

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber on Thursday, 11 July 2024.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mr N Baker, Mrs C Bell, Mrs S Chandler, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Mr D Watkins and Mr R J Thomas

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr A Ghosh (Director of Public Health), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Ms C McInnes (Director of Education), Ms S Hill (Interim Director Adult Social Care), Alesbrook (Financial Hardship Programme Manager), Mrs J Dixon-Sherreard (Policy Manager), Tracy Veasey (Commissioning Officer) and Mr T Woolmer (Policy & Partnerships Adviser - Kent Public Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

53. Apologies

(Item 1)

No apologies were received

54. Declarations of Interest

(Item)

Mr Peter Oakford declared an interest in item 9 – Financial Hardship Programme - in that he was a Trustee of the North West Kent Citizen's Advice Bureau.

55. Minutes of the Meeting held on 20 June 2024

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting on 20 June 2024 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

56. Cabinet Member Updates

(Item 4)

1. Mr Watkins, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, provided an update on the following:
 - (a) Each year on 21st June the Motor Neurone Disease (MND) Association join with the wider MND community, including professionals and volunteers involved in the planning and delivery of health and social care services to honour both those living with MND and their carers. Mr Watkins attended the event which was held at the University of Kent and received a number of requests to ensure that those suffering with MND received the required care and support in a timely fashion. Mr Watkins confirmed that this work would be followed up accordingly with officers.

Alcohol Awareness Week ran from 1st to 7th July 2024. Many people in the UK drank sensibly, and a growing number did not drink at all. However, around a quarter of adults in England and Scotland, including 300,000 residents in Kent, regularly consumed more than the recommended 14 units a week. A reduction in alcohol consumption had a number of both short-term and long-term benefits, including better sleep, healthier weight, lower blood pressure and reduced the risk of some cancers developing. The [Know your score quiz](#) offered practical steps on measuring and monitoring alcohol consumption; however, for those looking for support, Kent County Council (KCC) offered the One You Kent Service which could be accessed via the initial [online referral form](#). KCC also commissioned specialist treatment. [Forward Trust ran the East Kent Community Drug and Alcohol Service](#) while [Change Grow Live](#) delivered the West Kent Drug and Alcohol Wellbeing Service.

(b) Both KCC and Medway Council were backing calls from the UK Health Security Agency (UKHSA) and NHS for pregnant mums to get vaccinated against whooping cough to protect their babies. Cases continued to rise across England and infants who were too young to start their vaccinations were at greater risk. Parents of babies over 8 weeks old were also urged to get their young children protected against the disease that is caused by a bacterial infection of the lungs and breathing tubes, and which could cause serious problems including pneumonia and seizures. In rare cases it could be fatal. Mr Watkins urged those who were pregnant and who had not been vaccinated, along with those who had a child who had not been vaccinated to contact their GP practice.

2. Mr Love, Cabinet Member for Education and Skills, provided an update on the following:

(a) Mr Love attended the MJ Awards ceremony which acknowledged the tremendous efforts of those in local government and the difference they made to the communities they served. Mr Love paid tribute to Sarah Hammond, Corporate Director for Children, Young People and Education who was recognised as ‘highly commended’ for her achievements in the ‘Corporate Director of the Year’ category.

(b) Mr Charlie Guthrie, Chief Executive Officer of Endeavour Multi-Academy Trust had been appointed as Chair to the Pathways for All Post-16 Board. Collaborative working would continue to ensure that young people of all interests and abilities could access provision closer to where they lived.

(c) KCC’s statutory SEND services continued to improve. In June 32.3% of Education Health and Care Plans (EHCPs) were completed within 20 weeks, a rise of 30 percentage points since the service reforms were put in place, and the service was on target to ensure that no child or young person would be waiting over 30 weeks for an EHCP by September 2024. Progress continued and the beneficial impacts of the reforms were now starting to come to fruition.

