

**POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE**

**Tuesday, 10th September, 2024**

**10.00 am**

**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall,  
Maidstone**





## AGENDA

### POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

**Tuesday, 10 September 2024, at 10.00 am**      Ask for:      **Hayley Savage**  
**Council Chamber, Sessions House, County**      Telephone:      **03000 414286**  
**Hall, Maidstone**

#### **Membership (17)**

- Conservative (12):      Mr D L Brazier (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman),  
Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mr T Bond, Mr N J D Chard,  
Mr G Cooke, Mr P C Cooper, Mrs S Hudson, Mr J A Kite, MBE,  
Mr J P McInroy and Mr H Rayner
- Labour (2):      Mr A Brady and Ms M Dawkins
- Liberal Democrat (1):      Mr A J Hook
- Green and  
Independent (2):      Rich Lehmann and Mr P Stepto

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

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

- 1      Introduction/Webcast announcement
- 2      Apologies and Substitutes
- 3      Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda
- 4      Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2024 (Pages 1 - 4)
- 5      Facilities Management Bi-Annual Update (Pages 5 - 22)
- 6      24/00069 - Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2030 (Pages 23 - 62)
- 7      24/00079 - Sevenoaks Land East of High Street - Pre-Consultation and the next steps (Pages 63 - 136)

- 8 Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department (Pages 137 - 154)
- 9 24/00071 - Afghan Resettlement (ARAP and ACRS) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) - proposed service delivery from February 2025 (Pages 155 - 182)
- 10 Annual Equality & Diversity Report 2023-24 (Pages 183 - 248)
- 11 Customer Feedback Policy (Pages 249 - 276)
- 12 Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee meetings (Pages 277 - 284)
- 13 Work Programme 2024/25 (Pages 285 - 288)

### **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

**Monday, 2 September 2024**

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**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL****POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 10 July 2024

PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr T Bond, Mr N J D Chard, Ms M Dawkins, Mr A J Hook, Rich Lehmann, Mr J P McInroy, Mr H Rayner, Mr P Stepto, Mrs R Binks (Substitute), Ms J Meade (Substitute) and Mr G Cooke

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford and Mr D Jeffrey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr J Betts (Acting Corporate Director Finance), Miss K Reynolds (Governance Advisor), Mr H D'Alton (Investment and Disposal Surveyor), Ms C Starte (Head of Marketing and Resident Experience), Ms A Wynde (Engagement & Consultations Lead) and Ms C Vincent (Investment & Disposals Officer)

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS****210. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 2)*

Apologies for absence had been received from Dr Sullivan, Mr McInroy, Mrs Hudson and Mr Cooper. Ms Meade and Mrs Binks were present as substitutes for Dr Sullivan and Mr McInroy respectively.

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

*(Item 3)*

There were no declarations of interest.

**212. Minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2024**

*(Item 4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 15 May 2024 were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chairman.

**213. Budget Update**

*(Item 5)*

1. Mr Peter Oakford and Mr Dave Shipton introduced the report which set out the proposed process and timetable for updating the Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) presented to full Council on 19th February 2024 including consultation, scrutiny and final approval by full Council in February 2025. It

was emphasised that the Council's planned spending growth exceeded the expected increase in funding through Council Tax and the Government settlement.

2. It was said that the response rate to the ongoing Budget Consultation was less than that of the previous year, despite a comprehensive communications campaign. Further work was being undertaken to promote the consultation at the halfway point. Members of the public were urged to respond to the consultation.
3. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) The first quarterly budget report for 2024/25 would be considered by Cabinet in September 2024. It was said that early indications suggested that there were still areas of budget pressures, despite the planned spending growth. However, it was always difficult to estimate the impact accurately in the early months of the financial year. There were weekly meetings involving relevant Corporate Directors and Cabinet Members to review the Council's spending.
  - b) The expected inflation were based on the November 2023 Office for Budget Responsibility (OBR) forecasts for 2024-25 to 2026-27. The March 2024 OBR report had lower forecasts into 2025/26 than the November report. However, the most recent Bank of England forecasts were higher than OBR forecasts despite rate of increase in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) reducing close to the 2% target in recent months.
4. RESOLVED to note and comment on the proposed process and timetable to update the MTFP.

