with Kent below the national average, widening to over 5 percentage points at Level 4. The percentage of the workforce qualified to both Levels 3 and 4 is lower than the national percentage in nine of the twelve Kent districts, with especially low rates in East Kent: Swale, Thanet, Dover and Folkestone and Hythe
- 1.4 Consequently, there has been a strong focus on addressing workforce skills challenges in recent years. The provision offered by Kent’s three Further Education Colleges has been consolidated and strengthened alongside significant improvements made in developing links between skills providers, employers and other strategic providers. These are being reinforced through the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force (chaired by the Leader of the County Council) and the commissioning of a detailed evidence base of skills requirements in all local sectors. This was the basis of the employer-led Local Skills Improvement Plan and sector specific initiatives which have been endorsed by the Department for Education leading to significant new Government funding for capital projects and multi-year revenue funding for courses.
- 1.5 The Department for Work and Pensions has recently announced changes to its administration of Universal Credit and the introduction of Universal Support. The Department for Education has announced an expansion of child care support to help working families alongside support for childminders, new financial support for those seeking a Level 3 qualification and new funding for Skills Bootcamps to be administered by local authorities. Both main political parties have announced plans to reform the apprenticeship system should they form the government after the next General Election.



1.6 The structure of the Kent Labour Market is shown below.



**2. Schools, FE Colleges and Universities, KCC Adult Education and Community Learning, and Apprenticeships**

- 2.1 Secondary education in Kent could be radically affected by the Government’s reform of the funding for Level 3 qualifications. The impact on the 6<sup>th</sup> Forms of Kent’s schools is described in the attached slides. The proposed actions include strengthening the links between schools and the local economy, greater support for the Careers and Enterprise Company and putting the case to Government for the restoration of funding for applied general qualifications (such as BTEC).
- 2.2 Kent is characterised by the absence of 6<sup>th</sup> Form Colleges. Children at 16 and over have a choice between schools, FE colleges and work, which might include training such as an apprenticeship.
- 2.3 The slides address these issues and suggest areas for discussion including how to work with the Department for Education to bring sustainable funding into the county and how best to reform the apprenticeship system.

The actions proposed are:

### **Skills**

- Improve links between local employers.
- Support for the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- Lobbying for applied general (BTEC etc) qualifications.

### **Apprenticeships**

- Working with the DFE/ESFA to bring sustainable apprenticeship funding into the County.
- Lobbying for a more sustainable system.
- Need to look at ways to work with employers, apprentices and training providers to improve the successful completion of apprenticeships.
- Relaxation on Maths and English element to support more people into apprenticeships and support Training Providers.
- Have a central point where all apprenticeship vacancies are advertised.
- More flexibility in how the apprenticeship levy is used.

## **3. Implications**

### Financial

- 3.1 There are no direct financial implications for KCC arising from the discussion of the issues in this paper. However, it ought to shape KCC's future work programme in relation to apprenticeships, community learning and skills within the constraints of the KCC budget.

### Equalities

- 3.2 Equalities impact assessments have been prepared for each of the relevant KCC programmes.: The actions suggested are aimed at improving access for disadvantaged groups and removing inequalities: future changes will require new assessments to be undertaken.

### Data protection

- 3.3 There are no data protection implications.

## **4. Next steps**

- 4.1 Papers covering the same issues will be discussed later in May by the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee and the Kent and Medway Employment Task Force.

## **5. Recommendation**

The Cabinet Committee is asked to COMMENT the suggested actions being taken to meet current challenges.

## 6. Background Documents

PowerPoint presentation slides: KCC's support for Community Learning, Skills and Apprenticeships in the context of the Kent economy.

## 7. Contact details

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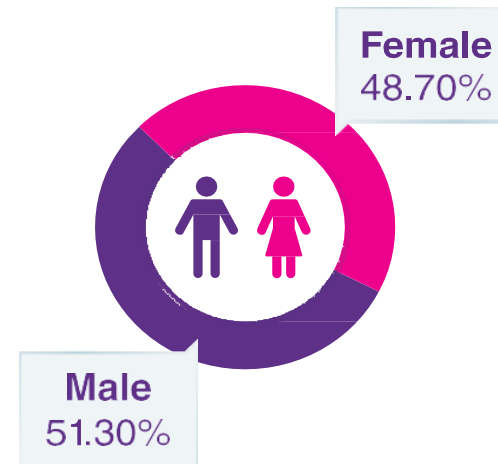
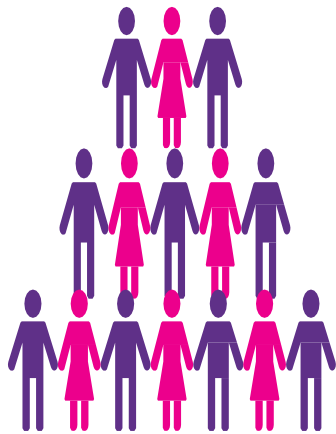
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**Presentation to  
Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee  
14 May 2024**

**This presentation provides a background for  
discussion of KCC's support for  
Community Learning, Skills and  
Apprenticeships  
in the context of the Kent economy.**

# Kent's Resident Population

1,593,200



There are currently estimated to be 1,593,200 people living within the Kent County Council area; the population in Medway is 279,800. The figures for Kent in this presentation refer to the area covered by KCC.

Kent borders London boroughs, which has implications for workforce travelling to work in London.

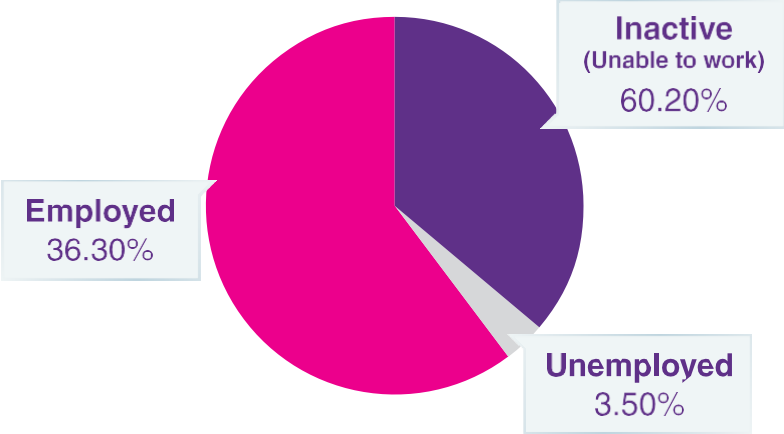
Kent has a greater proportion of young people aged 14 years and under and of people aged 50+ years than the England average. But it also has an ageing population with the number of 65+ years old forecast to increase by 40.7% between 2022 and 2040, yet the proportion of population aged under 65 is only forecast to increase by 12.3%.

# Economic activity of working age residents (16 – 64)

The number of people who were unemployed in Kent in February 2024 was 33,635 which is 7.7% higher than last year. The claimant rate in Kent is currently 3.5%, below the GB average rate of 3.8%. Youth unemployment (18-24) in Kent is 5.3%, slightly above the national average of 5.2%.

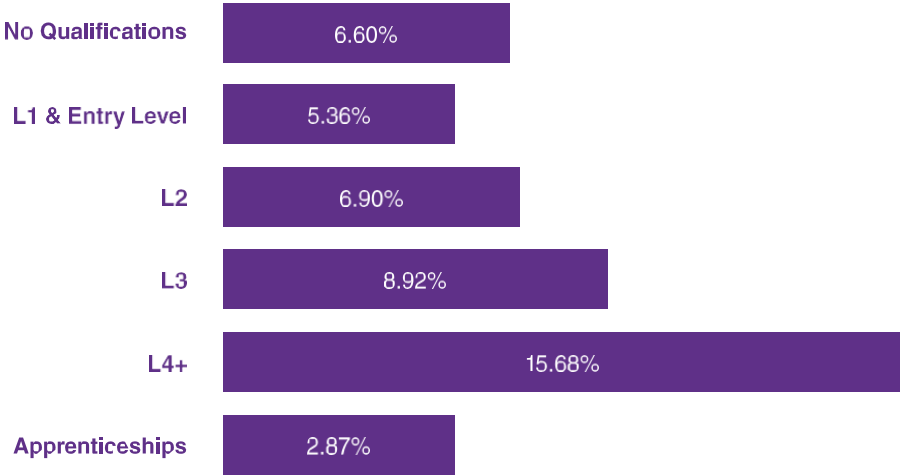
Thanet has the highest rate of youth unemployment in the South East at 9.9%. Unemployment has increased for both males (+5.7%) and females (+10.4%) since last year.

Currently 4% of males and 3% of females are unemployed.



# Qualifications

Around a third of Kent’s population aged 16 to 64 is qualified to at least level 2+. This is lower than both the national average (43%) and the figure for the South East as a whole (45.2%). The percentage of Kent’s population aged 16 to 64 with no qualifications, at 6.6%, is just above the national figure of 6.5% and higher than the South East (5%).

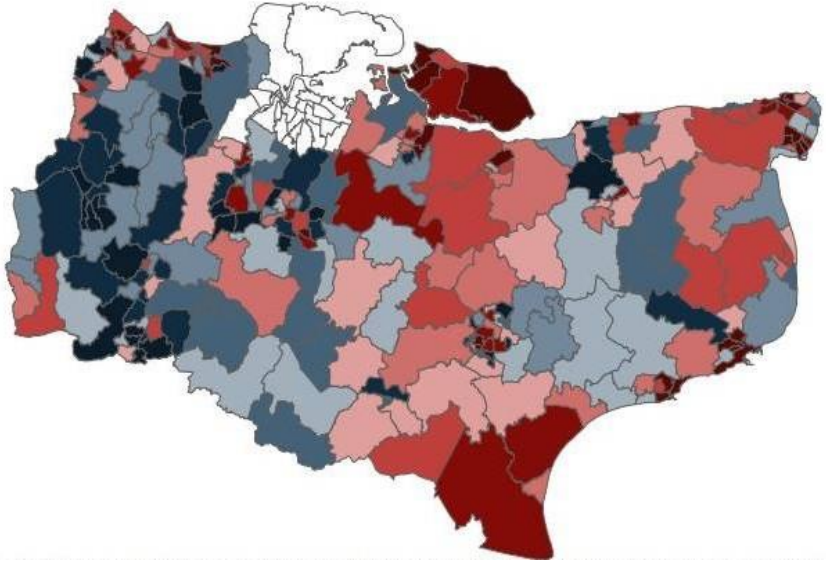


# Deprivation

The number of Kent LSOAs that are within the 10% most deprived LSOAs in England between the IMD2019 and the previous IMD2015 remains at 51. Thanet continues to rank as the most deprived local authority in Kent. Gravesham has experienced the largest decrease in deprivation relative to other areas.

District	Weighted IMD Score Per District	KCC Districts IMD Rank
Thanet	31.31	1
Swale	27.08	2
Folkestone & Hythe	24.15	3
Dover	22.16	4
Gravesham	21.41	5
Dartford	18.81	6
Ashford	18.55	7
Canterbury	16.80	8
Maidstone	16.80	9
Tonbridge & Malling	13.33	10
Sevenoaks	12.44	11
Tunbridge Wells	11.31	12

KCC IMD Deciles for 18+ Population per Ward  
 KCC Wards IMD Decile ● 1 ● 2 ● 3 ● 4 ● 5 ● 6 ● 7 ● 8 ● 9 ● 10



The deciles are based on the ranking of the 271 KCC wards (2019) according to their IMD Score (calculated from LSOAs), with a higher score indicating greater deprivation. The top decile (1) contains the most deprived 10% KCC wards, whereas the bottom decile (10) contains the least deprived 10% KCC wards.

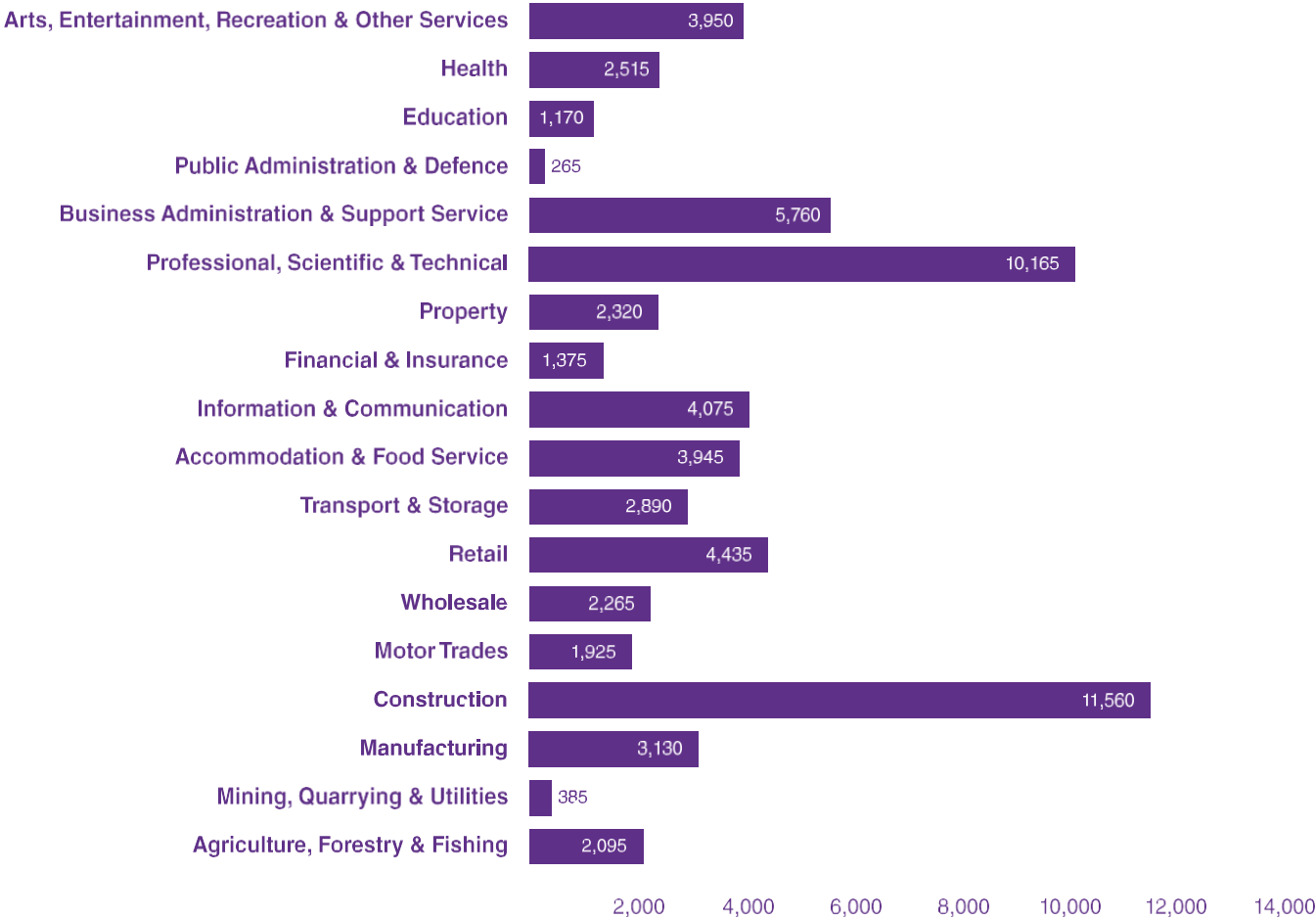


# Business in Kent by industry

There are over 60,000 enterprises in Kent employing 647,300 people. 12.5% of people in Kent were self-employed.

Most enterprises in Kent (89.7%) are classed as micro businesses and employ 9 or fewer people. 9.4% are classed as small (10 to 49 people), 1.4% medium (50 to 249 people) and 0.3% large (250+ people).