- (d) Mr Love visited a number of schools and educational provisions across North Kent including the three schools on the Sevenoaks education campus. Mr Love paid homage to KCC for the historical work undertaken to bring two new grammar school buildings to a town previously deprived of grammar schools. The visit highlighted the impressive teaching and learning at all sites and reinforced the reason as to why Kent schools continued to outperform the national average as confirmed by Ofsted data.
- (e) Mrs Hamilton (Deputy Cabinet Member for Education and Skills) attended the new wing at Jubilee Primary School in Maidstone which marked the ten year anniversary of the Free school.
- (f) Aquila, the Diocese of Canterbury Academies Trust also celebrated its tenth year anniversary with a service at All Saints Church in Maidstone to which Mr Love was invited to attend. The 16 schools within the Trust put forward a number of pupils to sing in a choir of 160 young voices which Mr Love remarked was a moment of shared joy.
3. Mr Baker, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport, provided an update on the following:
- (a) Kent County Council's (KCC) Structures and Tunnels Asset Manager, Helen Rowe, was included in the Women's Engineering Society's Top 50 Women in Engineering (WE50) list of winners for 2024. The yearly award takes place every International Women in Engineering Day on 23 June and celebrated women who were trailblazers in the world of engineering. Mr Baker offered his congratulations and said that anyone living in or visiting Kent benefited from the Helen's work.
- (b) The £8.6m pothole blitz was progressing well. As of 21st June a total of 138,557.61 sqm had been completed and would continue into mid-October prior to entering into the winter service period.
- 4110 potholes had been filled
 - 77% of works had been raised and passed to contractors
 - 62% of work had been completed across the network
- (c) Work was also underway to deliver the £40m road surfacing programme for both roads and footways. As of the end of June, the team had successfully delivered £15.5m of road surfacing work covering 350,000sqm and £1.5m improvement of footways covering 42,000sqm.
- (d) Mr Baker advised that there remained no confirmed date for the implementation of the EU Entry/Exit system but KCC continued to work towards 6th October. As key partners in the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum, the Council continued to revise business continuity plans to take into account the anticipated impacts on Kent; however, a reasonable worst case scenario was awaited from Government to enable targeted planning. Eurotunnel were continuing to develop the terminal at Cheriton with kiosks for UK nationals to register before traveling to Europe. The port of Dover was developing an area of kiosks to process coaches and a

buffer zone prior to French customs to enable registration for car users. However the port did not have capacity for kiosks and would therefore rely on officers using hand-held devices to register car occupants.

- (e) Operation Brock continued to present challenges and would be a topic of priority to discuss with the new Secretary of State for Transport. KCC remained focused on pressing Government for a multi-year settlement plan to enable forward planning and the ability to secure appropriate resource for Kent.
4. Mr Thomas, Cabinet Member for Environment, provided an update on the following:
- (a) The consultation feedback on the Change to Windmills Policy was presented to the [Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee on Tuesday 9th July](#). The recommendation was that KCC should seek to divest itself of the windmills it currently owns by a method that ensures that the windmills have a sustainable future in which they are appropriately cared for and maintained as community assets. Mr Thomas reiterated the message presented Cabinet Committee and stated that the steps identified were the start of the process and not the end and work would continue to take place with communities to ensure that windmills were conserved for future generations.
 - (b) The build of the new Sevenoaks Household Waste Recycling (HWRC) Centre at Dunbrik was due to be operational by mid-September 2024. The build commenced in early July 2023 and development had been secured through new leasing arrangements that would enable sustainable waste disposal operations along with enhanced capacity whilst also accommodating government's future legislative changes. The HWRC was designed to enable the recycling of more waste streams collected at kerbside by Sevenoaks district council and to ensure statutory requirements were met for both collection and disposal authorities .
 - (c) KCC continued to expand its reuse activities with eight HWRCs collecting items in reuse containers. FCC Environment who provided the management and operation for a number of Kent's HWRCs worked in partnership with charities and local authorities to establish reuse shops. Mr Thomas confirmed that a reuse shop had been established at the Allington HWRC.
 - (d) Mr Thomas confirmed that Mr Simon Springate had joined KCC at the start of July in his role as the new Plan Bee officer.
5. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Growth and Economic Development, provided an update on the following:
- (a) KCC hosted a meeting with the Governor of West Flanders, Carl Decaluwé on 10th and 11th June. The visit commenced with a political meeting, attended by both Mr Murphy and the Leader of the Council on matters requiring a united approach, with a particular emphasis on economic development, inward investment and research. The meeting