**214. 24/00063 - Disposal of Boughton Mount, Boughton Monchelsea, Maidstone, ME17 4NA**

*(Item 6)*

1. Ms Rebecca Spore introduced the report which detailed the proposed disposal of Boughton Mount, Boughton Lane, Boughton Monchelsea, ME17 4NA. It was confirmed that a full review had been conducted and that the site was surplus to KCC's requirements. It was proposed that the property would be marketed on an all enquiries basis.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) Historic restrictive covenants had complicated the disposal of the property. Further to a Key Decision taken in June 2017 to undertake an appropriation procedure in relation to the restrictive covenant, and subsequent to an abortive disposal in 2019/20, the site was considered to be ready for remarketing.
  - b) Mr Oakford confirmed that, given the Council's challenging financial position, he was not in a position to ringfence the capital receipt from the sale of the property for children's or education services.
3. RESOLVED to consider and endorse the proposed decision to agree to:

- a) the disposal of the property, Boughton Mount, Boughton Lane, Boughton Monchelsea, ME17 4NA; and
- b) delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

## **215. Decisions taken outside of Committee cycle: 24-00050 - Rosemary Centre Disposal**

*(Item 7)*

1. Mr Peter Oakford introduced the report which outlined the reasons why Key Decision 24/00050 was taken outside of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee cycle, and why it could not reasonably be deferred to the next programmed Committee.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:
  - a) There were specific processes in place to dispose of properties that were listed as assets of community value. It was confirmed that the Council was required to demonstrate Best Value and, therefore, some assets that were listed as assets of community value were put to auction to achieve the highest capital receipt. The process ensured that there was a 6 month period prior to the disposal to give community groups time to develop proposals and secure funding in order to participate in any process. However, the Former Rosemary Centre, 189 High Road, Wilmington DA2 7DP was not an asset of community value when it was entered into auction; the nomination was made after it had been published in the auction catalogue.
  - b) A full list of KCC's property assets was available on the KCC website: [Contact us about property or land we own - Kent County Council](#). The Council's property asset disposal list was not published as this was seen to increase the risk of criminal activity on the sites.
3. RESOLVED to note that Decision No. 24/000550, Disposal of the Former Rosemary Centre, 189 High Road, Wilmington DA2 7DP, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

## **216. Contract Management Review Group update**

*(Item 8)*

1. Ms Clare Maynard introduced the report which detailed on the work of the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG) following the re-launch of the Group under new Terms of Reference in September 2023. The paper summarised the key outcomes and common themes emerging from the contract reviews that have been undertaken since the re-launch of the CMRG and assesses the impact that the Group had in that time period. Since the publication of the report, the CMRG had also met on the 9<sup>th</sup> of July 2024 to discuss the property construction framework.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was said that:

- a) The Terms of Reference for the CMRG would be reshared with the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee for reference.
- b) Ms Maynard would consider the recommendation that union representatives be invited to attend the CMRG meetings to provide information on specific contracts.

3. RESOLVED to consider and note the report.

## **217. Kent County Council's Approach to Public Consultation**

*(Item 9)*

1. Mr Dylan Jeffery introduced the report which summarised the current approach and process to public consultation at KCC. The distinction between statutory and non-statutory consultation was emphasised and Members were told that where KCC had a duty to consult it adopted fair and effective consultation methods. It was emphasised that KCC follows the Gunning Principles - the requirements for a legally robust consultation process. The Let's Talk Kent platform was an example of how the Council utilised technology to engage with a greater number of residents. Members were assured that the Council always offered different methods of engagement to avoid digital exclusion.
2. In response to questions and comments it was said that:
  - a) A number of the 36,000 registered users on the Let's Talk Kent platform were organisations, and therefore represented multiple residents within a single registration.
  - b) Responses to consultations were taken into account by decision-makers, but consultations were not a form of vote. It was confirmed that consultation promoted was targeted to those who were most affected by the proposed decision to encourage them to respond. The Consultation Team worked with services in the community to better understand how to improve the consultation process.
  - c) The Consultation Team would take into account the suggestion to provide feedback on the results of consultations on the same channels on which they were initially advertised.
  - d) The Consultation Team would take into account the suggestions made for improvement to the Let's Talk Kent Platform.