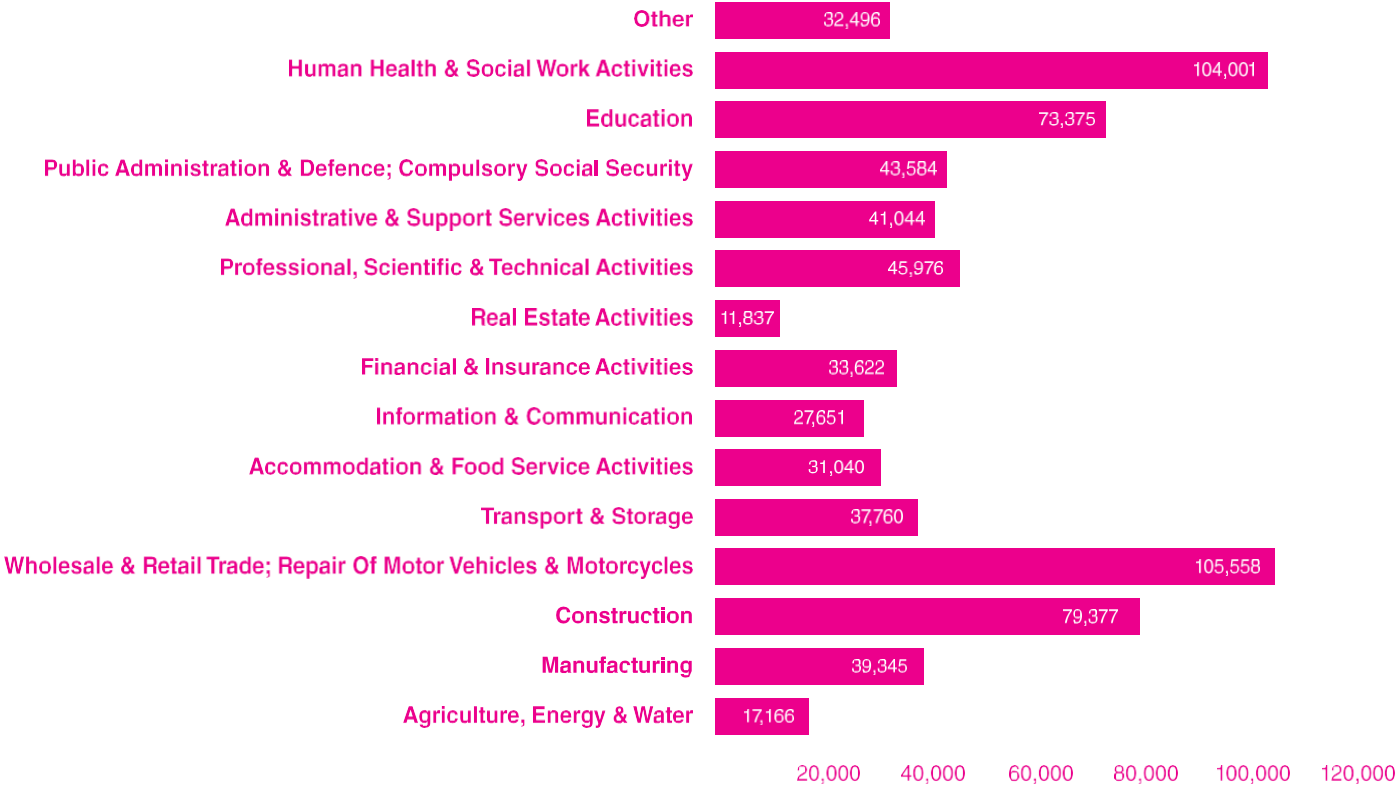
The biggest number and percentage increase in jobs was in Arts, entertainment & recreation (+4,500 jobs, +36%).



# Employees in Kent by industry

Employee jobs in Kent have increased by 1.8%, (+11,200 jobs) over the last year. This is a lower increase than the regional average of +3.1% and the national average of +3.1%.

Kent has a larger proportion of jobs in 8 industrial sectors than seen nationally. The biggest differences were in wholesale and retail trade (Kent 16.3%, GB 13.9%).



## Broadband in Kent

The average internet speed in Kent is 114Mbps, this is 1% lower than the UK average (116 Mbps.) The median download speed is 56 Mbps, 8% lower than the UK median (60 Mbps). The average upload speed is 18 Mbps, which is 0.89% lower than the UK average. Most people's internet connections are rated 'fast', however, 30% of the population are considered to have 'slow' or 'very slow' internet connections.

(Information from Fair Internet Report 2024)

## Skills Demand

At national level, The Growth Plan 2022 sets out new measures for economic growth including helping the unemployed into work and those in jobs secure better paid work.

The Skills White Paper (January 2021) set out how further education will reform so it supports people to get the skills the economy needs. Focusing post-16 skills on this core mission will increase productivity, support growth industries and give individuals opportunities to progress in their career.

At local level, The Kent and Medway Economic Framework set out three overarching objectives to support the development of an economy that is more "productive, sustainable and inclusive". In 2023 the Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan was launched and identified the following sectors key to Kent & Medway skills needs:

Construction	Manufacturing & Engineering	Fresh Food & Food Production	Health and Social Care	Education
--------------	-----------------------------	------------------------------	------------------------	-----------

Alongside these, the sectors Transport & Logistics and Creative Industries will have future skills needs.

These skills are principally focused on employers' requirements, however, social, technological and policy change will drive demand for new skills across the economy. Two main transformational changes were identified:

**Decarbonisation:** the UK's commitment to net zero carbon emissions by 2050 is a key driver of investment in low carbon technologies. This will impact the whole economy: ultimately, all businesses will need to become low carbon businesses and therefore, developing skills associated with decarbonisation will be key.

**Digitalisation:** with rapid advances in digital technology and advanced digital capabilities, digital skills are a priority, with the need to ensure digital skills are embedded across the board and to improve digital skills within the existing workforce.

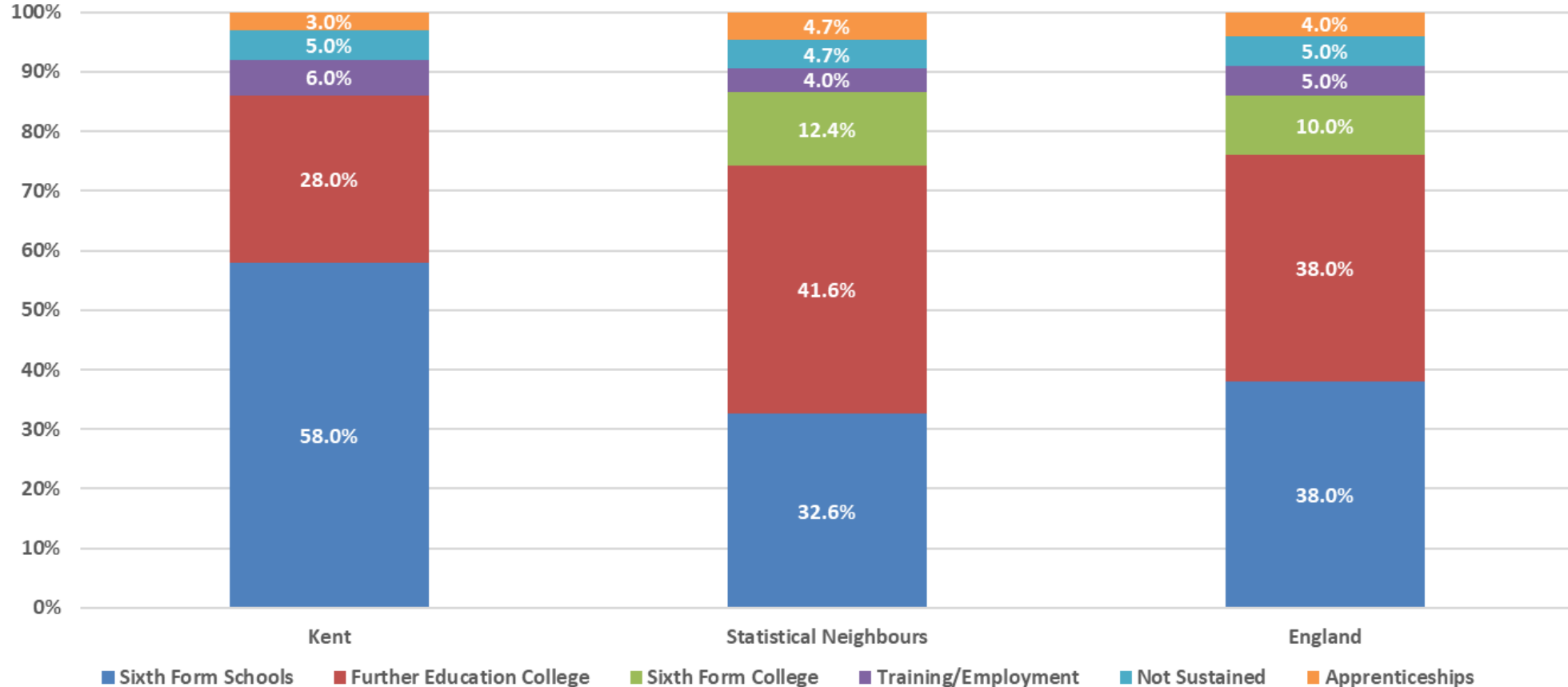
## Kent and Medway Economic Framework

:

- To support the Kent economy to be resilient and successfully adapt to the challenges and opportunities it faces over the coming years, work with partners to develop a skills system for Kent that delivers skills that are resilient to changing workforce needs and opportunities and supports people to higher level skills.
- Kent & Medway Employment Task Force oversees the Local Skills Improvement Plan for Kent and Medway

# The Kent Cohort – Where they study post-16

KS4 Destinations (2019)



# The Kent Cohort – Where they study by attainment level

(Source: SCA Cohort Analysis)

Average GCCSE Grade	Destination - February Year 12							Total
	School	College	Apprenticeship	Employment	Training	Unemployed	Other	
1	9.2%	59.3%	5.9%	6.5%	7.9%	7.7%	3.5%	100.0%
2	15.6%	61.3%	7.4%	4.1%	6.1%	3.5%	1.9%	100.0%
3	22.5%	60.5%	8.7%	2.3%	2.8%	1.3%	1.8%	100.0%
4	44.6%	43.4%	7.0%	1.1%	1.4%	0.7%	1.8%	100.0%
5	71.6%	21.8%	3.6%	0.7%	0.6%	0.4%	1.2%	100.0%
6	88.4%	8.7%	1.5%	0.2%	0.1%	0.0%	1.0%	100.0%
7	96.6%	2.0%	0.1%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	1.1%	100.0%
8	97.8%	0.8%	0.4%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1.0%	100.0%
9	98.7%	0.8%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.4%	100.0%

## 6<sup>th</sup> Form in Kent

- Approximately 60% of the cohort.
- Selective – almost exclusively A levels.
- Non selective – IBCP, A levels, Applied Generals.
- Almost exclusively Level 3.
- Mixed careers support.

## Challenges / Actions

### Challenges:

- Government's qualifications reform could radically alter sixth forms.
- Some students could be left without an offer.
- 

### Actions:

- Improve links with local employers.
- Support for the Careers and Enterprise Company.
- Lobbying for applied general (BTEC etc) qualifications.



# Kent's Training Providers - countywide

Total number of providers for Kent		
	Number of Providers	Yearly Difference
18/19	42	
19/20	19	-23
20/21	25	+6
21/22	24	-1
22/23	20	-4

## Kent's FE Colleges

- Mainly Vocational – focused on progression into work.
- Much higher % of students studying for Level 2 and below.
- Very varied offer across the county – different specialisms.
- Main deliverers of T-levels.
- 2 campuses out of 12 now offer A-levels

# KCC Community Learning and Skills (CLS) Strategic Aims

Support  
the Kent  
economy

Support the most  
vulnerable children  
and families in our  
county

Promote healthy,  
creative, and  
active  
communities

Offer an  
inclusive  
curriculum which  
widens  
participation

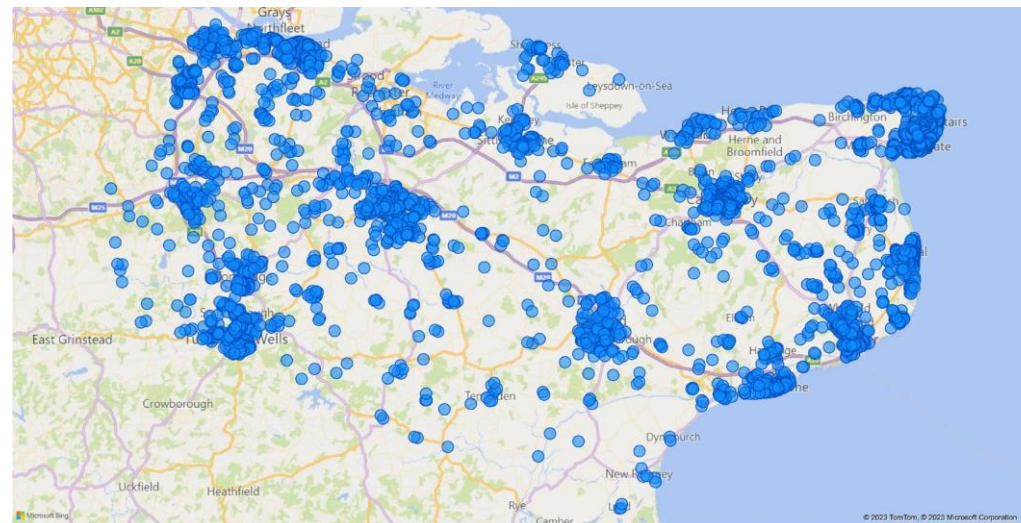
# CLS deliver from 16 main centres across the County.

As well as from community venues, children's centres, schools and faith centres.



- 1. Ashford
- 2. Broadstairs
- 3. Canterbury
- 4. Dartford
- 5. Deal
- 6. Dover
- 7. Folkestone
- 8. Gravesend
- 9. Maidstone
- 10. Margate
- 11. Sevenoaks
- 12. Sheppey
- 13. Sittingbourne
- 14. Tenterden
- 15. Tonbridge
- 16. Tunbridge Wells

## Spread of learners by postcode



# KCC Community Learning and Skills: 2024-25

## Strategic Priority and Aims

## Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills

### Strategic Priority 1: Support the Kent Economy

### Framing Kent's Future (2022-26): Levelling Up Kent:

Increase delivery of Study Programmes for Young People across Kent, including those with EHCPs and UASC, to reduce NEETs and provide positive progression into FE or employment. Offer high quality sub-contracted delivery where appropriate (subject to Cabinet decision).

To support the Kent economy to be resilient and successfully adapt to the challenges and opportunities it faces over the coming years, work with partners to develop a skills system for Kent that delivers skills that are resilient to changing workforce needs and opportunities and supports people to higher level skills.

Strategic Priority and Aims (2)

Contribution towards National, Regional and Local  
Priorities for Learning and Skills

## Pathways for All

- Make a concerted effort to improve the outcomes for young people from our post-16 provision
- Enable a wider range of provision to be locally accessible
- Improve provision below Level 2 and provide good pathways into further learning at higher levels
- Support young people's mental health

# KCC Community Learning and Skills: 2024-25

## Strategic Priority and Aims

## Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills

### Strategic Priority 2: Family Learning

Utilising Tailored Learning funding, in conjunction with other KCC departments, schools and children's centres, deliver a programme of family learning to increase parents/carers' skills, their understanding of how their children are educated and appropriate parenting. Increase the number of courses which support understanding of particular Special Educational Needs and/or Disabilities (SEND). Increase the number of men accessing courses.

### New models of care and support

To support the most vulnerable children and families in our county, ensuring our social work practice supports manageable caseloads, reflective learning, joined up safeguarding and effective corporate parenting arrangements.

# KCC Community Learning and Skills: 2024-25

## Strategic Priority and Aims

## Contribution towards National, Regional and Local Priorities for Learning and Skills

### Strategic Priority 3: Health and Well-being

### Framing Kent's Future (2022-26): Levelling Up Kent:

Utilising Tailored Learning funding, work with Public Health and other relevant local partners to increase health, wellbeing and resilience outcomes for Kent's residents.

KCC Priority: Infrastructure for Communities and Public Health Framework

Working with our partners to hardwire a preventative approach into improving the health of Kent's population and narrowing health inequalities



## Measurable Outcomes (1)

**250** NEET learners complete Study Programmes which include employability skills, English, Maths and a work experience placement. Positive outcomes include employment, a traineeship, apprenticeship or a college placement.

**55** learners with EHCPs will complete Supported Internships, including appropriate work experience.

**3,000** hard to reach adults will take part in engagement activities as a first step to their employability journey.

**5,000** learners will complete employability programmes which move them closer to, into or up in work.

**500** adult learners with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) will complete courses to develop independence, skills and confidence.

# KCC Community Learning and Skills: 2024-25

## Measurable Outcomes (2)

**2,100** parents, guardians, children and other family members from schools and other community partners, focusing on identified areas of deprivation, benefit from family learning programmes.

1,200 adults benefit from Parenting Courses.

**5,000** learners report a feeling of improved resilience as a result of their courses, helping them to better manage their own wellbeing, and where appropriate performance in the workplace (DWP Retention in Employment).

**350** learners, including older learners, develop Essential Digital Skills and attend other IT courses which reduce isolation, help them access services, develop skills for work and stay safe online.

# Adult Learning (1)

The majority of Adult Learning in Kent is funded by The Education and Skills Funding Agency through what will be called the Adult Skills Fund from new academic year, commencing 1st August 2024. This consists of Funding for Qualifications which is formula funded, and grant funding for 'Tailored Learning' which must meet one of the 7 Primary Purposes below, and does not need a qualification outcome:

Page 145

- Engaging and/or building confidence
- Preparation for further learning
- Preparation for employment
- Improving essential skills (English, ESOL, maths, digital)
- Equipping parents/carers to support children's learning
- Health and well-being
- Developing stronger communities

The overall primary purpose of tailored learning is to support learners into employment and to progress to further learning.