was followed by an intensive workshop on water management, the theme of which stemmed from a meeting of the Straits Committee held in Dover in 2023. Day two of the visit included a series of presentations on water management and a visit to the Lower Medway Drainage Board.

- (b) Mr Murphy met with Matthew Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner on 19th June to discuss the resources available to combat environmental crime in the county and principally, how improved communication and cooperation amongst partner organisations such as the Environment Agency and the HMRC could play a pivotal role. Work continued to develop in this area to optimise resource and outcome.
 - (c) The Kent and Medway Business Fund (KMBF) Board had received an encouraging number of applications from across a number of sectors within Kent regarding interest to sit on the Board, which was a voluntary non-paid position. The successful candidate would be announced in due course.
 - (d) Furthermore, due to the success of the KMBF marketing campaign, the Small Business Board was due to convene for a whole day as opposed to a half day in order to assess the volume of applications received.
6. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, provided an update on the following:
- (a) The Food Standards agency awarded Kent Scientific Services with a grant of over £100,000 to support their work. In addition, Mrs Bell placed on record her congratulations to Ms Rebecca Flint who had excelled in her apprenticeship degree and received 1st class in chemistry and a distinction in her final assessment.
 - (b) Kent Community Safety Partnership hosted a webinar to share learning from domestic homicide reviews . The event included a powerful presentation in relation to coercive control. It was attended by 130 professionals and 98% rated it as excellent or very good.
 - (c) The [consultation](#) on Folkstone library was due to commence on Thursday 18th July.
 - (d) The Know your neighbourhood project, a national initiative aimed to widen participation in volunteering and tackle loneliness in 27 disadvantaged areas across England received £2.5m of the £30m fund. Thanet libraries which received £85,000 of the grant aimed to use the funding to run a range of activities and events over the course of the next year including walking and gardening for wellbeing, children's craft activities, menopause cafes, family learning support events and social prescribing.

(e) The 2024 [Summer Reading Challenge](#), Marvelous Makers, launched on 6th July and would conclude on 7th September. The 2023 reading challenge saw 18000 children participate, 2911 of whom joined the library specifically to take part. National evidence from 2023 indicated that 80% of children read more as result of taking part, 70% improved their reading skills and 72% gained reading confidence. A number of free events were taking place across Kent libraries during the Summer Reading Challenge. Mrs Bell urged both residents and Members to visit their local library to see the positive work underway.

7. The Leader attended the opening of the Thanet Earth Centre of Excellence at Hadlow College. The new education centre had been developed to inspire and train the next generation of UK salad and vegetable growers. It was an inspirational occasion and was strongly linked to the growing Kent and Medway initiative. The Leader commented on the scale of work taking place to invigorate a traditional sector, which remained an area of tremendous strength and advantage for the county.

The Leader thanked the Cabinet Members for their updates.

57. Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) Update *(Item 5)*

Dave Shipton (Head of Finance, Policy, Strategy and Planning) was in attendance for this item

1. Mr Oakford (Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services) introduced the report that set out the proposed process and timetable for updating the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) which was presented to full Council on 19th February 2024 including consultation, scrutiny and final approval which would be sought by full Council in February 2025. Mr Oakford commented on the welcome news regarding a multi-year settlement from government from 2025-26 onwards; however, the Council needed to continue to identify efficient ways of making savings. Cabinet remained fully committed to finding £20m of policy savings in 2025-26 to replace one-off measures taken to balance 2024-25.
2. Mr Shipton (Head of Finance, Policy, Strategy and Planning) advised that the current plan showed forecast spending growth was higher than the assumed funding growth and the paper presented to Cabinet outlined the timescales and processes to be carried out by Finance to update both the spending and saving figures to identify if there were any gaps that needed to be addressed or a surplus.
3. Price growth was forecast to decline in line with inflation forecasts (the rate of inflation had been declining steadily in recent months). The MTFP was based on the Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts made in November 2023 and based on an annual rate of 3.6% for 2024 which fell to 1.8% for 2025. The actual rates for 2024 were lower than the OBR forecast (3.5% in the first quarter, 2.3% in April 2024 and 2.0% in May 2024). However, the May Bank of England forecast

for 2025 was 2.8% in quarters 1 & 2 falling to 2.6% in quarter 3 and 2.4% in quarter 4. These were higher than the 1.8% that the OBR had forecast. Officers were waiting for the August Bank of England projections to review inflation rates.

4. Updates would continue to be received as outlined in the report and as proposed, Scrutiny Committee in November would focus on the policy choices within the budget proposals relevant to each Committee, rather than the overall assumptions on which budget proposals were based. Each Committee would receive a tailored report with an overall budget plan as background information, rather than the standard report that had been published in recent years. The BI dashboard introduced for the 2024 budget would continue to be used, however, enhanced in line with the suggestions put forward by Scrutiny Committee.
5. The [Budget Consultation](#) for 2025-2026 was launched on 13th June. To date the response rate had been lower compared to the same time last year. A comprehensive communications campaign had been launched alongside the consultation; however, this was due to be reviewed to ascertain as to whether additional activity was required to increase response rates.
6. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:
 - Clarity was needed from Government, particularly in relation to Social Care reform in terms of funding mechanisms and the fair cost of care which was due to come into effect from autumn 2025.
 - A new financial settlement under a new Labour administration was unlikely to relieve the financial pressures for the 2025-26 budget. Whilst there were suggestions of reform that could impact the cost drivers within Adult Social Care and Children's Social Care, the Council would need to continue to make difficult decisions to balance the budget for 2025-26.
 - Whilst local authorities had faced a reduction to core funding from Government over the years, KCC continued to deliver its services despite the financial challenges. Thanks was paid to staff who continued to deliver savings and for their ongoing commitment.
7. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the proposed process and timetable to update the MTFP.

58. Unaccompanied Asylum-Seeking Children Update (Item 6)

Ben Watts (General Counsel) and Amanda Beer (Chief Executive) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Leader introduced the report which provided an update on the current operational and legal position regarding the arrival of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children (UASC) in Kent. Members were reminded that following a number of hearings over the past year, the final judgment in the High Court

proceedings that was brought against the Government by Kent County Council (KCC) was handed down on 5th June 2024. The judgment concluded the position that KCC had reported through a number of Section 5 reports, regarding its inability to meet its statutory duty regarding UASC and the issue concerning the inequitable National Transfer System (NTS) which placed a disproportionate burden on Kent. The judgment was clear that the Council and the Home Office had to do everything possible to get the Council back to a position of lawfulness. Following discussions and funding from the Home Office for this explicit purpose, the Council had developed additional capacity at pace. However, the challenge remained in ensuring KCC had sufficient capacity to meet the high number of arrivals and work was ongoing to accommodate this. Following the General Election and the appointment of Rt Hon Yvette Cooper MP as the new Home Secretary, the Leader confirmed that he would be writing to her, setting out KCC's current position and would seek to engage with Government to find solutions for a national problem which would be positive and long-lasting. The Leader commended the Children's Services team, along with infrastructure, legal and finance for the work they had done in addressing the challenges.