3. RESOLVED to note KCC's approach to public consultations.

## **218. Work Programme**

*(Item 10)*

RESOLVED to consider and note the planned work programme for 2024/25.

**From:** Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,  
Corporate and Traded Services

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10 September 2024

**Subject:** Facilities Management Bi-Annual Update

**Classification:** UNRESTRICTED report

**Past Pathway of report:**

**Future Pathway of report:** None.

**Electoral Division:** All

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### **Summary:**

This report provides the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee the bi-annual update on Kent County Council's (KCC) Facilities Management (FM) arrangements to provide services across both the corporate and schools estate, for which KCC has responsibility. It includes an update on the performance of the current contract and changes over the last six months.

### **Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

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## **1. Introduction/Background**

1.1 On the 1 November 2022 the disaggregated new FM model came into effect across the Corporate Landlord (CLL) and school managed estate.

1.2 The FM services have been split into contracts for:

- Hard FM contract – planned and reactive maintenance, statutory compliance, and overall helpdesk – delivered by Skanska. Across approximately 370 CLL buildings and 490 Schools.
- Cleaning and Feminine Hygiene contract – delivered by Churchills. Across approximately 271 CLL sites.
- Waste and Recycling – delivered by Countrystyle. Across approximately 187 CLL sites and 264 Schools.
- Landscape and Pest Control – delivered by Commercial Services Group (Landscape Services). Across approximately 387 sites for tree

management CLL and Schools. 187 for grounds maintenance and 60 sites for Pest Control for Corporate Landlord sites.

- Security - delivered by Sight and Sound, Wards Security and Prestige - this service will be subject to a service review with new arrangements being put in place during 2024. Across approximately 235 CLL sites.
- Porterage, Reception and Post Room services – delivered in-house by KCC FM team.

1.3 The current poor condition of the KCC estate, and historic lack of asset replacement and capital investment in buildings, continues to place increasing pressure on the delivery of FM services with FM services delivered to Warm Safe and Dry standard with this context.

1.4 The key objectives for the FM service delivery arrangements are:

- FM service delivery standards should be consistent and responsive to service requirements and required standards.
- FM services should deliver value for money for Kent and ensure that the Council meets its statutory responsibilities.

## **2. Hard FM Performance (Contractual including Key Performance Indicators (KPIs))**

2.1 Key Performance Monitoring data outlined below focuses on the completion of planned, reactive and statutory tasks.

2.2 Each month KCC and Skanska review the performance of the contract at the Governance group meetings.

2.3 In April 2024, indexation was applied to the contract in line with the Consumer Price Index as outlined within the contract.

2.4 Overall Planned Preventative Maintenance (PPM) tasks for the corporate and school managed estate are outlined below. The contractor shall ensure that Routine Maintenance for all systems and Assets except Critical Systems on the Routine Maintenance Schedule within the Performance Month are carried out within the relevant tolerances. These are outlined in Appendix A.

<b>Month</b>	<b>All PPM Tasks</b>	<b>% Completion</b>	<b>Statutory PPM Tasks</b>	<b>% Completion</b>
January 2024	2550	99	659	96
February 2024	2756	98	714	97
March 2024	2857	99	621	99
April 2024	3284	98	790	98
May 2024	2931	98	664	97
June 2024	3266	98	629	96