## Adult Learning (2)

### Fully funded learning opportunities for eligible learners aged 19+ include:

- English and maths, up to and including level 2, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have not previously attained a GCSE grade 4 (C), or higher, and/or
- First full qualification at level 2 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and eligible adults aged 23+ who don't hold a full Level 2 and are seeking work, or on a low income presently <£20,319 pa.
- First full qualification at level 3 for individuals aged 19 to 23, and eligible adult aged 23+ who don't hold a full Level 3 and are seeking work, or who hold a level 3 but are unemployed or are on a low wage, are fully funded once, under **NSF Free Courses for Jobs**.
- Essential digital skills qualifications, up to and including level 1, for individuals aged 19 and over, who have digital skills assessed at below level 1.

Note: A learner can only be fully funded for one vocational qualification from the entitlement qualifications list.

## Adult Learning (3)

For 19+, Advanced Learner Loans (ALLs) are available to help with costs of courses at L3 and above, for learners not available for AEB funding.

Sector-based Work Academy Programmes (SWAPs) are designed to help Job Centre Plus claimants build confidence to improve their job prospects and enhance their CV, whilst helping employers in sectors with current local vacancies to fill them.

Other learning opportunities for adults include:

- Apprenticeships
- Skills Bootcamps – courses of up to 16 weeks linked to job outcomes
- Multiply – to improve numeracy confidence and skills for adults who don't hold a L2
- education and training services funded by the Shared Prosperity Fund/HMT Guarantee

## **KCC Adult education**

CLS leads on the delivery of the Department for Education's 'Multiply' programme, working with multiple referral and delivery partners across Kent. Multiply aims to increase the numeracy skills and confidence of ten distinct cohorts of adults without Level 2 qualifications in numeracy.

# Adult Learning - Challenges

- Reduced/reducing range of Level 2 and Level 3 courses
- AEB grant funding not increasing for 25+ years despite cost increases
- Limited rates increases for qualifications
- Provider Advanced Learner Loan allocation not matching demand
- ESF funding ceased

# Apprenticeships

Under 19	19/20		20/21		21/22		22/23	
	Kent	Medway	Kent	Medway	Kent	Medway	Kent	Medway
Immediate (L2)	950	390	680	190	770	230	750	230
Advanced (L3)	630	190	660	250	840	300	900	350
Higher (L4+)	90	30	70	30	160	20	210	60
19 to 24								
Immediate (L2)	590	430	590	180	540	230	470	240
Advanced (L3)	970	350	1220	440	1230	440	1240	410
Higher (L4+)	480	100	510	90	760	150	800	420
25+								
Immediate (L2)	870	250	800	230	800	240	530	180
Advanced (L3)	1690	370	1760	410	1900	410	1830	420
Higher (L4+)	1330	280	1690	350	1820	420	2020	400



# Apprenticeships in Kent National Comparison

Age	Kent	National
Under 19	+5%	+0.003%
19-24	-0.5%	-7%
25+	-4%	-3%

# KCC Apprenticeships: Key Statistics (1)

Over 1,000 KCC staff have accessed apprenticeship training since the introduction of the Apprenticeship Levy  
474 (46%) accessing level 2 and level 3 training.  
16% new apprentices  
22% ages 16 -25 yrs

169 staff have accessed apprenticeship training for Adult Social Care  
51 staff for Children's Social Work and Early Years provision.

Social Worker Degree Apprentices  
23 graduated in 2023  
32 commenced study in 2023  
11 starters in 2023/24  
10 starting in September 2024.

# KCC Apprenticeships: Key Statistics (2)

KCC shares a portion of its Levy with 125 other employers in Kent supporting 287 employees with apprenticeship training  
212 on Level 2 and Level 3  
231 in Social Care and Early years sectors.

28% of the employees on KCC's apprenticeship program are new recruits  
34% are aged 16-24.

# 204 Apprenticeship Vacancies in Kent as at 8<sup>th</sup> April 2024

Kent and Medway Sector	No. of Apps	Sector	No. of Apps
Business Admin	26	Agriculture, Environmental & animal Care	4
Dental Health	25	Electrotechnical	3
Health & Science	25	Hospitality	3
Engineering, Manufacturing & Design/Draughting	17	Fire Emergency & Security Services	2
Customer Service	15	Furniture	2
Automotive Retail	9	Public Service	2
Food & Drink	9	Retail	2
Hair & Beauty	9	Ambulance Services	1
Bus Coach & HGV	7	Automotive	1
Energy	7	Event Management	1
Travel	7	Financial Services	1
Sales & Marketing	6	Housing	1
Accountancy	5	Land Based Engineering	1
Construction	5	Leadership & Management	1
Digital Industries	5	Logistics & Supply Chain	1
		Surveying	1

# Apprenticeships: Challenges (1)

- Funding / sustainability.
- Increased level of student need.
- No capital funding.

## Apprenticeships: Challenges (2)

- Apprenticeship opportunities, but not necessarily in industries of interest for young people.
- Not all apprenticeship vacancies are advertised through the national apprenticeship service, as employers can choose where to advertise, which means people could miss out.
- Young people unaware of large employers' recruitment cycles as they are different with each employer.
- Smaller employers can struggle with providing the right support to an apprentice and current apprenticeship funding rules confuse employers.
- Government development of apprenticeship standards is L3 or higher which has the potential to disadvantage anyone with low level qualifications.

# Apprenticeships: Actions

- Working with the DFE/ESFA to bring sustainable apprenticeship funding into the County.
- Lobbying for a more sustainable system.
- Need to look at ways to work with employers, apprentices and training providers to improve the successful completion of apprenticeships.
- Relaxation on Maths and English element to support more people into apprenticeships and support Training Providers.
- Have a central point where all apprenticeship vacancies are advertised.
- More flexibility in how the apprenticeship levy is used.

## Key documents

Framing Kent's Future - Our Council Strategy 2022- 2026:

[www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/framing-kents-future](http://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/strategies-and-policies/framing-kents-future)

Pathways for All:

<https://www.kent.gov.uk/education-and-children/college-sixth-form-employment-and-training/kent-16-to-19-review-pathways-for-all>

Kent and Medway Local Skills Improvement Plan:

<https://kentemployersskillsplan.org/kent-medway-lsip-2023/>

Kent and Medway Skills and Employment Group plan:

[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_\\_\\_\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0003/116706/Kent-and-Medway-Employment-Plan.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/____data/assets/pdf_file/0003/116706/Kent-and-Medway-Employment-Plan.pdf)

Public Health Framework:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/public-health-outcomes-framework>

The Growth Plan 2022:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-growth-plan-2022-documents/the-growth-plan-2022-html>

Skills for Jobs: Lifelong Learning for Opportunity and Growth:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/601980f2e90e07128a353aa3/Skills\\_for\\_jobs\\_lifelong\\_learning\\_for\\_opportunity\\_and\\_growth\\_\\_web\\_version\\_.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/601980f2e90e07128a353aa3/Skills_for_jobs_lifelong_learning_for_opportunity_and_growth__web_version_.pdf)

Kent and Medway Economic Partnership:

<https://www.kmep.org.uk/app/uploads/2024/03/Kent-Medway-Economic-Framework-Web-Version-March-2024.pdf>

Multiply Prospectus:

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/1068822/Multiply\\_Investment\\_Prospectus.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/1068822/Multiply_Investment_Prospectus.pdf)

CLS Ofsted report 2020:

<https://reports.ofsted.gov.uk/provider/42/52836>

## Contact us

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[www.communitylearningandskills.co.uk](http://www.communitylearningandskills.co.uk)

[www.kentadulteducation.co.uk](http://www.kentadulteducation.co.uk)

[www.kenttrainingandapprenticeships.co.uk](http://www.kenttrainingandapprenticeships.co.uk)

**COMMUNITY  
LEARNING  
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apprenticeships





From: Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director, Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee  
14 May 2024

Subject: **District Visits Programme**

Classification: **Unrestricted**

**Past Pathway of Paper:** None

**Future Pathway of Paper:** None

**Electoral Division:** All

**Summary:** This report outlines the outcome of the recent visit to Maidstone district as part of this programme and key issues raised during the visit as well as potential future visits.

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member on the future visits programme.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In 2017 Members of this Cabinet Committee agreed that officers arrange a programme of informal visits to Kent districts. The objective was to provide an opportunity for Cabinet Committee Members to gain an understanding of the economic development, regeneration, community and infrastructure opportunities and challenges within each of the Kent districts.
- 1.2 This report outlines the programme of future visits to Kent districts in 2024 and a proposed new formalised internal monitoring process for key issues raised during these visits.

## 2. The visit to Maidstone

- 2.1 The details of the visit are summarised in Appendix 1 of this report.
- 2.2 The key priorities for Maidstone Borough Council are:

1. Employment Land developments such as:

- Maidstone Innovation Centre,
- Woodcut Farm (LOC8)
- Former Sygenta Works (Yalding Enterprise Park)

2. The adoption of the proposed Local Plan with key features being:

- Plan for long term sustainable growth
- Coordinated delivery of new homes & jobs to support population growth

3. Economic Vision: By 2030 Maidstone will excel as the 'Business Capital of Kent' via five strategic priorities:

- Open for business
- Greener more productive economy
- A thriving rural economy
- Inclusive growth
- Destination Maidstone

4. Borough wide improvements via UK Prosperity Fund and Rural Prosperity Fund:

- Maidstone Town Centre: lift the tone of the town centre to make it a thriving place for projects and events.
- Rural areas within the borough by supporting and improving community infrastructure

4. Housing provision via:

- 1,000 Affordable Homes Programme
- MBC Housing working with Golding Homes
- 10year plan to build 1000 homes directly as a £200m investment.

2.3 The main asks of KCC from the visit were:

- KCC to confirm the future of the Adult Education Centre. KCC to advise MBC that the service formerly at St Faiths Centre has now moved to Oakwood House.
- Continue to work in partnership with KCC on key buildings such as Oakwood House and also Sessions House as a heritage anchor building.
- Further One Public Estate opportunities – new developments for disabled/elderly via joint ventures.
- Joint funding bids/opportunity for Joint Venture with KCC on downsizing for older people
- Leveraging CIL & S106: sites for new uses in the town centre and cooperation with KCC to ensure KCC 106 CIL money is spent.

2.4 These asks are to be reported at the next available meetings of:

- Growth & Communities Divisional Management Team
- Highways & Transportation Divisional Management Team

to determine a response to Maidstone Borough Council and escalated, if required to Growth, Environment & Transportation Corporate Management Team for a response.

The initial response will be provided at the next meeting of the Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee meeting.

2.5 An overview of the borough and the itinerary for the visit and are provided as Appendices 2 and 3 respectively.

2.6 The numbers of Members attending this visit was low. There were 19 confirmed attendees ahead of the visit with 6 attending on the day.

### 3. Programme of Further Visits

- 3.1 Further Member visits to Kent districts are being arranged in collaboration with district and borough officers. The format for each visit involves a day-long tour of the principal economic development, regeneration, community and infrastructure within each district. The content of each visit is principally determined by the district council, but key county council initiatives or aspects may also be included.
- 3.2 The visits programme for 2024 is being planned to include visits to Gravesham, Dartford and Swale.
- 3.3 The Committee has in the past visited Swale, Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe, Dover, Dartford, Tunbridge Wells, Gravesham, Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling, Sevenoaks and Thanet as well as the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation.
- 3.4 These visits will be continued for a new cycle following Committee's recommendation to the Cabinet Member.
- 3.5 As agreed by the Committee, should places be available, invitations are extended to the Chair and Members of the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee, the Cabinet Member and Deputy Cabinet Member for Community & Regulatory Services and then all Members.

### 4. Financial Implications

- 4.1 The cost of coach hire is approximately £525 per visit. The visits facilitate closer partnership working between the County Council and the District Councils and are a very cost-effective way of connecting key decision makers across the different authorities.

### 5. Recommendation

**Recommendation:** The Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report and make any recommendations to the Cabinet Member on the future visits programme.

### 6. Contact details

Report Author

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**Highlights of the visit to Maidstone Borough Council:**

**In attendance:**

**Maidstone Borough Council:**

Leader Of Maidstone Borough Council Cllr David Burton  
Paul Cooper Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development

Officers

Alison Broom	Chief Executive
William Cornall	Director of Regeneration and Place
Angela Woodhouse	Director of Strategy, Insight & Governance
Chris Inwood	Economic Development Manager
Sarah Tobias	Innovation Centre Manager

**Kent County Council:**

Members of Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee (GEDCCC).  
Members of Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee (ETCC)

Avtar Sandhu	(Chair GEDCCC)
David Brazier	(Vice Chair GEDCCC)
Derek Crow-Brown	
Rosalind Blinks	
Mark Hood	

Attendance by other Members:  
Paul Cooper

**Officers:**

Steve Samson	(Interim Head of Economy)
Rob Hancock	(Programme Manager, Strategic Development & Place)

**Welcome**

Leader Of Maidstone Borough Council Cllr David Burton  
Paul Cooper Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member Planning, Infrastructure & Economic Development

Avtar Sandhu Chair of GEDCCC thanked MBC for facilitating the visit on behalf of KCC.

**Main focus of the visit:**

**Employment Land developments**

- Maidstone Innovation Centre
- Woodcut Farm (Loc8)
- Former Sygenta Works (Yalding Enterprise Park)
- Lidsing Garden Community
- Heathlands Garden Community

- Town Centre – Maidstone East & Maidstone Riverside

### **Local Plan – key features**

- Plan for long term sustainable growth
- Coordinated delivery of new homes & jobs to support population growth
- Important to provide sufficient employment sites to ensure sustainable economic growth of the borough
- Local Plan found to be sound by PINS and will be published soon

### **Business**

Economic Vision: By 2030 Maidstone will excel as the ‘Business Capital of Kent’

Five strategic priorities:

- Open for business
- Greener more productive economy
- A thriving rural economy
- Inclusive growth
- Destination Maidstone

Top 4 sectors are Construction; Professional, Scientific and Technical; Transport services and Business Administrative services.

### **The tour of Maidstone Innovation Centre**

The Centre generates income by offering several membership packages through the provision of flexible work space:

- Office Space from 141 sq ft
- Hot Desk & Co-working Studio
- Conference & Event Space
- Breakout Areas

Currently supports over a total of 52 businesses made up of 32 inhouse businesses & 20 virtual businesses, providing employment for 200 individuals.

### **Site visit to LOC8**

Part of the afternoon site visits included this logistics and warehousing site on a former 450 acre farm site with phase two in planning for delivery.

### **Maidstone Town Centre**

#### Approach:

Lift the tone of the town centre to make it a thriving place for projects and events which is characterised by MBC putting on events so community groups not charged. Mote Park events are charged with the money raised used to support community groups

Aim: Emphasis on re-invigorating the town centre through events and activities as well as supporting rural communities.

Funding: UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.  
Project B- A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting  
Project C - A Community Arts Hub & Maker Space  
Project D - Links from the Town Centre to Lockmeadow

### **Rural areas within the borough**

Aim: Supporting and Improving community infrastructure

Funding: Rural Prosperity Fund

### **Housing provision**

- 1,000 Affordable Homes Programme
- MBC Housing working with Golding Homes
- 10year plan to build 1000 homes directly as a £200m investment.

### **Key Asks of KCC:**

- KCC to confirm future of the Adult Education Centre
- Continue to working in partnership with KCC on key buildings such as Oakwood House and also Sessions House as a heritage anchor building.
- Further One Public Estate opportunities – new developments for disabled/elderly via joint ventures.
  
- Joint funding bids/opportunity for Joint Venture with KCC on downsizing for older people
- Leveraging CIL & S106: sites for new uses in the town centre and cooperation with KCC to ensure KCC 106 CIL money is spent

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### Overview:

- County Town and Business Capital of Kent.
- Strategically located for European and London markets.
- Four motorway junctions on two motorways.
- Three central train stations, connect to London, Ashford, Tonbridge and Medway.
- Good housing
- Good schools and Further Education.
- Quality retail and leisure offer.
- Outstanding green space and open countryside.
- Maidstone has a Business Improvement District in shopping area with a surcharge on retailers for cleaning and events. Population
- Population increase 44,800 people = 13,200 jobs 19,669 homes

### Economic Vision:

By 2030 Maidstone will excel as the 'Business Capital of Kent' defined by a strong entrepreneurial spirit, unrivalled urban-rural economic offer with opportunities for all of our communities.

### Five strategic priorities

- **Open for business:** Maximising our economic role at the heart of Kent and a strong public sector base to create a positive and entrepreneurial environment in which businesses can grow and thrive
- **Greener more productive economy:** Diversifying our economic base and boosting productivity by growing high value activity, including existing strengths in life sciences and new opportunities for clean growth.
- **A thriving rural economy:** Realising the potential of our rural assets (such as sector strengths in viticulture and tourism) and overcoming barriers to growth through enhanced infrastructure and connectivity.
- **Inclusive growth:** Taking an inclusive approach to growth to ensure that all of our communities can benefit from economic success and prosperity.
- **Destination Maidstone:** Re-imagining Maidstone's town centre as a vibrant, mixed-use destination with a welcoming economy befitting a modern county town.