2. Mrs Chandler (Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services) addressed the significant amount of work that had been undertaken across the Council, specifically in relation to 'trigger point 4' under the Early Warning System (EWS) whereby on a number of occasions KCC and central Government narrowly averted crisis and ensured placements were identified within timeframe to accommodate UASC arrivals. The level of participation from other Local Authorities in the NTS had not been maintained, which emphasised the Council's contention that the NTS was not operating in an equitable manner to ensure children were evenly distributed across the country. The level of UASC arrivals remained high and tensions would persist over the summer period. Furthermore, Mrs Chandler noted that the cohort of KCC's UASC Care Leavers was greater compared to other Local Authorities, however, funding from Government continued to remain inadequate in comparison to funding received for those under 18. Again, this was a national issue which KCC had to effectively manage with very limited resources.
3. Mr Watts (General Counsel) advised that all measures would be taken to mitigate requirement for further litigation. He noted that the litigation did however ensure a package of funding and increased investment to support the steps required by the Court and thus avoided funding from Kent taxpayers. Mr Watts noted the opportunity that was presented to the Council to share and reflect on its learning from the Judicial Review; however, the challenge remained for the Council in its capacity to meet its statutory duty and would continue to advocate to Government the need for sustainable changes.
4. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:
 - That despite the Home Secretary retaining the power to accommodate UAS children in hotels under emergency situations, it was unpopular and damaged both local cohesion and the tourism sector.

- Members noted that whilst KCC may have had appropriate funding and capacity to accommodate UAS children, there may not have been the capacity in terms of specialist resource to manage the large numbers of arrivals.

5. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the report.

59. Annual Governance Statement Update

(Item 7)

Ben Watts (General Counsel) was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Watts (General Counsel) introduced the report which performed the role of one of the actions which was to be delivered as part of the Annual Governance Statement and ensured Cabinet Members were sighted on areas of the Council where statutory compliance had been identified as a risk. This report replicated some of the discussions held as part of the Performance Monitoring at previous Cabinet meetings. Cabinet Members continued to work with Corporate Directors to address the areas identified as being at risk. The annual internal and external audit and the Annual Governance Statement was due to be presented to County Council in September 2024. Mr Watts thanked all those who continued to support him in effectively dealing with the legal challenges presented to the Council, including Gurpreet Singh (Barrister, Head of Law), Tristan Godfrey (Senior Governance Manager), Lizzy Adam (Operations & Client Relationship Manager) and Joel Cook (Democratic Services Manager).

2. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the report.

60. Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy/Kent Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy Delivery Plan

(Item 8)

Dr Anjan Ghosh (Director of Public Health) and Jenny Dixon-Sherreard (Policy Advisor) were in attendance for this item.

1. The Leader introduced the report which provided an update on the development of the Integrated Care Strategy Shared Delivery Plan (SDP) which in turn encompassed the Delivery Plan for the Integrated Care Strategy, which serves as Kent's Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy (JLHWS), and noted the extensive work undertaken to create a system wide approach.

2. Dr Ghosh (Director of Public Health) informed Members that the Shared Delivery Plan was underpinned by the Logical Framework (logframe) which was an extensive collection of strategic indicators that were linked to the six shared outcomes within the [Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy](#). The Shared Delivery Plan was designed to be a useful mechanism to gain oversight and assurance in the coherent delivery of actions across the system. The Shared Delivery Plan also functioned as the NHS Joint Forward Plan which was a statutory requirement of the Integrated Care Board (ICB). The Shared Delivery Plan spanned two years (2024-2026) and therefore took into account the current financial challenges. Dr Ghosh noted that the final version of the Plan would be presented to the Integrated Care Board (ICB) and had been approved by Medway

Council. The final draft was due to be presented to the Integrated Care Partnership on 27 August for endorsement.