- These figures demonstrate the high volume of PPM tasks that are completed as part of the fixed priced fee on a monthly basis across the estate.
- This data shows the level of planning required to maintain assets in a planned manner across the estate.
- Tasks which are completed late against the routine maintenance schedule, or where evidence of completion was not available in a timely manner, are failed, even though the site remains compliant with statutory requirements.
- A percentage of all the tasks completed in month are dip tested by the KCC FM team to ensure the accuracy of the Hard FM contractor's reporting.
- Tasks that have not been completed in line with the Service Level Agreement (SLA) will be reschedule and completed.
- Generally, the reason why tasks are not completed within SLA is due to the requirement for specialist parts, limited suitable access times to site if the works are likely to be disruptive, or issues with managing the supply chain.
- Resultant/remedial works from these reports are automatically loaded on the Skanska Concept system to be reviewed and agreed by the KCC FM team.

2.5 The information provided below demonstrates the contract performance for reactive services defined within the contract schedules.

2.6 These figures are applicable to the CLL estate:

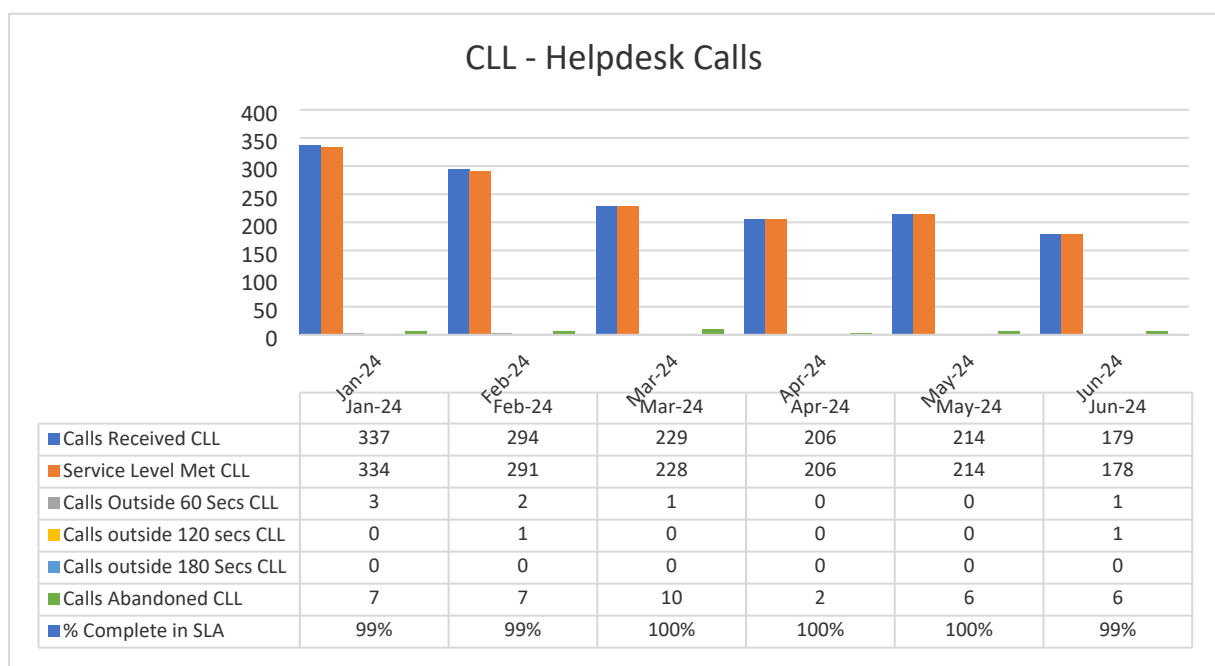
<b>Reactive Services</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>Total tasks logged</b>	<b>% Completion</b>
January 2024	900	96
February 2024	800	93
March 2024	743	97
April 2024	727	96
May 2024	716	96
June 2024	617	96

- The figures cover all reactive task priority levels within the agreed SLA i.e. Priority levels A-D. Appendix A contains the SLA standards and indicative scenarios. The above figures show tasks logged from calls and, emails as well as subordinate/additional service requests generated from the initial service request and/or visits.
- To support the contractor in ensuring that the correct Priority levels are applied, a detailed list of indicative scenarios have been agreed.