### Local Plan – key features

- Plan for long term sustainable growth.
- Coordinated delivery of new homes & jobs to support population growth.
- Important to provide sufficient employment sites to ensure sustainable economic growth of the borough.

### Maidstone Town Centre

### Approach:

Lift the tone of the town centre to make it a thriving place for projects and events which is characterised by MBC putting on event's and so community groups not charged. Mote Park events are charged with the money raised used to support community groups.

Aim:

Empasis on re-invigorating the town centre through events and activities as well as supporting rural communities.

Funding: UK Shared Prosperity Fund

Project A - Building Pride in Place through promotion of the Town Centre and Events.

Actions taken:

- Creative Community Fund
- Festive trail event
- Literature Festival
- Digital and Physical Trail
- Events expertise to develop bespoke events
- Event advertisement
- Borough Insight
- Promotional video for events and businesses

For 24/25:

- Launch of digital and physical sculpture trail in the Town Centre
- Creative Community Fund
- Borough Insight
- Arts Carnival
- Partner for Shaun the Sheep trail

Project B- A Safe and Attractive Town Centre achieved through Greening and Lighting

Actions taken:

- Feasibility study and agreement of priorities for greening and lighting

For 24/25:

- Updating MBC's existing lighting infrastructure
- Implementing a digital management system to improve management and maintenance of MBC's lighting infrastructure.
- Projects to enhance safety.
- Projects to elevate the quality of the night time experience with a focus on heritage assets
- Green Pockets in four key areas:
  - Jubilee Square
  - Remembrance Square
  - Gabriel's Hill - Week Street junctions with Brewer Street,
  - St Faiths Street and Union Street

Project C - A Community Arts Hub & Maker Space

Action taken:

- Feasibility Study and Business Case

For 24/25:

- Creative Maker Space created in Granada House

### Project D - Links from the Town Centre to Lockmeadow

For 24/25:

- Callisthenic Equipment installed by Lockmeadow – linked to project B

### **Rural areas within the borough**

Aim:

Supporting and Improving community infrastructure

Funding: Rural Prosperity Fund

Actions Taken:

- Just over 100k in Awards made
- Staplehurst Free Church
- Teston Parish Council
- Hollingbourne Parish Council
- Boxley Parish Council

For 24/25:

- Over 400K in Awards to:
- The Harrow Pub
- Headcorn Village Hall
- Detling Village Hall
- Chart Sutton PC
- Bearsted District Guide Association
- Langley Village Hall
- Marden Memorial Hall
- Sutton Valence Village Hall

### **Housing**

1,000 Affordable Homes Programme

- MBC Housing with Golding Homes
- 10 year plan to build 1000 homes directly as a £200m investment
- Housing pressures rising
- Stock transfer Council Approved Jan 2022, 10-year project
- Social, Affordable & Market Rent
- Homes England & DLUHC grants
- Not competing with housebuilders or RPs
- Unlocking “market-failure” town centre sites
- All for rent in different guises so will not compete with house owners or housing associations Aims to unlock market failure sites with examples being:
  - Royal Mail/KCC Cantium House site 217 homes proposed
  - Springfield site 107 homes
  - Small brownfield sites Granville Rd, Bath Store and Len House
  -
- Next steps:
  - Senior & Supported housing

- One Public Estate opportunities – new developments for disabled/elderly via joint ventures
- Mixed use schemes
- Joint funding bids/opportunity for JV with KCC on downsizing for older people
- Leveraging CIL & S106: sites for new uses in the town centre and cooperation with Kent County Council to ensure KCC 106 CIL money is spent

## **Businesses Statistics**

- 8,000 VAT or PAYE businesses.
- 85.7%, employing between 0 and 9 people.
- Top 4 sectors Construction, Professional, Scientific and Technical, Transport services, and Business Administrative services.
- Enterprise birth & survival rates above Kent and England.
- Higher levels of self –employed than Kent and England.
- Larger employers include:
  - Maidstone Studios
  - KIMS
  - Marley
  - Burtons
  - Scarab, BG
  - MidKent College
  - KCC
  - NHS Maidstone & Tunbridge Wells Trust

## **Key strategic sites for employment**

- Woodcut Farm (Loc8)
- Former Sygenta Works (Yalding Enterprise Park)
- Lidsing Garden Community
- Heathlands Garden Community
- Town Centre – Maidstone East & Maidstone Riverside

## Examples:

### **Investment in SME: Maidstone Innovation Centre:**

The Centre generates income by offering several membership packages through the provision of flexible work space:

- Office Space from 141 sq ft
- Hot Desk & Co-working Studio
- Conference & Event Space
- Breakout Areas

### **Occupancy**

- All businesses need to meet the requirements of the planning conditions being directly related to the medical sector.
- Coming quarter the centre will exceeds its forecasted occupancy rate of 51% from the original business plan to 67%.
- Currently supports over a total of 52 businesses made up of 32 inhouse businesses & 20 virtual businesses, providing employment for 200 individuals.

- Successfully completed the European Regional Development Fund Project. The Centre will be used as an example of Good Practice.
- Won an award for “Best Architectural Design” at the South East Construction Awards.
- Created an ecosystem as the Hub for MedTech, Life Science and Healthcare.
- Welcomed over 10 new businesses with a 100% retention on current tenants.
- Facilitated over 300 meetings and events. 65% repeat bookings
- Meeting Hub for health care sector.60% of bookings from NHS

Supporting KMEP via Growing Kent Kent and Medway’s Economic Framework’s 5 Ambitions:

- Enable innovative, productive and creative businesses
- Widen opportunities and unlock talent
- Secure resilient infrastructure for planned, sustainable growth
- Place economic opportunity at the centre of community wellbeing and prosperity
- Create diverse, distinctive and vibrant places and Medway’s Life Science and Med Tec sector.

**LOC8 at Junction 8 of the M20** - part of the afternoon site visits included this logistics and warehousing site on a former 450 acre farm site with phase two in planning for delivery.

**Yalding Enterprise Park** - located on the former Syngenta site in the south-west of the borough. A rural area brownfield old chemical works. Phase 1 comprising 20 units including dirty trades and both leasehold and freehold as freehold makes it more attractive to occupiers.

***Information sources: Maidstone Borough Council***

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## Visit to Maidstone 11 March 2024

### ITINERARY

09.45 Depart from County Hall

10.00 Arrive at Maidstone Innovation Centre

10.15 Welcome and Introductions

CLlr David Burton, Leader, Maidstone Borough Council.

10.20 Presentations on Key Priorities

Priority 1 - Town Centre

Priority 2 - Employment land to accompany housing and population growth.

Priority 3 - Development opportunities and viability issues.

- Introduction to Maidstone's economy. **Karen Britton/Chris Inwood.**
- How MBC is contributing to delivery through brownfield site regeneration and future development (Maidstone East – 1,000 affordable homes/development opportunities) **William Cornall.**
- UKSPF Investment Strategy – to include the rural UKSPF scheme **Angela Woodhouse.**
- Maidstone Innovation Centre (MIC) presentation. **Chris Inwood/Sarah Tobias.**

11:15 Q&A

11:30 Tour of Maidstone Innovation Centre **Chris Inwood/Sarah Tobia/Sophie O'Sheen.**  
(3 groups simultaneously)

13:00 Afternoon Coach Tour **Chris Inwood**

- Kent Medical Campus
- Eclipse Park
- Loc 8 (Meet the commercial agent to view a unit)

15:00 Coach returns to Maidstone Innovation Centre and drop off.

15.10 Coach returns to County Hall and drop off.

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From: Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member, Economic Development  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development & Communities Cabinet Committee  
14 May 2024

Subject: **No Use Empty (NUE)**

Classification: Unrestricted

Electoral Division: All

Kent County Council (KCC) launched the No Use Empty (NUE) initiative in 2005 in East Kent. Following the success of NUE in East Kent, the initiative was rolled out across Kent in 2008/09 and is now delivered by KCC in partnership with all 12 district and borough councils.

The primary aim of the initiative is to improve the physical urban environment in Kent by bringing long-term empty properties back into use as quality housing accommodation through a range of interventions.

To achieve this aim, NUE operates a loan scheme providing short term secured loans registered as a first or second charge. On repayment of the loan, funds are recycled to the next project. In addition to this NUE is helping to deliver increased Council Tax receipts and collection of Business Rates.

The purpose of this report is to provide Cabinet Committee with an update on NUE's performance to date following the key decision as recorded 15 March 2023, including the £24m Derelict Conversion/New Builds NUE Scheme (investing the Council's cash balances in accordance with KCC's Treasury Management Strategy) which is helping contribute to accelerating the delivery of good quality housing in the County.

**Recommendation:**

Members are asked to comment on and note the report.

**1. Introduction**

1. 1. NUE is the longest running empty property initiative in the country winning several national awards including UK Housing Award for Regeneration (2018) and shortlisted for Council of the Year in the UK Housing Awards (2020 and 2022).
1. 2. This report provides an update on the various elements of the NUE scheme including:
  - The NUE Empty Property Initiative (Capital Programme)
  - The NUE New Build Scheme (KCC Treasury Management Investment Strategy)
  - The NUE residential and commercial schemes funded by Growing Places Funding
  - Future plans

**2. Recent and Ongoing Achievements**

- 2.1 NUE team member and former apprentice Jake Body picked up the "Rising Star Award" - sponsored by Fraser and Fraser at the national Empty Homes Network Conference held

in Birmingham on 24 May 2023. Jake has also completed his Chartered Institute of Housing Level 3 qualification in March 2024.

- 2.2 Meridian TV featured NUE as the headline news item on 6 March 2024. This was in relation to national empty homes week. Two projects in Dover were featured including interviews with the owner and our Strategic Programme Manager. This was the first time Meridian had covered NUE and shown in a positive light.
- 2.3 NUE has a proven record returning 8,185 long-term empty properties back into use across the County to the decent home standard (as of December 2023). Based on performance over the last 10 years this is on average 486 long-term empty properties back into use per annum. Long-term means those dwellings that have been unoccupied or unfurnished for over six months.
- 2.4 A summary of empty homes brought back in to use by district is at Appendix 1.

### **3. Capital Programme (NUE Empty Property Initiative)**

- 3.1 As NUE has evolved we have introduced interest bearing loans for larger empty property projects which require a greater financial support or to those small developers who return to the scheme with new projects. The interest rate reflects the increased risk of these loans and is used to provide for a small element of bad debt risk as well as assisting with the administration costs of the scheme. The loans continue to be offered interest free to first time applicants and an application fee is charged.
- 3.2 To date, NUE has awarded £59.7m in short term secured loans and has levered in £44.4m from the public/private sectors, giving a total investment of £104.1m across Kent. All loans are subject to a risk assessment and secured as a 1st or 2nd charge and offered typically over a three-year period. 70% of loans are secured as a 1<sup>st</sup> charge and 30% are secured as a 2<sup>nd</sup> charge.
- 3.3 The investment has helped generate new KCC Council Tax receipts with an annual value of £1,479,090.
- 3.4 Based on calculations, creating 71 new homes per year from larger redundant buildings could increase new Council Tax receipts to £2,169,588 by 2029-30.
- 3.5 A summary of investment by district and Council Tax calculations is at Appendix 2.
- 3.6 There is a healthy pipeline of projects for the financial year 2024-25 for which there is an indicative allocation of £7.45m (based on repayment of loans due)
- 3.7 NUE has previously secured funding from Growing Places Fund (GPF) for both residential and commercial loan schemes administered by the South East Local Enterprise Partnership (SELEP). Based on calculations, creating 71 new homes per year from larger redundant buildings could increase new Council Tax receipts to £2,169,588 by 2029-30.
- 3.8 Following the closure of SELEP, KCC will explore the possibility of submitting a potential NUE application as part of future funding rounds to be developed and launched using a retained allocation of GPF recycled loan funds previously administered by SELEP and earmarked for future use in Kent from 2025.

3.9 A summary of NUE projects funded/delivered with GPF Funds is at Appendix 3

#### **4. NUE New Build Scheme (KCC Treasury Management Investment Strategy)**

- 4.1 In addition to the NUE Empty Property Initiative, a new loan product was launched in financial year 20/21 following support from Treasury Management and agreement from the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services.
- 4.2 An initial £12m was allocated to NUE to provide secured, by way of first charge, short-term interest-bearing loans (recycled) to developers of derelict/vacant sites, to primarily create new build residential units in Kent and to generate a return on investment for KCC and for NUE to cover its operational costs.
- 4.3 The allocation was quickly exhausted due to the unprecedented demand for the new loan product. Incremental increases in subsequent years of £4m agreed with Treasury and the recycling of loans already repaid now means that NUE has a current allocation of £24m as agreed by the KCC Treasury service in 2022.
- 4.4 To date, NUE has approved loans to the value of £33.8m to support 232 new build residential homes (£32m) and 24 business units (£1.78m).
- 4.5 A total of 122 new build residential homes and 24 business units have been completed. Following the sale or re-financing of these properties, NUE has received £15m in loan repayments to 31st March 2024.
- 4.6 The residential projects range from single houses, bungalows, 2-3 houses and apartment blocks which are spread across 8 of the 12 Kent districts, primarily in our coastal regions.
- 4.7 Two projects which NUE funded have been acquired by a district council (Dover 8 units and Folkestone & Hythe 14 units) to increase their own housing stock and make the units available to those on their respective housing waiting lists at an affordable rent.
- 4.8 NUE worked with Tridax Limited to support the construction of twenty-four business units at land lying to the east of Honeywood Parkway and land adjoining Honeywood Parkway, Whitfield, Dover. The project commenced in April 2022 and is now complete.
- 4.9 This flagship NUE project is making a positive contribution to the economic recovery of Dover and has attracted much interest. Demand from local businesses was such that all the units, except for three units being retained by the developer have been sold. The loan and interest were repaid in full by 12 January 2024.
- 4.10 It is hoped that the business unit model can be replicated and provide a template for the regeneration and development of other sites in the county which could be considered for such investment, and which would respond to ongoing demand from local companies for bespoke industrial units that provide suitable facilities to enable firms to develop and grow, also leading to job creation.
- 4.11 A selection of new build projects including Honeywood Parkway is at Appendix 4.

#### **5. Return on Investment (KCC Treasury Management Strategy)**

- 5.1 The interest rate charged to NUE by KCC Treasury is 4.5% (October 2023).
- 5.2 The interest is calculated from the date each individual drawdown is made. The difference between the actual interest charged on each individual loan and the amount required by Treasury is used to cover the operational costs of NUE management and administration including legal fees over the lifetime of the initiative. On this basis, the NUE team operates on a cost neutral basis for KCC.
- 5.3 The return on investment paid to Treasury is £940.4k based on £31.3m drawn against loans approved as of March 2024.
- 5.4 The following table shows the projected return on investment in future years based on loans approved to date (calculated at 4.5%). This does not consider new loans as they come on board which would continue to increase the return year on year as we continue to re-cycle the original loans.

<b>Financial Year</b>	<b>Forecast Treasury ROI</b>
FIN YR 24-25	£ 780,772
FIN YR 25-26	£ 816,405
FIN YR 26-27	£ 816,405
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£ 2,413,582</b>

## 6. Revenue

- 6.1 NUE has operated without a dedicated KCC revenue budget allocation since 2020-21.
- 6.2 An administration fee based on the value of the loan is collected from recipients under the main empty property initiative. A typical fee would be £1,500.
- 6.3 The loans offered for new builds which are Treasury funded operate on a different fee scale, currently 1% + VAT of the total sum borrowed. Interest, typically 8% is applied to all loans and collected quarterly or at the end of loan term.
- 6.4 The fee income and interest earned is used to fund all work undertaken by the NUE team and one of KCC's legal services providers for the provision of services associated with the production of loan documentation and discharge of security once loans are repaid.

## 7. NUE Going Forward 2024-25

- 7.1 Bringing long term empty properties back into use is a key method of driving regeneration which not only provides new homes but also new sources of employment within local firms and a sense of community. Empty properties can attract antisocial behaviour and lead to the general degradation of an area so bringing them back into use enhances the built environment in the county.
- 7.2 Wider regeneration initiatives continue to attract high profile investors and funding, This has led to an increase from small and medium sized property developers looking to refurbish empty buildings and turn them into homes, however, in many cases severe dilapidation and an inability to access funding on the open market for renovation costs results in buildings being left empty.

7.3 The recycling loan fund operated by NUE provides working capital to help owners/small developers refurbish/convert empty homes or redundant commercial buildings to provide good quality residential accommodation.

7.4 Demand for empty property loans or new build loans has not diminished. It is not unusual to have at least 10 new enquiries each week. NUE has a steady pipeline of projects covering long term empty property loans and new build loans.