3. Mrs Dixon-Sherreard detailed the changes that had been made to the Shared Delivery Plan (as set out within the report)
4. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:
 - Members commented on the extensive input and the feedthrough of plans down to district and boroughs through the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC). It was important that delivery of the plan was consistent.
 - Whilst it was important to ensure progress through extensive monitoring, a central aspect in being able to measure the outcomes of the Shared Delivery Plan would be through the ability to demonstrate the personal outcomes of those individuals.
 - The Shared Delivery Plan was a live document that spanned two years (2024-26), after which it would be refreshed to take account of progress and any national or local changes. The Integrated Care Strategy was a five year document, after which a full review would take place.
 - In response to concerns regarding the performance of the NHS within Kent and the impact this had on the ability to deliver the aims and objectives set out within the Integrated Care Strategy and Shared Delivery Plan, Mr Ghosh advised that the key areas which aimed to be addressed through the work included prevention and tackling health inequalities through providing care closer to home; the other was around strengthening primary care to release pressure in the acute Trusts, both of which are objectives for the new Labour Government. Mr Ghosh advised that 80% of health outcomes sat outside the NHS and the work that was being done through the Integrated Care Strategy and Shared Delivery Plan aimed to be part of that solution.
5. The Leader thanked the officers and all those involved
6. RESOLVED that Cabinet
 - (a) note the process used in developing the Shared Delivery Plan for the Integrated Care Strategy and
 - (b) agree the Shared Delivery Plan to support assurance on delivery of the Integrated Care Strategy
 - (c) note and support ongoing activity to define fully the role of KCC in improving health and wellbeing

61. Financial Hardship Programme
(Item 9)

Lucy Alesbrook (Financial Hardship Programme Manager) Tracy Veasey (Project Manager - Residential Lead) and Tim Woolmer (Head of Strategic Partnerships)

were in attendance for this item.

1. The Leader introduced the report which provided a high-level overview of the support provided in response to the ongoing financial pressures, focussing in particular on the work funded by the Helping Hands Scheme, and the delivery of the Department of Work and Pensions Household Support Fund. The Leader thanked the officers for their hard work which had enabled the programme to operate beyond its initial timeline, March 2025.
2. Ms Alesbrook (*Financial Hardship Programme Manager*), presented a series of slides (not included within the agenda pack) which set out the key areas of the Financial Hardship Programme: Residential, Digital Inclusion and Capabilities, Crowdfunding and Business.
3. Further to comments and questions from Members it was noted:
 - In response to the increase in statistics concerning the uptake in residents using NHS online services (17.25%) and online government services (5.62%) and whether this was a direct result of the digital inclusion workstream, Ms Alesbrook confirmed that the digital inclusion workstream provided training and drop-in sessions for residents to both improve their knowledge and understanding of those services. The evaluations had been taken from surveys of those people both before and after training to track their inclination to use services online and their confidence in doing so. The statistics were a direct outcome of the work done with a specific set of people, they were not from other independent surveys. Ms Alesbrook agreed to provide further information on the evaluation process and how this fed into the narrative.
 - In regard to whether there was a coordinated approach to the digital inclusion work to avoid duplication, Ms Alesbrook confirmed that the Programme worked closely in partnership with a number of organisations to reduce duplication and ensure that efforts were focussed on achieving positive impacts for Kent. There were a number of steering groups (led by KCC) along with the Financial Hardship Task and Finish Group, and strong partnership working within the voluntary sector. Whilst there remained no central lead, a number of effective formal and informal channels were established to ensure a joined up approach and which mitigated duplication of efforts. The Financial Hardship Programme had also received funding from other organisations in recognition of the expertise offered and some partners had funded work directly, all of which had helped to ensure the effective coordination of work.
 - It was confirmed that as part of the Device Recycling Scheme, old devices that potentially could not be refurbished would be disposed of in the most environmentally friendly way. A significant number of KCC devices were refurbished and reused.
4. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the report.