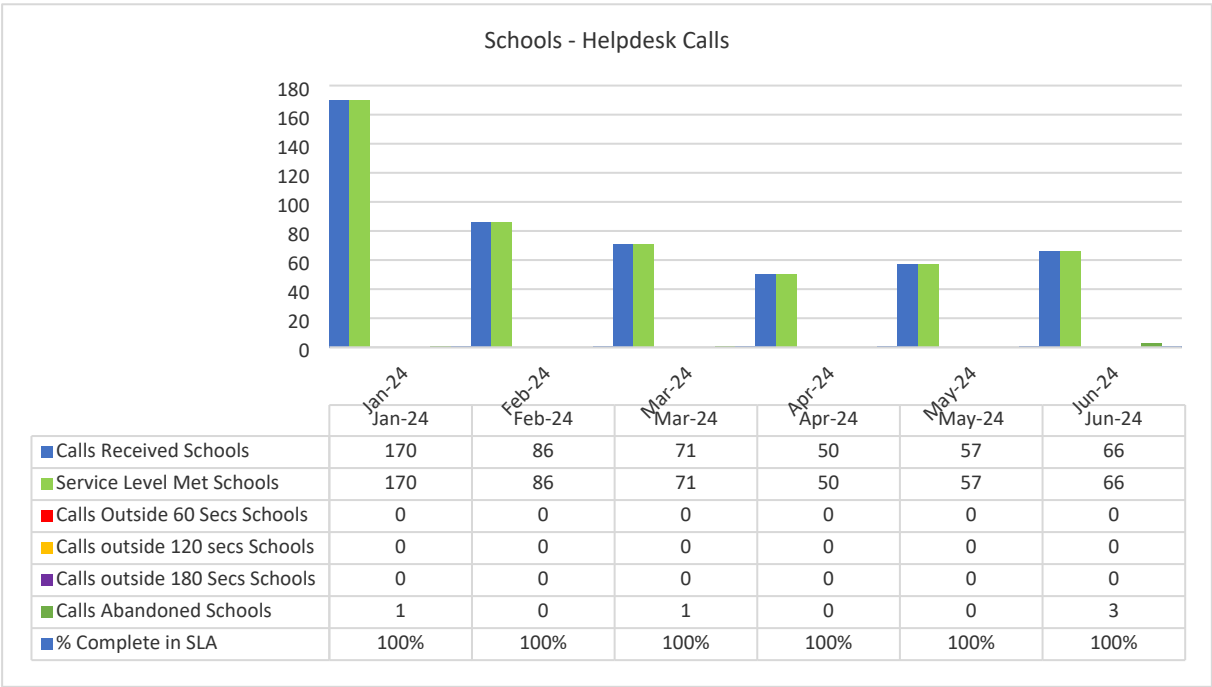
- Skanska have undertaken extensive training with the contract team, including the helpdesk to ensure that the correct priorities are allocated to each call received.
- The completion rates of tasks have improved however, Skanska continues to work with supplier chain to improve on these times.
- The application of the Semi Comprehensive Maintenance Threshold to quotes is currently under review by KCC and Skanska, with plans to remove this from the contract by September 2024. The change will reduce delays with quote approvals and allow increased resilience via Third Party contractors where Skanska are unable to respond within the required timescales.
- Overall performance against SLA has remained above 95% most months.

**The helpdesk call data for both Corporate and Schools is shown below.**

- Skanska provide the Kent Helpdesk function for all FM services across the authority. This is a 24 hour 365 days a year service including out hours.