### **7.5 NUE Empty Property Initiative**

7.6 To meet demand, the team is exploring potential funding sources to support:

- £3.5m for the residential empty property scheme and
- £1.5m to provide a third phase of the commercial scheme to bring long term empty shops back into use and assist with town centre regeneration.

7.7 If funding can be secured, this would provide NUE with a total of £5m investment.

7.8 The NUE team will also continue to provide a loan processing service to Southend On Sea City Council (SOSCC) for at least one further year to help deliver their NUE South Essex project to return long term empty commercial properties back into use for residential, alternative commercial or mixed-use purposes.

7.9 All loans are paid out by SOSCC, and the council is responsible for any debt recovery associated with its loans. SOSCC pays KCC per application processed by the NUE team.

### **7.10 NUE New Builds**

7.7 The availability of this loan product is assisting smaller local developers who still find it difficult to access mainstream funding. Bespoke lenders often require a higher rate of interest; greater security; early exit penalty fees; more restrictive lending criteria and delays in being able to administer and process in timescales which are critical to taking projects forward. The NUE loan scheme bridges the gap for many developers between mainstream lenders and bespoke lenders

7.8 The team is exploring potential for flexibility in accessing and potentially increasing the funding KCC Treasury has made available to NUE for new builds in future years. This will ensure NUE is able to offer a fluid “open year-round” approach and not be solely reliant on projects to complete and be repaid before a new project can be funded and works commence.

7.9 This would also give opportunity to increase the return on investment for KCC.

7.10 [Information on pipeline projects is at Appendix 5](#)

## **8 NUE Commercial New Builds**

8.1 NUE also wishes to explore the potential for NUE to internally borrow funds from the Kent & Medway Business Fund (KMBF) to support specific NUE Commercial projects which could potentially provide wider opportunities and benefits as well as generating income, through interest payments, for the KMBF fund managed and administered by KCC.

- 8.2 NUE would propose to borrow funds from the KMBF scheme which are currently allocated for use in future years to provide short term loans secured as a first charge to known developers that NUE have worked with and have a track record for delivery and loan repayment to deliver more business units in other parts of Kent similar to the “Honeywood Park” model.
- 8.3 Any such KMBF funding allocated to support an NUE loan project, would be ring-fenced for an approved time specifically to deliver more business units and for the loan to be repaid back to the KMBF fund to be used in future years.
- 8.4 The standard KMBF business loan scheme could then be offered to those business who are looking to acquire/move into the new business units as startups or expanding or re-locating.
- 8.5 Having access to the KMBF fund would mean that NUE does not need to request KCC Treasury funds to take the new larger commercial projects already identified forward. NUE could concentrate these funds on residential development.

## 9 Recommendation

- 9.1 The Cabinet Committee is asked to comment on and note the report.

## 10 Appendices and background documents:

Appendix 1 - Statistics by District

Appendix 2 - Investment and Council Tax

Appendix 3 - A summary of projects funded/delivered with GPF Funds

Appendix 4 - A selection of new build projects including Honeywood Parkway

Appendix 5 – Information pipeline projects

Background documents:

- Record of key decision: 15 March 2023:  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk:9071/ieDecisionDetails.aspx?ID=2689>
- Source data for Council Tax 2024-25:  
<https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/finance-and-budget/council-tax#tab-1>
- Treasury Investment Strategy Appendix M of the Budget Book 2024-25. Page 140:  
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0012/164010/Budget-Book-2024-25.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0012/164010/Budget-Book-2024-25.pdf)

For more information on projects funded by NUE please view the case studies section of the website: <https://www.no-use-empty.org.uk/category/news/>

## 11 Contact details.

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## Appendix 1

NUE has a proven track record returning 8,185 long-term empty properties back into use across the County to the decent home standard (data to Q3 2023-24)

Q4 data January-March 2024 currently being collated and verified.

Long term empty means those dwellings that have been unoccupied or substantially unfurnished for over six months.

NUE DATA	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09	2009-10	2010-11	2011-12	2012-13	2013-14	2014-15	2015-16	2016-17	2017-18	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24	Total All Years
Ashford	0	0	0	0	0	5	7	0	0	1	2	2	11	1	6	5	1	16	7	64
Canterbury	0	0	0	14	0	0	0	0	4	0	11	0	40	6	10	0	0	8	0	93
Dartford	0	0	0	57	113	98	123	104	104	96	100	97	56	96	86	79	48	72	35	1,364
Dover	16	39	17	27	33	36	33	44	41	32	48	40	30	24	34	43	6	30	12	585
Folkestone & Hythe	52	34	50	26	47	32	34	45	36	29	55	81	84	70	48	78	44	50	35	930
Gravesham	0	0	0	75	56	31	50	54	58	45	34	30	19	13	10	24	9	4	43	555
Maidstone	0	0	0	18	24	29	12	106	99	132	59	39	21	15	53	19	35	30	13	704
Sevenoaks	0	0	0	4	20	20	17	15	27	12	7	16	17	8	17	10	0	26	18	234
Swale	12	14	12	3	33	37	33	63	84	86	71	79	2	45	116	36	97	0	180	1,003
Thanet	68	83	90	92	90	108	117	113	120	119	122	169	138	140	159	161	178	153	58	2,278
Tonbridge & Malling	0	0	0	5	9	5	9	12	18	18	7	14	12	0	0	0	2	3	14	128
Tunbridge Wells	0	0	0	20	13	10	14	27	20	17	22	14	9	28	12	7	8	26	0	247
<b>Total All Districts</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>170</b>	<b>169</b>	<b>341</b>	<b>438</b>	<b>411</b>	<b>449</b>	<b>583</b>	<b>611</b>	<b>587</b>	<b>538</b>	<b>581</b>	<b>439</b>	<b>446</b>	<b>551</b>	<b>462</b>	<b>428</b>	<b>418</b>	<b>415</b>	<b>8,185</b>

Note from 2005-2008, NUE only covered: Dover, Folkestone & Hythe, Swale and Thanet (County wide from 2008-09)

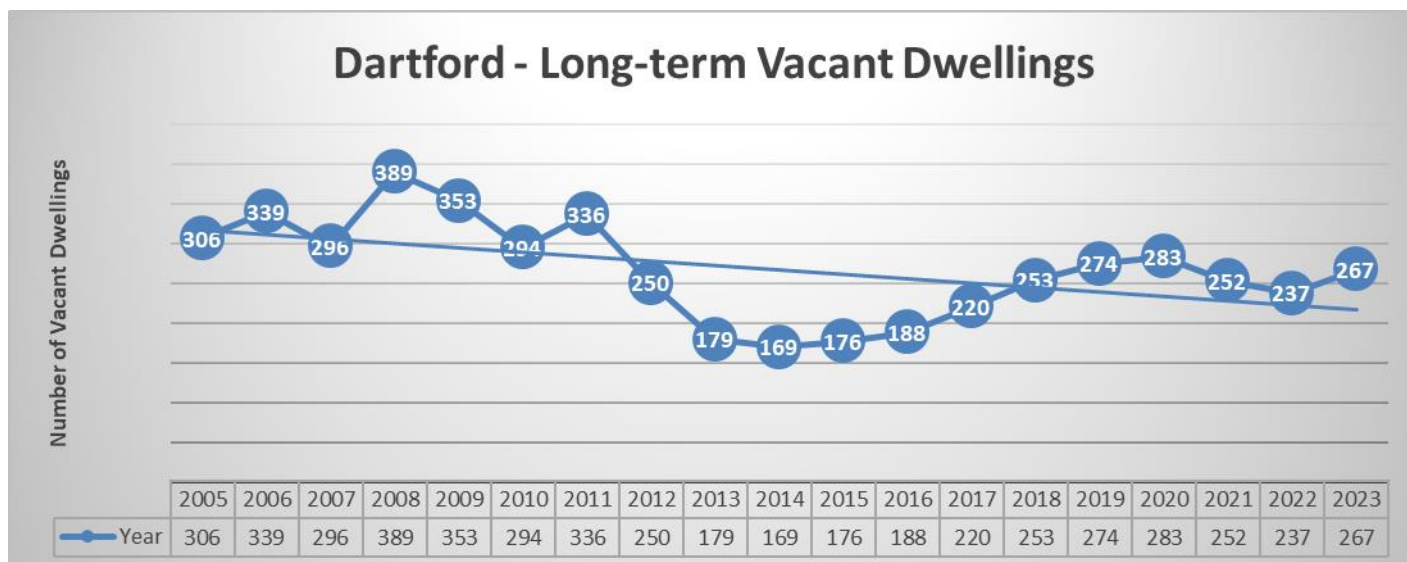
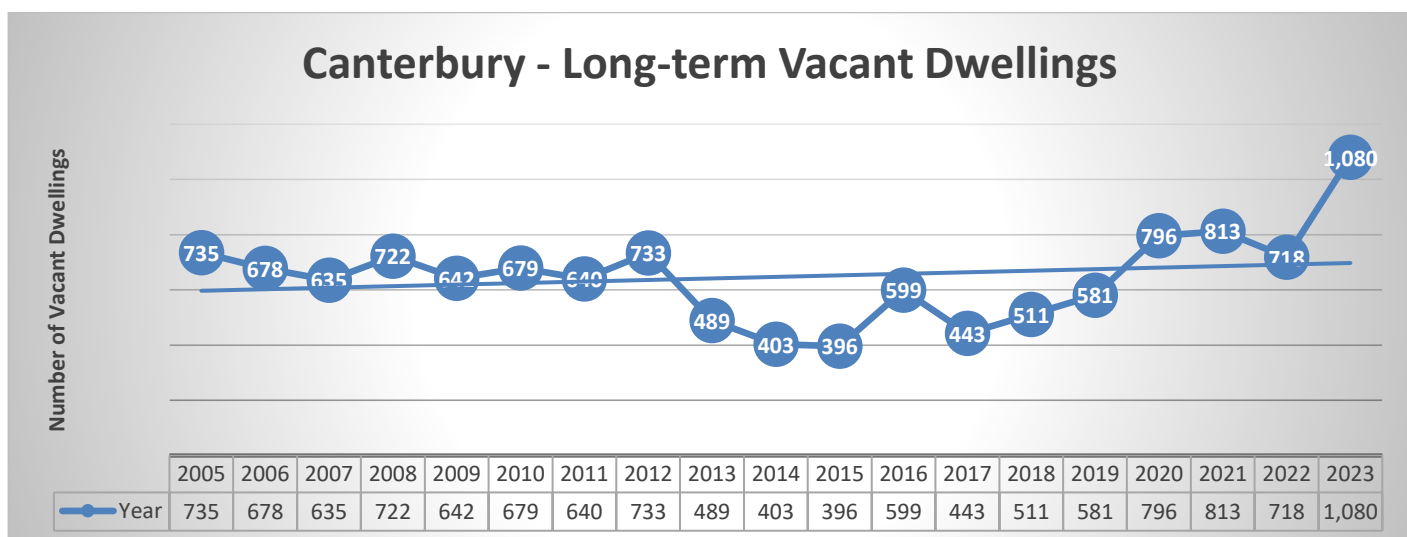
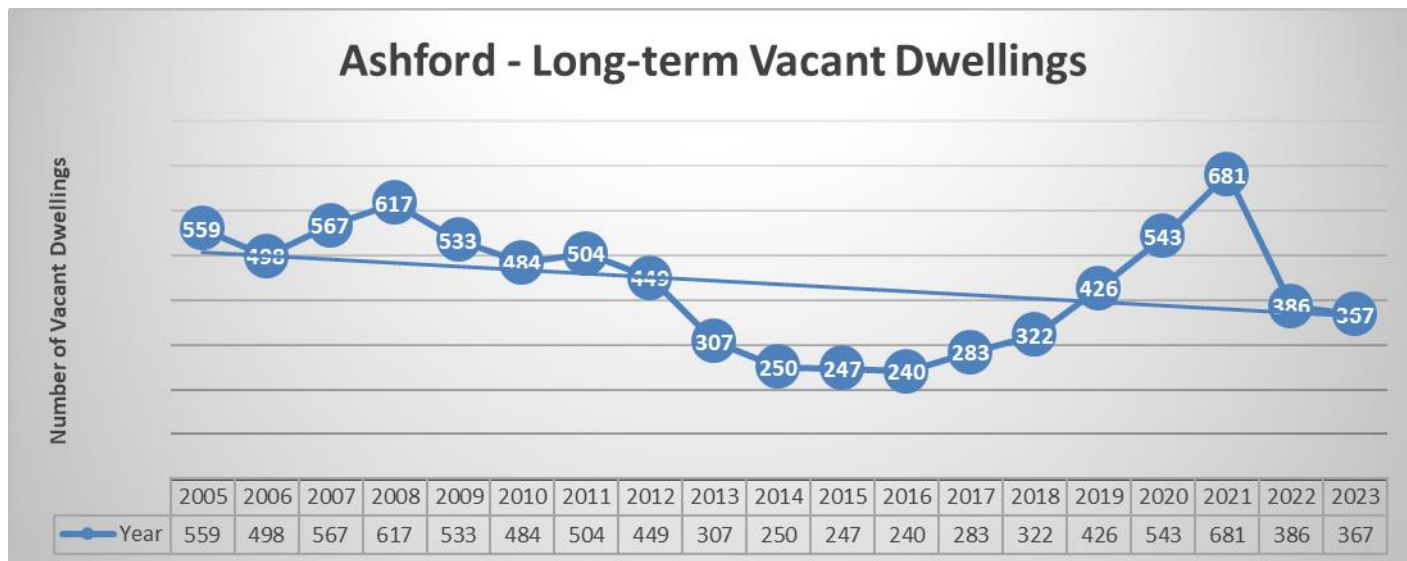
NUE on average is returning 486 long-term empty properties back into use per annum (based on performance over the last 10 years).

Data is provided to NUE Team on a quarterly basis two weeks after the end of the last month in that quarter.

For clarity this excludes investment activity which is focused on new builds.

**All long-term vacant dwellings by local authority district, England, from 2005**  
**Source Data: DCLUC Council Tax Database returns from districts.**

A summary table can be found after the graphical representations by local authority district.





## Dover - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

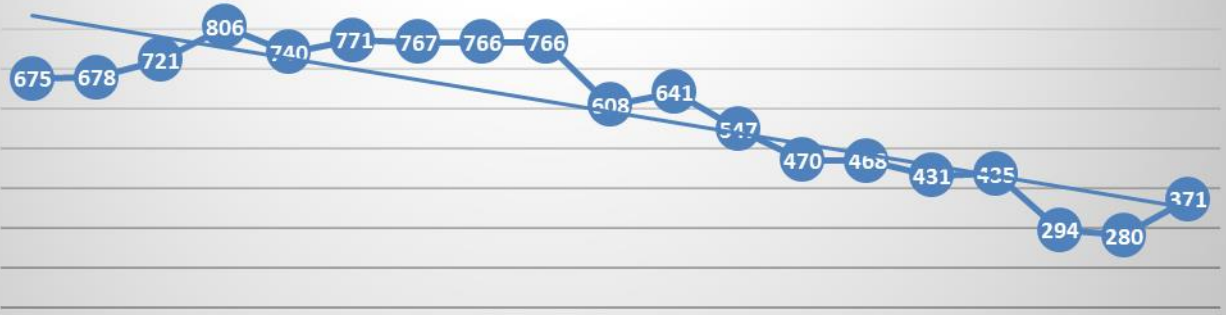
Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	750	743	748	808	952	908	878	725	510	436	478	624	523	471	460	725	601	527	881

## Folkestone & Hythe - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

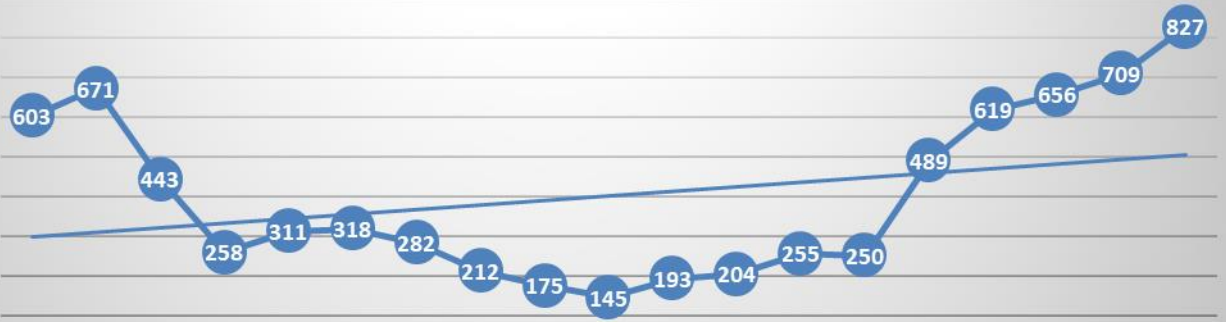
Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	675	678	721	806	740	771	767	766	766	608	641	547	470	468	431	435	294	280	371