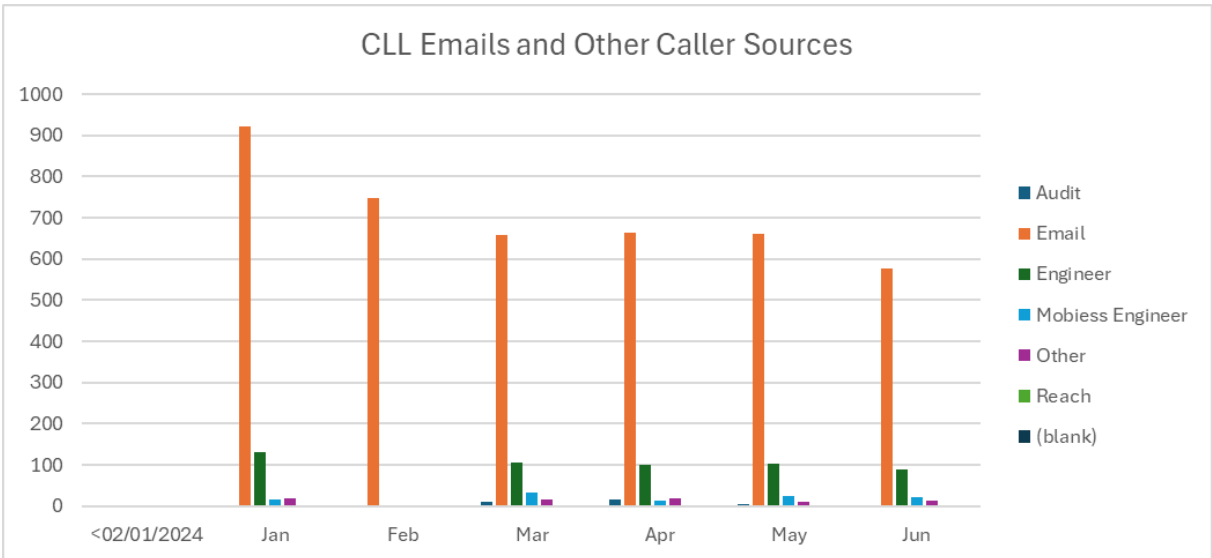


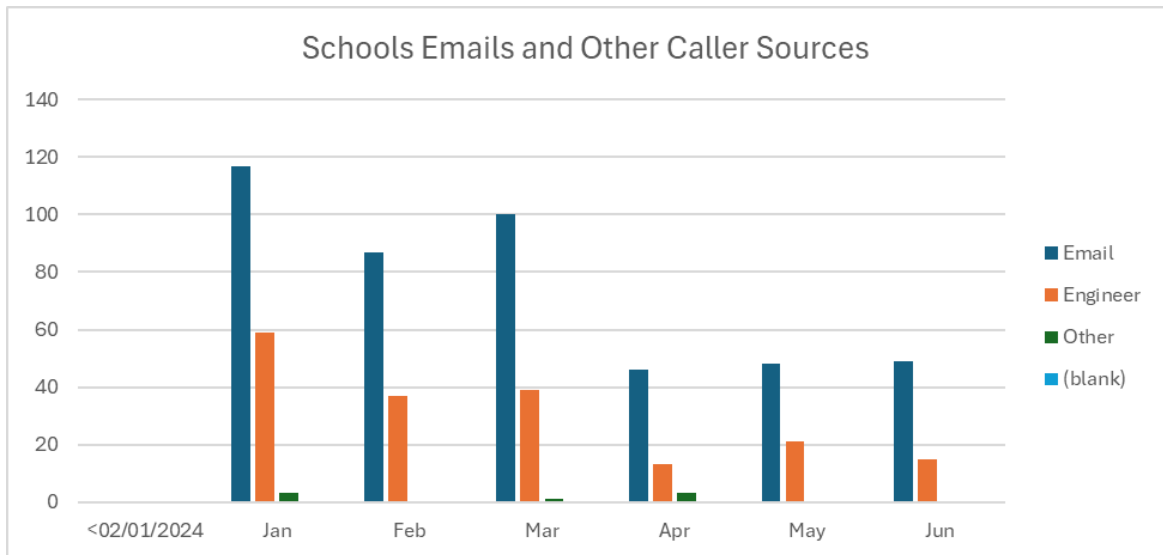




- We saw a significant increase in call volumes in January due to heating related issues, however this dropped down to usual volumes February through to June.
- SLA standard is that a call should be answered within 60 seconds. If the call continues to go unanswered the KPI is accumulative after every 60 seconds.