## Gravesham - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	603	671	443	258	311	318	282	212	175	145	193	204	255	250	489	619	656	709	827

## Maidstone - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

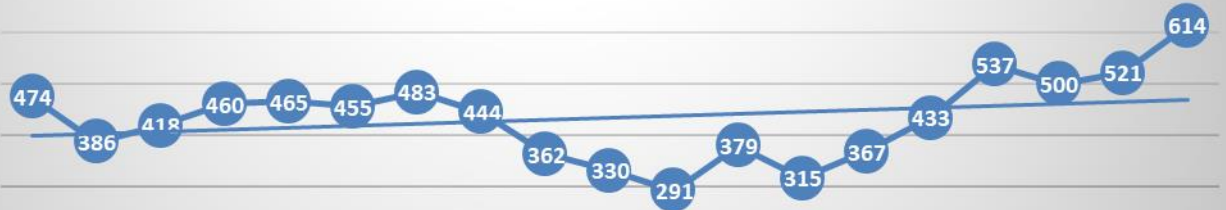
Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	480	515	544	602	525	533	530	422	414	323	273	306	342	485	204	326	270	283	274

## Sevenoaks - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	474	386	418	460	465	455	483	444	362	330	291	379	315	367	433	537	500	521	614

## Swale - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

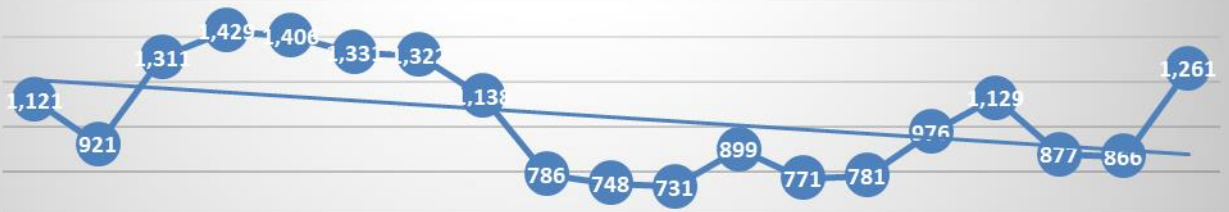
Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	889	688	671	742	712	639	619	617	491	405	439	291	348	356	388	541	469	402	519

### Thanet - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	1,121	921	1,311	1,429	1,406	1,331	1,322	1,138	786	748	731	899	771	781	976	1,129	877	866	1,261

### Tonbridge and Malling - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

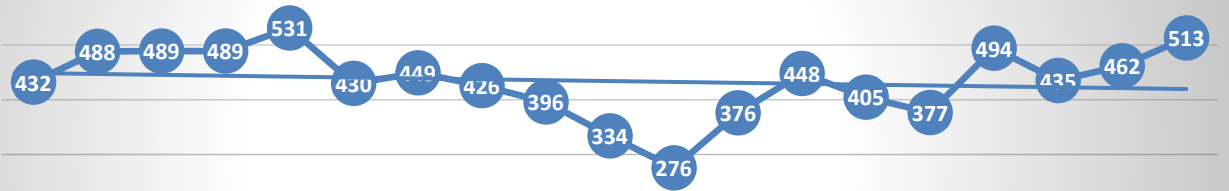
Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	325	309	269	317	308	252	247	246	272	307	355	346	360	359	331	370	356	373	513

### Tunbridge Wells - Long-term Vacant Dwellings

Number of Vacant Dwellings



Year	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023
Year	432	488	489	489	531	430	449	426	396	334	276	376	448	405	377	494	435	462	513

## Summary

All long-term (more than 6 months empty) vacant dwellings by local authority district, England, from 2005

Table 615 All long-term vacant dwellings by local authority district, England, from 2004																				Source : Council Tax Base (CTB)																			
Local Authority Name	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	2023	Change																			
Ashford	559	498	567	617	533	484	504	449	307	250	247	240	283	322	426	543	681	386	367	-19																			
Canterbury	735	678	635	722	642	679	640	733	489	403	396	599	443	511	581	796	813	718	1,080	362																			
Dartford	306	339	296	389	353	294	336	250	179	169	176	188	220	253	274	283	252	237	267	30																			
Dover	750	743	748	808	952	908	878	725	510	436	478	624	523	471	460	725	601	527	881	354																			
Folkestone & Hythe	675	678	721	806	740	771	767	766	766	608	641	547	470	468	489	619	656	709	827	118																			
Gravesham	603	671	443	258	311	318	282	212	175	145	193	204	255	250	204	326	270	283	274	-9																			
Maidstone	480	515	544	602	525	533	530	422	414	323	273	306	342	485	433	537	500	521	614	93																			
Margate	474	386	418	460	465	455	483	444	362	330	291	379	315	367	431	435	294	280	371	91																			
Swale	889	688	671	742	712	639	619	617	491	405	439	291	348	356	388	541	469	402	519	117																			
Tonbridge	1,121	921	1,311	1,429	1,406	1,331	1,322	1,138	786	748	731	899	771	781	976	1,129	877	866	1,261	395																			
Tonbridge and Malling	325	309	269	317	308	252	247	246	272	307	355	346	360	359	331	370	356	373	513	140																			
Tunbridge Wells	432	488	489	489	531	430	449	426	396	334	276	376	448	405	377	494	435	462	513	51																			
<b>Total Kent</b>	<b>7,349</b>	<b>6,914</b>	<b>7,112</b>	<b>7,639</b>	<b>7,478</b>	<b>7,094</b>	<b>7,057</b>	<b>6,428</b>	<b>5,147</b>	<b>4,458</b>	<b>4,496</b>	<b>4,999</b>	<b>4,778</b>	<b>5,028</b>	<b>5,370</b>	<b>6,798</b>	<b>6,204</b>	<b>5,764</b>	<b>7,487</b>	<b>1,723</b>																			

## Appendix 2 – Summary NUE Residential (Countywide Investment) – 9 April 2024

### NUE Recyclable Loans (£5m original investment)

NUE INTERVENTION	INVESTMENT			PROPERTY VALUES			HOMES BACK INTO USE			KCC COUNCIL TAX
Local Authority Name	Total KCC NUE Loan	Public & Private Sector Investment	Total Investment	Original Value of Properties	Future Value of Properties	Increase in Value of Properties	Current Empty Residential Units	Future Residential Units	NUE New Homes Created	Additional Council Tax Per Year (Average C)
Ashford	£1,130,000	£1,131,625	£2,261,625	£3,598,000	£7,305,000	£3,707,000	8	26	18	£25,773
Canterbury	£1,330,000	£4,077,124	£5,407,124	£4,017,000	£12,207,000	£8,190,000	18	54	36	£51,546
Dartford	£676,000	£731,216	£1,407,216	£4,979,000	£6,493,500	£1,514,500	11	34	23	£32,932
Dover	£13,994,202	£9,890,250	£23,884,452	£23,733,800	£51,727,000	£27,993,200	80	335	254	£363,687
Folkestone & Hythe	£15,222,227	£4,351,739	£19,573,966	£20,142,500	£43,790,200	£23,647,700	63	266	203	£290,664
Gravesham	£870,000	£537,806	£1,407,806	£1,963,500	£3,000,000	£1,036,500	2	16	14	£20,046
Maidstone	£1,522,388	£1,021,217	£2,543,605	£3,363,800	£6,221,800	£2,858,000	5	46	41	£58,705
Sevenoaks	£679,000	£1,289,424	£1,968,424	£4,974,000	£7,244,000	£2,270,000	16	26	10	£14,318
SWale	£4,758,500	£2,794,144	£7,552,644	£8,827,750	£16,865,100	£8,537,350	23	129	106	£151,775
Shepway	£16,656,100	£16,728,441	£33,384,541	£35,409,250	£76,454,000	£41,044,750	167	465	297	£420,961
Tonbridge and Malling	£370,000	£483,249	£853,249	£1,615,000	£2,975,000	£1,360,000	7	15	8	£11,455
Tunbridge Wells	£2,507,156	£1,402,841	£3,909,997	£8,688,000	£15,172,000	£6,484,000	26	49	23	£32,932
<b>Total Kent</b>	<b>£59,715,572</b>	<b>£44,439,077</b>	<b>£104,154,649</b>	<b>£121,311,600</b>	<b>£249,454,600</b>	<b>£128,643,000</b>	<b>426</b>	<b>1,461</b>	<b>1,033</b>	<b>£1,474,795</b>

The total KCC NUE Loan includes loans operated under the Affordable Homes (2012-15) project co-funded with HCA and Growing Places Funds (SELEP) for NUE Residential and NUE Commercial Phase I and Phase II.

New Homes Created are a result of converting larger empty properties with planning permission for residential use.

The net number of empty homes brought back into use were included in the New Homes Bonus allocations (80% districts/20% KCC)

Future property values recorded from RICS valuation at time of application.

Note this table excludes KCC Treasury funded projects.

## Summary

### Additional KCC Council Tax as a direct result of NUE intervention (Existing Empty Properties)

NUE HAVE SUPPORTED 1,461 HOMES WITH CAPITAL INVESTMENT OF WHICH 1,033 ARE CLASSED AS NEW HOMES (CHANGE IN NUMBERS)

TO CALCULATE THE IMPACT NUE HAVE ASSUMED THAT PROJECTS FUNDED ARE DELIVERED AT LEAST ONE YEAR LATER

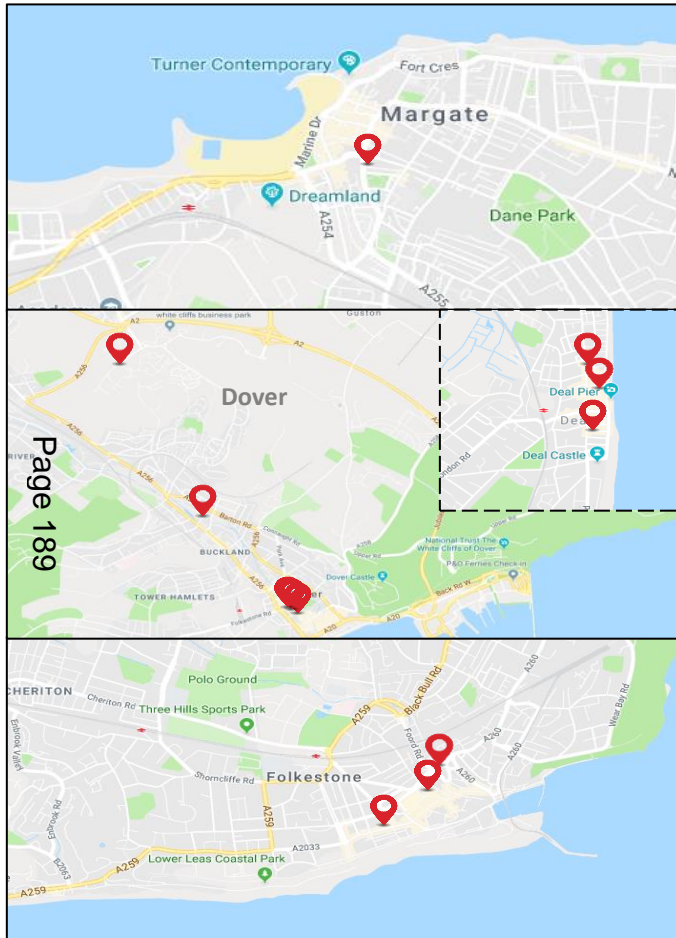
E.G., 34 EXTRA HOMES IN 2007-08 WILL GENERATE £ 32,231 THE FOLLOWING YEAR AND THEN RISING ON A CUMULATIVE BASIS

Page 108  
AVERAGE BAND C RATES (2008-2025) HAVE BEEN USED (AS THESE ARE THE TYPICAL PROPERTIES DEALT WITH)

IF AN EXTRA 71 NEW HOMES WERE CREATED FROM 2024-25 TO 2029-30, THE PROJECTED ADDITIONAL COUNCIL TAX RECEIPTS HAVE A PROJECTED VALUE OF £2.17M

Colour Code					
	Delivered				
	Projected				
					<b>Based on KCC Band C</b>
	<b>Total Homes</b>	<b>Extra Homes</b>	<b>Extra Homes</b>		<b>New Council</b>
	<b>Inc Extra Homes</b>	<b>By Year</b>	<b>Cumulative</b>		<b>Tax Generated</b>
<b>2007-08</b>	48	34	34	£	-
<b>2008-09</b>	21	15	49	£	32,231
<b>2009-10</b>	75	53	102	£	48,139
<b>2010-11</b>	89	63	165	£	103,479
<b>2011-12</b>	77	55	220	£	170,448
<b>2012-13</b>	59	42	262	£	226,776
<b>2013-14</b>	154	109	371	£	270,747
<b>2014-15</b>	95	67	439	£	386,811
<b>2015-16</b>	111	79	518	£	461,187
<b>2016-17</b>	46	33	550	£	550,006
<b>2017-18</b>	84	60	610	£	602,837
<b>2018-19</b>	111	79	689	£	694,904
<b>2019-20</b>	89	63	752	£	824,720
<b>2020-21</b>	80	57	809	£	942,708
<b>2021-22</b>	129	92	900	£	1,053,466
<b>2022-23</b>	113	80	981	£	1,199,752
<b>2023-24</b>	60	43	1023	£	1,338,031
<b>2024-25</b>	100	71	1094	£	1,431,068
<b>2025-26</b>	100	71	1165	£	1,566,587
<b>2026-27</b>	100	71	1236	£	1,708,286
<b>2027-28</b>	100	71	1307	£	1,855,883
<b>2028-29</b>	100	71	1378	£	2,009,581
<b>2029-30</b>	100	71	1449	£	2,169,588

## Appendix 3 – Summary of NUE Commercial Phase I – Completed



**TARGET:** To return a total of **8 EMPTY COMMERCIAL UNITS** back into use and create **28 RESIDENTIAL HOMES** – GROWING PLACED FUND Awarded £1M

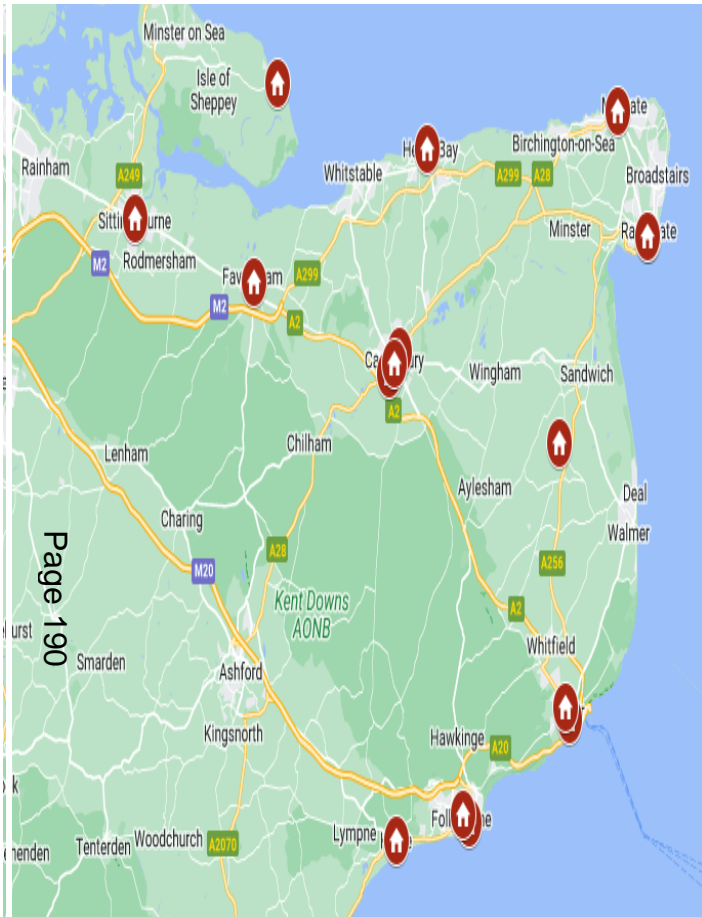
Commercial Units	Residential Homes	Total	GPF £	LEVERAGE £	TOTAL £
2	1	Deal	85,000	410,000	495,000
9	16	Dover	595,000	1,667,000	2,262,000
2	6	Folkestone	280,000	1,140,000	1,420,000
2	5	Margate	40,000	311,867	351,867
15	28	Investment	1,000,000	£3,528,867	4,528,867

**Completions:**  
**15 Commercial Units**  
**28 Residential Homes**

**Repayment to GPF:**  
**£800k repaid 31 March 2022**  
**£200k repaid 31 March 2023**

Commercial Properties back into use include a Beauty Salon, Delicatessen, 2-3 Restaurants, Recruitment Agency, Marketing Suite for Property Sales, Office Space, Pizza Room for Micro Brewery, retail units for local independent traders.

## Appendix 3 – Summary of NUE Commercial Phase II – In Progress



**TARGET: To return a total of 18 EMPTY COMMERCIAL UNITS back into use and create 36 RESIDENTIAL HOMES – GROWING PLACES FUND Awarded £2M**

Commercial Units	Residential Homes	Total Districts	GPF £	EXPECTED LEVERAGE £	EXPECTED TOTAL £
5	18	Canterbury	455,000	455,000	910,000
3	3	Dover	289,000	208,600	497,600
3	11	Folkestone	495,000	2,038,572	2,533,572
2	4	Swale	205,000	916,918	1,121,918
9	16	Thanet	525,000	2,483,500	3,008,500
22	52	Investment	1,969,000	6,102,590	8,071,590

\*\* Table includes expected leverage as total project costs will be re-calculated on completion of project. Commercial Properties on track to be brought back into use include an Estate Agent, 4 x local take aways (not chains), a pub with accommodation, 2 x pubs as a restaurant with bar, 2 x offices, local independent stores one with a Post Office counter (Minster).

**Contracted/Completed:**  
**22 Commercial Units – 11 completed.**  
**52 Residential Homes – 41 completed.**

**Repayment to GPF:**  
**£2m due by 31 March 2025**



## Examples of projects supported NUE Commercial Phase I

Sandgate Road, Folkestone	Former Walmer Castle Pub, Westgate on Sea, Margate	
<p>This was a three-storey retail unit with a large single storey rear addition. It closed in 2017 and remained empty until the new owner acquired it. The ground floor comprises a large lock up shop with the upper parts offering basic ancillary storage space. Planning permission has been granted for change of use and creation of 2 flats. The commercial space is now a beauty salon employing 9 staff. The flats are completed to decent homes standard and rented to local people. KCC have a 1st charge secured.</p>	<p>This former public house was acquired by the Greek community in 2016 and following planning permission has been transformed to provide: 3 residential flats, a community space, and a Greek restaurant. Like many pubs which have closed this one breathes new life, and the business employs 3 staff. KCC have a 1<sup>st</sup> charge secured.</p>	
		
		
<p>Empty: 1 Years</p>	<p>Former Pharmacy</p>	<p>Empty: 10 months</p>
<p>Residential Units: 2</p>	<p>Occupied</p>	<p>Residential Units: 3</p>
<p>Commercial Units: 1</p>	<p>9 Jobs</p>	<p>Commercial Units: 1</p>
<p>Project Cost: £990k</p>	<p>Private Funds: £540k</p>	<p>Project Cost: £172.8k</p>
<p>GPF Funds: £200k</p>	<p>NUE Loan: £250k</p>	<p>NUE Loan: £51.2k / GPF Funds: £30k</p>

## Examples of projects supported NUE Commercial Phase II

### Preston Street, Faversham - 1 x Commercial / 6 x Residential

NUE provided a total loan of £650k including £100k from GPF Funds to Ratio Developments Ltd to create six stunning apartments in Preston Street, Faversham.

The building was originally arranged as a ground floor lock up commercial unit with offices on the ground and first floor. Planning was granted in June 2021 to convert the building into 6 self-contained flats (1 under permitted development). A commercial unit has also been retained and refurbished on the ground floor.

The loan was repaid in full 29 November 2023.



### Folkestone Town Centre

### 1 x Commercial / 8 x Residential



NUE have provided a loan of £64,000 from the Growing Places Fund, and a top up loan of £120,000 from Folkestone & Hythe DC Top Up Funds to help fund the total refurbishment costs of £362,500 to bring this empty shop in the heart of Folkestone Town Centre back into use following the acquisition of the freehold by the new owner.

The 8 self-contained apartments are completed.

NUE have collaborated with the applicant on previous projects.

They assisted in publicising the NUE scheme by providing and placing advertising boards in the shop front. Works are nearing completion, and an ice-cream/waffle parlour is due to open Summer 2024.

### The Promenade, Leysdown on Sea

### 1 x Commercial / 3 Residential

NUE provided a loan of £125,000 from the Growing Places Fund to contribute to the total project costs of £267,000 to bring this former Pub back into use.

Swale Borough Council granted permission in April 2020 for change of use of a former Public House into a Fish and Chip Take Away/Restaurant with a bar and conversion of existing first floor into 3 self-contained flats.

Works have completed on the property which had been empty for 3 years and is now compliant as the property did not conform to current regulations and was below the required energy efficiency ratings.

The property was completed in time for late Summer 2022.



## Appendix 4 – NUE New Builds

### Tridax Business Park, Honeywood Parkway, Whitfield, Dover - 24 Business Units

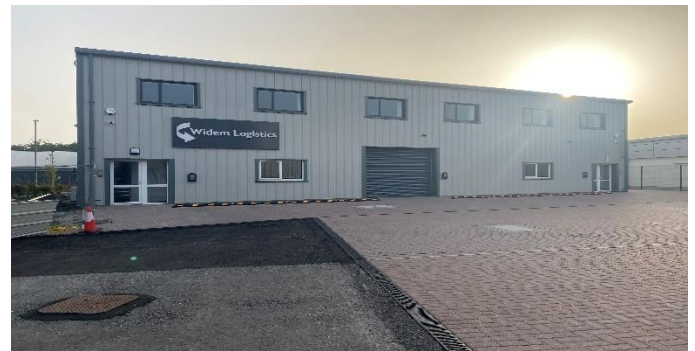
NUE's amazing regeneration project, which will stand as a flagship project making a positive contribution to the economy of Dover.



The construction of 24 business units at Honeywood Parkway began in April 2022 and completed late December 2023.



NUE has worked with Tridax Ltd to support the construction, Tridax having previously collaborated on residential projects. All the units are fully installed, ready to use and insulated. Features include single/3 phase power supply, toilet/kitchenette at ground level, lockable windows and doors, and ducting for fibre optics. Demand for the units has been phenomenal, with interested buyers outnumbering the available units.

All have now been sold except the remaining units, which will be retained by the developer. Local businesses who have already moved in include a printing company, double glazing firm and an electrical contractor. Widem UK, a Belgian owned customs clearance, forwarding and logistics company who have acquired 3 units to provide them with a presence close to the Dover port. Widem created 8 new jobs for their operation in Dover, employing local people, which is fantastic news. Details of occupiers of the business units are tabled at the end of this document.

The NUE loan (£1.7m) provided in phased stages, was repaid in full by 12 January 2024.



<b>Land at Radnor Park Road, Folkestone</b>	<b>14 self-contained units</b>
<p>Local developers Livingston Homes Ltd acquired the former Royal Victoria Hospital in 2020. The hospital opened in 1890 and closed in 2012 when the East Kent Hospitals University Foundation trust deemed the site surplus to its needs. It remained dormant until the developer converted the main building into residential apartments following planning approval granted by Folkestone and Hythe District Council (FHDC) in November 2020. (This was not funded by NUE).</p> <p>NUE assisted with an interest bearing loan released in two phases following further approval granted to demolish the redundant outbuildings and erect two residential blocks. This consists of 14 self-contained units (10 x 2 bed flats and 4 x 1 bed flats). There are 8 apartments in block one and 6 apartments in block two.</p> <p>FHDC acquired the site and have made the home available for let through their Housing Waiting List at Affordable rents. The units have an energy efficient rating of EPC B.</p> <p>The loan and interest were repaid 25 Jan 2023 and FHDC have acquired the site.</p>	
 <p data-bbox="212 857 687 884"><b>Works In Progress – rear of property (Block 1)</b></p>	 <p data-bbox="995 869 1398 896"><b>Completed – front of property (Block 2)</b></p>
<p data-bbox="108 913 788 940">Total Loan - £810,000 (Phase 1 - £330k /Phase 2 - £440k)</p>	<p data-bbox="1007 913 1386 940">Project Timescales – 18 months</p>
<p data-bbox="284 949 617 976">Cost of Works - £ 1,310,000</p>	<p data-bbox="1040 949 1353 976">Loan repaid January 2023</p>

<b>Former Railway Bell, River, Dover</b>	<b>12 new homes</b>
<p>Over the last 18 months, No Use Empty and Argosy Developments (London Road) Ltd have been working together and making great progress on the site which will boast 12 great homes on the London Road, River.</p>	
<p>Karlee Construction (UK) Ltd a Kent based independent company with over 20 years experience have been contracted to deliver the project. The site was formally home to a period public house known as The Railway Bell which closed 3 years ago. Following a change in ownership planning was granted for the change of use and conversion of the public house into 6 self contained flats and the erection of 6 new three bed houses.</p>	
<p>The family sized houses all come with a garden and two allocated parking bays. On the ground floor sits the open plan kitchen, diner and lounge with patio doors opening out onto a private garden, laid with patio and turf. Upstairs sit a master with an en- suite, another double room, a single bedroom and a family bathroom.</p>	
<p>All 12 units are now on the market for sale.</p>	
 <p data-bbox="236 1897 662 1924"><b>Former Railway Bell under refurbishment</b></p>	 <p data-bbox="911 1937 1482 1964"><b>New Homes to the left, Refurbishment to the right (former pub)</b></p>
<p data-bbox="268 1968 630 1995">Original Site Value - £ 775,000</p>	<p data-bbox="1007 1968 1386 1995">Project Timescales – 18 months</p>
<p data-bbox="309 2011 588 2038">Total Loan - £1,600,000</p>	<p data-bbox="959 2011 1437 2067">Loan repayments commence with sales. (expected May 2023)</p>

Examples of other projects funded include:

<b>Albert Road, Dover – 7 Self-contained units</b>	<b>Former Alma Public House, Swanscombe – 13 homes</b>
	
Currently for sale and for let	Completed and Loan Repaid
Total Loan - £400,000	Total Loan - £600,000
<b>Lorne Road, Ramsgate – 6 x 2 bed houses</b>	<b>Benenden, Cranbrook – 1 new home</b>
	
Owner retaining for lets – loan repaid	Work nearing completion
Total Loan - £715,000	Total Loan - £270,000
<b>Lower Road, Faversham – 3 new houses</b>	<b>Deal Police Station – 3 homes</b>
	
Currently all let – loan repaid.	Currently under development.
Total Loan - £500,000	Total Loan - £500,000
<b>High Halden, Ashford – 3 houses</b>	<b>St Mildred's Close, Ramsgate – 7 apartments</b>
	
Currently for sale/let	Completed and Loan Repaid
Total Loan - £500,000 (to complete site)	Total Loan - £600,000

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## Appendix 5 – Pipeline (New Builds)

1. Some loan enquiries are from existing developers who have delivered smaller sized projects, repaid their loans and are looking to scale up on their next project. Projects of this nature would require a larger loan, with some enquiries seeking a facility of between £1-2m to generate more homes.
2. The following table captures raw information from the current pipeline of potential projects which NUE has recorded as of March 2024 which have an indicative value of £13.4m.

District	Potential NUE Loan	Potential Units Supported
Ashford	£450,000	2
Canterbury	£430,000	tbc
Dover	£8,288,000	62
Folkestone & Hythe	£720,800	4
Swale	£2,492,500	23
Thanet	£990,000	9
<b>Total</b>	<b>£13,371,300</b>	<b>100</b>

3. Working within the current £24m allocation, the NUE team is currently discussing four projects identified in the above table which are slightly further advanced in terms of sites which have planning approved. Subject to final due diligence and approval under delegated authority NUE expect new projects approved to commence during the first quarter of the 24/25 financial year.
4. Based on the loans approved and their expected repayment dates the following table informs the potential funding opportunities based on the existing level of Treasury investment being recycled (£24m).

Expected	Loan Value Due
FIN YR 24-25	£4,810,000
FIN YR 25-26	£11,903,000
FIN YR 26-27	£ 3,996,500
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>£ 20,709,500</b>

5. A further £4.8m is due to be repaid during 2024-25 which could potentially support 30% of those projects currently identified at 2 subject to approval.
6. Whilst all those projects currently identified may not come forward, future new schemes and larger schemes, as we have found, are more than likely to join the list based on continued enquiries and repeat customers who have delivered successful projects.

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**From:** Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 14 May 2024

**Decision No:** N/A

**Subject:** Kent Film Office

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Electoral Divisions:** County Wide

**Summary:** The purpose of this paper is to provide an update that shows the economic impact of Kent Film Office being able to facilitate filming in Kent.

**Recommendation(s):** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note and make any comments and recommendations to the cabinet member.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 Kent Film Office (KFO) sits within the Creative & Cultural Economy Team in the Growth and Communities Division. There are two full time and one part time staff members.
- 1.2 KFO was established in 2006 by Kent County Council. It generates inward investment into the Kent and Medway economies from the film and broadcast industries while ensuring that any filming activity taking place in the region is lawful and considerate of Kent & Medway's residents and businesses.
- 1.3 KFO initiated and maintains the [Kent Filming Partnership](#) with councils and local and national agencies, making Kent a film friendly county. It is a member of FO:UK (Film Offices UK), a group of council run or funded film offices sharing best practice, providing evidence to government on economic performance of the sector and identifying laws and practices that impact on sector growth so UK remains attractive for inward investment. KFO is an affiliate member of The Production Guild, giving it access to promotion to and networking with key industry professionals and has a partnership agreement with Filming in England (FiE), formerly Creative England, key benefits being: Kent locations have a national exposure on the FiE database, access to a Kent crew and facilities database which saves significant staff time at KFO, regional networking with industry professionals, promotion via FiE newsletters and social media.

## 2 KFO Economic Impact

- 2.1 Filming in England distributes average daily spend figures for diverse types of productions to film offices. These were arrived at by access to a selection of production budgets through the BFI and the Production Guild from which averages were calculated. Olsberg SPI were recently commissioned to carry out a study which is currently ongoing to update these projections to reflect significant increases in production costs. Currently, a daily local spend of £8K is estimated for a feature film with a total budget of £1.5+ million, £108K for a £60+million production and £16K for a TV drama.
- 2.2 Since 2006, the contribution of filming activity to the Kent economy has experienced a steady rise from £1.3m annually, to a record £8.2m in 2021-2022. Annual figures are expected to fluctuate, but over the last five years an average of £5m per annum was achieved. For every £1 invested in Kent Film Office, there was a £109 return into the Kent economy, an average of £58 per £1 over the last five years.
- 2.3 KFO has managed to attract an increasing number of filming projects, including high profile productions like Empire of Light, The Beekeeper, The Crown and Mr Bates Versus The Post Office, largely due to the excellent film facilitation service it provides. Kent is the home county furthest from any London Production Hubs like Pinewood and Leavesden, therefore, managing a large, nationally available locations database and fast responses to national location enquiries by FiE and international ones from The British Film Council (BFC) is crucial in putting Kent at the forefront of a UK film offering.
- 2.4 In 2023/24 KFO supported the generation of £6.8m for the Kent economy through a total of 690 filming days. Over the year, KFO received 872 requests, made up of 468 filming requests and 404 related enquiries. KFO also provided 17 trainee/runner placements over 57 days and 1 location manager job over 22 days. Highlights this year include dramas such as Mr Bates vs the Post Office, Mary & George, The Crown S6, and features such as Mission Impossible, Hamlet and Bird.
- 2.5 A location filming day is the result of long, detailed prep work, sometimes starting months ahead because it is very costly to production; anything from £90K to £250K for a film like Empire of Light and up to half a million for large blockbusters like Mission Impossible. Understandably, productions need to make sure any location chosen is supported by an agency that can provide local connections, remove obstacles and solve a multitude of problems quickly and effectively. It is the core work of KFO to provide this support and we have included a small selection of feedback in section 2.7 to give you a measure of KFO's success in this area.

- 2.6 The support given includes, among other things: accelerating temporary planning permits, finding additional crew and production bases, negotiating runner and trainee placements for local students, arranging parking dispensations, traffic management, drone flying exemptions, Kent Police permits for weapons and stunts, liaising with environmental departments at councils, environment agency or Natural England, providing advice to location owners as well as ensuring safety and consideration for residents.
- 2.7 Below are 3 of the 25 best feedback we logged on iCasework this year.
- 03/11/23  
 [We] had an amazing time shooting in Kent. It proves to me again what a solid option Kent is for production as London is becoming more and more difficult in terms of the financials & lead up times. On behalf of our little short, a massive thank you for your ongoing support!  
*Julian Bivol, Location Manager, Bookyville*
- 09/06/23  
 Your hard work, flexibility unwavering support, and sheer knack for making things happen played a huge role in the success of our shoot. It was an absolute pleasure to work with a team as dedicated, efficient, and downright amazing as you folks.”[...]  
*Karin Kavanagh, Location Manager, The Veil [sic to be released]*
- 31/08/2023  
 I have to say we were incredibly impressed with Kent Film Office's approach - so easy to deal with and helped us with a tight turn around. The shoot went brilliantly and can't wait to film in Kent again soon!  
*Dan Matthews, Producer, Sam Fischer| Afterglow*
- 2.8 The year 2023 saw some of the longest industrial action in the industry's history, with firstly US writers going on strike at the beginning of May, being joined by US actors in the middle of July. As a large proportion of the UK film and TV Industry is closely allied to the US one, the strikes had a serious effect on UK industry. Kent was lucky in having secured several projects early in the year, as well as a number of domestic productions that remained unaffected by the strikes.
- 2.9 Although industrial action was resolved in October, the effects are ongoing. Various productions were shelved as pivotal crew or cast already had prior commitments to productions going forward. Production will therefore take time to regain momentum.
- 2.10 Many production companies, especially the large streamers like Amazon and Netflix used the strikes to roll back budgets which had gone up to anything in excess of between £10 and £20m per episode through competition for audience subscriptions for prime shows. It is expected that budgets of between £1 and £3m per episode are more likely going forward.

- 2.11 Government recently announced that film industry tax credits will be maintained and, in some cases, extended which is a positive incentive. However, this comes alongside proposals for large increases in business rates for film & TV studios, which are expected to deter companies from filming in the UK.
- 2.12 It is a disadvantage that Kent has no studio provision since film companies favour combining studio and location production to provide economies of scale. As reported through industry contacts, significant number of new studio developments have come online since 2020, all to the northwest of London. Others were greenlit and supported in the north of England through Levelling Up. We will continue to work with Ashford Borough Council on the potential for a studio provision on the Railway Sheds site.
- 2.13 Our nearest large studio complex is in Dagenham which, if combined with location work in Kent necessitates extra costs for Dartford crossing tolls which could amount to an additional £500 per day to get crew, equipment and cast into the county. The proposed Lower Thames Crossing is also planned as a toll road and as such would not alleviate this.
- 2.14 Kent Film Office is part of discussions on developments to coordinate film provision across the Thames Estuary Production Corridor.

### **3 Film Tourism**

- 3.1 KFO have been working with Visit Kent to analyse the impact of screen tourism by assessing the effect of filming on visitor figures through their quarterly business barometer. Of the 41 attractions surveyed, 51% reported they had been used as a filming location previously. Of this group, 22% specified that since filming they have seen an increase of up to 20% in footfall. 11% experienced increases in footfall of up to 40% which, through their own research they could directly attribute to filming. Going forward, KFO will monitor this quarterly with the aim of assessing which kinds of programmes bring in the most tourism benefits.
- 3.2 KFO and Visit Kent are working jointly to promote projects across our social media platforms, press campaigns and film tourism trails when opportunities arise. This will build on previous joint work undertaken for the Boleyn, Darling Buds of May and Empire of Light promotions and trails.

### **4 Communication Strategy**

- 4.1 KFO has recently reevaluated its comms strategy in response to industry trends to move towards other platforms following the acquisition and rebranding of Twitter to X. There has been a steady decline in users of X but an increase in use of our new Instagram account where engagement is spread more evenly across posts and the user base is more in line with our target audience of location managers, scouts and other industry professionals. For 2024/25, we are also focusing on building up our LinkedIn presence to maximise use of this business focused platform.

## **5 Financial Implications**

- 5.1 The 2024-25 budget for the Service is £118,700 net. This is made up of £120,000 staffing, £12,700 non staffing and an estimated £14,800 income. There are no direct financial implications arising from this paper. Future opportunities that arise should a studio complex in Ashford be realised and developments to coordinate film provision across the Thames Estuary Production Corridor will be subject to detailed feasibility studies and approval will be sought for any proposed growth of the Kent Film Office.

## **6 Data Protection**

- 6.1 The existing privacy notices covers the operation of the service and no new data protection issues arise due to the contents of this paper.

## **7 Equality and Diversity**

- 7.1 The existing Equality Impact Assessments underpinning the breadth of the service's work apply to the work and roles described in this paper.

## **8 Conclusion**

- 8.1 Subject to Securing Kent's Future, KFO will continue to provide a high quality service, grow and manage filming in Kent, taking advantage of any opportunities that present themselves to improve and develop the service, maximising economic benefit to the county, through leverage and tourism.

## **9 Recommendation(s):**

The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to note this report and make comments and recommendations to the Cabinet Member.

## **10 Contact details**

Report Author:

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Relevant Directors:

Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director Growth and Communities

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From: Derek Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development  
Simon Jones, Corporate Director for Growth, Environment &  
Transport

To: Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet  
Committee

Date: 14<sup>th</sup> May 2024

Subject: **‘Project Gigabit’ Broadband Programme**

Classification: Unrestricted

Past Pathway of report: None

Future Pathway of report: None

Electoral divisions: All

**Summary:**

The purpose of this paper is to update Cabinet Committee Members on the implementation of the Government’s Project Gigabit programme in Kent.

**Recommendation**

Cabinet Committee Members are asked to note the current position and provide to the Cabinet Member any comments on the proposed approach.

**1. Introduction**

1.1 In August 2021, the Government launched the national Project Gigabit Programme to deliver gigabit-capable broadband connections across the UK.

1.2 Gigabit capable connections offer download speeds of at least 1 gigabit-per-second (1 Gbps) or 1000 megabits per second (Mbps) and are usually delivered through full-fibre connections (i.e. fibre-to-the-premise). These faster and higher capacity connections are increasingly required to ensure that Kent’s digital infrastructure meets both current and future needs<sup>1</sup>.

1.3 The national targets and objectives for the Project Gigabit Programme (which is being led by Building Digital UK<sup>2</sup> (BDUK)), are as follows:

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<sup>1</sup> [Future Telecoms Infrastructure Review - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk)

<sup>2</sup> Building Digital UK (BDUK) is an executive agency of the Department for Science, Innovation and Technology (DSIT). They are responsible for the rollout of gigabit-capable broadband in hard-to-reach areas of the UK.

- 85% of UK premises to have gigabit coverage by 2025 with the aim of achieving ‘near universal coverage as soon as possible’ but before the end of the decade.
- Commercial investment (i.e. upgrades funded by telecoms providers) to provide gigabit capable connections to 80% of homes and businesses across the UK.
- The 20% of properties that remain outside the scope of commercial investment to be connected via new government-funded programmes. £5 billion has currently been allocated to fund these connections – and the Government’s intention is for properties that cannot currently access a superfast broadband connection to be prioritised wherever possible within the new programme.

1.4 Within the county, BDUK’s new Project Gigabit Programme will build upon the work of the Kent BDUK Superfast Project. Led by Kent County Council, the Superfast Project (which has now concluded) connected over 145,000 homes and businesses across Kent with faster broadband connections. As a result of this work, over 97% of homes and businesses in Kent now have access to a broadband service of at least 24megabits per second and, the number of premises which cannot access a fixed broadband connection of at least 2megabits per second has reduced to 0.3%.

## **2.0 Delivering Project Gigabit in Kent**

2.1 Under the Government’s current plans, the Project Gigabit programme targets will be delivered via two workstreams. These are explained in more detail below.

### **Workstream 1: Commercial build programme**

2.2 As identified at 1.3, BDUK expects the majority of gigabit connections (at least 80%) to be funded by telecoms operators and not require public subsidy. These market-led investments are known as commercial build.

2.3 There has been a rapid increase in the availability of gigabit-capable connections delivered by these commercial build programmes. As of April 2024, 77% of homes and businesses across Kent can access a gigabit-capable broadband connection, compared to 7.8% in January 2020<sup>3</sup>. This progress reflects significant investments by operators such as Netomnia, Openreach, Trooli and Virgin Media in Kent’s broadband infrastructure.

2.4 BDUK is continuing to consult with operators to understand the exact extent and detail of telecoms providers’ plans to connect local areas with gigabit connectivity. The Department of Science, Innovation and Technology is also encouraging all local authorities to provide ‘barrier busting’ support to telecoms operators, where required,

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<sup>3</sup> Source – Think Broadband data: [Broadband Coverage and Speed Test Statistics for Kent \(thinkbroadband.com\)](https://www.thinkbroadband.com)



to help overcome any issues encountered during network build. Examples include facilitating wayleaves (i.e. legal agreements to cross private land and property) and ensuring that operators understand and are able to comply with the national requirements for street works.

2.5 KCC has also been working with local housing authorities, housing associations and telecoms providers to facilitate wayleaves to connect Kent's social housing stock. A toolkit including a standard wayleave agreement has been produced by Kent County Council to help support these connections across the county. This work was shortlisted in the national Connected Britain Awards 2023.

### **Workstream 2: Subsidising gigabit-capable connections in non-commercial areas.**

2.6 The Government's Project Gigabit Programme is looking to subsidise the upgrade of broadband connectivity in areas that will fall outside of the commercial build areas (also known as areas of 'market-failure').

2.7 BDUK announced on the 6 February 2024 that they have awarded a £112.3 million contract to City Fibre to deliver gigabit-capable connections to parts of Kent and Medway that are not expected to benefit from telecom providers' upgrade programmes. Circa 50,000 premises are expected to benefit from this investment.

2.8 BDUK will lead this project and will be responsible for working with the supplier to manage the rollout.

2.9 At this stage, BDUK has not published any further information about which premises will benefit, or when these connections will be installed. We understand that further details about the deployment plan should be released later this summer once further planning and survey work is undertaken. Once this information is available, we understand that it will be published on the supplier's website

2.10 In addition to the Project Gigabit procurements, BDUK is also continuing the national broadband voucher scheme, which has provided funding to community-led broadband projects. BDUK has temporarily paused the scheme to new projects in all regions where there are new project gigabit contracts until the build plans are finalised. However, the build of existing schemes is continuing - including those utilising the Kent Top-Up Voucher.<sup>4</sup> BDUK has also designated a number of voucher priority areas where suppliers have demonstrated that they can deliver connections more quickly through community-led broadband voucher schemes.

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<sup>4</sup> The Kent Top Up Voucher provides additional funding of up to £1,000 for homes and businesses for community-led schemes which cannot be funded entirely through BDUK's standard broadband voucher. The Kent Top-Up voucher is administered by BDUK as part of the BDUK national voucher scheme and was one of the first of its kind in the UK.

### **3.0 Connecting 'Very Hard to Reach Premises'**

3.1 The Government has indicated some of the UK's most expensive and difficult to connect premises (known as 'Very Hard to Reach') may fall outside of the scope of the Project Gigabit programme where the costs of providing a fixed broadband connection become prohibitive. They have estimated that 'potentially fewer' than 100,000 UK homes and businesses are likely to fall into this 'very-hard-to-reach' category based on local geography, topography and distance from other properties. No regional or county breakdowns have yet been published about the geographical distribution of these premises.

3.2 At this time the Government is continuing to consider their policy and delivery approach for connecting 'very-hard-to-reach' areas. It is piloting a number of 'alpha trials' utilising low-earth orbiting satellite technologies to provide connections to remote sites and have announced plans for a national satellite scheme – although further details, including the eligibility criteria, have not (at the time of writing) been released.

### **4.0 Financial Implications**

4.1 In contrast to the previous programme, local authorities are not being required to provide any new capital match funding for the new £112.3 million Kent and Medway 'Project Gigabit' procurement, nor will any of the scheme costs be shown within KCC's capital programme. However, both Kent County Council and Medway Council's broadband teams are expected by Government to work in partnership with BDUK and support the procurement and local operational delivery of the Project Gigabit workstream. As a result, KCC's contribution will be limited to the staffing costs associated with this work and will become part of the responsibilities of the base funded broadband team (£384K total budget). £2.3 million of KCC capital funding also remains available for the Kent Top-Up Voucher scheme.

### **5.0 Legal Implications**

5.1 As highlighted in section 2.8 above, BDUK will be the contracting authority for the new Project Gigabit Programme. As a result, Kent County Council is not being required to enter into any new delivery contracts with suppliers.

### **6.0 Equality and Diversity**

6.1 An Equalities Impact Assessment was undertaken for the Kent Broadband Top-Up Voucher scheme. No issues were identified.

### **7.0. Information Governance**

7.1 The Kent Broadband Voucher Scheme applications are processed by BDUK, who administers the Kent top-up funding as part of their national Gigabit Voucher Scheme. A privacy notice for the Gigabit Voucher Scheme can be found at [https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/privacy\\_notice/](https://gigabitvoucher.culture.gov.uk/privacy_notice/).

## **8.0 Conclusion**

8.1 There has already been significant progress in rolling out gigabit-capable broadband infrastructure across Kent with 77% of premises now having access to gigabit-capable connections.

8.2 The additional proposed £112.3 million investment by Government to deliver gigabit-capable connections to harder-to-reach, non-commercial homes and businesses is welcomed and Kent County Council remains committed to working with BDUK to support the local delivery of these vital connectivity upgrades.

### **Recommendation**

Cabinet Committee Members are asked to note the current position and provide to the Cabinet Member any comments on the proposed approach.

## **Contact details**

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**From:** Benjamin Watts, General Counsel

**To:** Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee – 14 May 2024

**Subject:** Work Programme 2024/2025

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past and Future Pathway of Paper:** Standard agenda item

**Summary:** This report gives details of the proposed work programme for the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.

**Recommendation:** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and agree its Work Programme for 2024/2025.

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 The proposed work programme, appended to the report, has been compiled from items in the Future Executive Decision List and from actions identified during the meetings and at agenda setting meetings, in accordance with the Constitution.
- 1.2 Whilst the chairman, in consultation with the cabinet members, is responsible for the programme's fine tuning, this item gives all members of this cabinet committee the opportunity to suggest amendments and additional agenda items where appropriate.

## 2. Work Programme

- 2.1 The proposed work programme has been compiled from items in the Future Executive Decision List and from actions arising and from topics, within the remit of the functions of this cabinet committee, identified at the agenda setting meetings. Agenda setting meetings are held 6 weeks before a cabinet committee meeting, in accordance with the constitution.
- 2.2 The cabinet committee is requested to consider and note the items within the proposed Work Programme, set out in appendix A to this report, and to suggest any additional topics to be considered at future meetings, where appropriate.
- 2.3 The schedule of commissioning activity which falls within the remit of this cabinet committee will be included in the work programme and considered at future agenda setting meetings to support more effective forward agenda planning and allow members to have oversight of significant service delivery decisions in advance.
- 2.4 When selecting future items, the cabinet committee should consider the contents of performance monitoring reports. Any 'for information' items will be

sent to members of the cabinet committee separately to the agenda and will not be discussed at the cabinet committee meetings.

### **3. Conclusion**

- 3.1 It is vital for the cabinet committee process that the committee takes ownership of its work programme to deliver informed and considered decisions. A regular report will be submitted to each meeting of the cabinet committee to give updates of requested topics and to seek suggestions for future items to be considered. This does not preclude members making requests to the chairman or the Democratic Services Officer between meetings, for consideration.

**4. Recommendation:** The Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee is asked to consider and agree its Work Programme for 2024/2025.

**5. Background Documents:** None

### **6. Contact details**

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**GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE  
WORK PROGRAMME 2024/2025**

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cabinet Committee to receive item</b>
Work Programme	Standing item
Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corporate Director	Standing item
Final Draft Budget	November and January
Risk Register – Strategic Risk Register	Annually (March)
Performance Dashboard	Quarterly
Kent and Medway Business Fund Monitoring	Bi-annual reporting (6 monthly)
Key Decision Items	

**3 JULY 2024 at 10am**

1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	PROW – Highways Act Amendment Paper	
7	Agriculture and farming economy - land based industries and food production	
8	Trading Standards Checked	
9	Lower Thames Crossing	
10	Thames Estuary	
11	Playground – Year 1 Update	
12	The Old Rectory – Outline Options	Key Decision
13	IAB Member Recruitment	Key Decision
14	Skills Bootcamp	
15	Sports Capital Grant	
16	Work Programme	Standing item

**11 SEPTEMBER 2024 at 2pm**

1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item

5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Performance Dashboard	
7	Deep dive into PROW	
8	KMBF Bi-Annual Report	
9	Universal Support	Key Decision
10	Minerals & Waste Local Plan	
11	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>6 NOVEMBER 2024 at 2pm</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Initial Draft Budget	
7	Otterpool Garden Town	
8	Tourism in the county and economic impact	
9	KMEP Implementation Update	
10	Energy Infrastructure	
11	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>22 JANUARY 2025 at 2pm</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Final Draft Budget	
7	Performance Dashboard	
8	Kent Design Guide	
9	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>6 MARCH 2025 at 10am</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item



6	KMBF Bi-Annual Report	
7	Work Programme	Standing item
<b>1 JULY 2025 at 10am</b>		
1	Intro/ Web announcement	Standing item
2	Apologies and Subs	Standing item
3	Declaration of Interest	Standing item
4	Minutes	Standing item
5	Verbal Updates – Cabinet Members and Corp. Dir.	Standing item
6	Performance Dashboard	
7	Work Programme	Standing item

<b>Items for Consideration that have not yet been allocated to a meeting</b>	
Dungeness Nuclear Power Station	<i>(Mr Robey – agenda setting 31/01/23)</i>
Faversham Creek Bridge	<i>(re-added – agenda setting 23/5/23)</i>
Manston Airport/Business Park	<i>(Mr Lewis – GED&amp;C CC 26/9/23)</i>

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