**The Helpdesk Emails and Other Caller Sources for both Corporate and Schools is shown below.**





- Email volume trends align with call volumes showing a significant increase in January with a decrease month on month for the rest of the year. While school email volumes show a slight increase in March, this is typically due to a push to have remedials and reactive repairs completed during the school holidays.
- Other caller sources include, tasks reported by Skanska Engineers, tasks reported in person by the KCC FM team and tasks logged directly by service users via Reach. Reach is not available in Schools.

### 3. Soft FM Performance (Contractual including KPIs)

3.1 Cleaning: The table below shows the number of planned cleans per month and the number of missed cleans. When a clean is missed, this is logged as a reactive call so that the mobile cleaning team can remedy the situation.

Planned Cleans			
Month	No of Planned cleans	No of Missed cleans	Percentage of missed cleans against planned
Jan-24	1153	6	0.50%
Feb-24	1153	7	0.60%
Mar-24	1153	7	0.60%
Apr-24	1153	11	0.95%
May-24	1153	15	1.30%
Jun-24	1153	9	0.78%
Jul-24	1153	10	0.86%

3.2 The table shows the reactive tasks undertaken by Churchills cleaning.

Reactive Tasks			
Month	Total tasks raised	Total tasks completed within timescales	Percentage completed within timescale
Jan-24	84	84	100%

<b>Feb-24</b>	<b>88</b>	<b>87</b>	<b>99%</b>
<b>Mar-24</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Apr-24</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>98%</b>
<b>May-24</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>89</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Jun-24</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>94%</b>
<b>Jul 24</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>100%</b>

3.2.1 June 2024 dropped to 94% due to a number of sub-contractor failures to respond to the emptying of Nappy and Sanitary waste bins. This has been addressed by the main contractors and contract management team.

3.3 The table below shows the number of scheduled window cleans throughout the estate.

<b>Windows cleans - Contract Year 2</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>No Planned</b>	<b>No Completed</b>
<b>Dec-23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Jan-24</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>54</b>
<b>Feb-24</b>	<b>63</b>	<b>63</b>
<b>Mar-24</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Apr-24</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>May-24</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Jun-24</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>

3.4 As the authority brings online new sites i.e. Young and Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children, these are added to the cleaning portfolio. A specific specification has been developed with the service to meet the needs of the children and the regulated bodies.

3.5 Churchills always strive for continuous improvement. Their latest innovation is a customer feedback QR code which allows the customer to provide anonymous feedback on the cleaning service.

3.6 The comments and issues are collated, and action plans implemented. To ensure that we close the feedback loop, each month we update a communication poster 'You spoke, we listened?' which tells the customer and other building users, how we have acted on the comments received.

3.7 This initiative has been rolled out across the Hybrid sites and we are now physically moving the QR code to different building locations as users become used to the poster, this is to help prompt different people to utilise it.

#### 4. Waste Management

4.1 The table below shows the number of waste collections including general waste, mixed recycling, and confidential waste from across the estate.

Waste Lifts	
DMR/GW/Confi Lifts	
Jan-24	3427
Feb-24	3441
Mar-24	3282
Apr-24	3281
May-24	3600
Jun-24	3094
Jul-24	2899

4.2 The schedule has been successfully followed. When there is disruption to the service, due to road closures or access denials, these have been recovered as we communicate daily with the service provider, and they provide evidence through camera captures.

4.3 The table below shows the reactive tasks received and completed by Countrystyle.

Reactive Tasks			
Month	Total tasks raised	Total tasks completed within timescales	Percentage completed within timescale
Jan-24	8	8	100%
Feb-24	13	13	100%
Mar-24	15	15	100%
Apr-24	20	20	100%
May-24	28	28	100%
Jun-24	20	20	100%
Jul-24	21	21	100%

#### 5. Landscape and Pest Control

5.1 The table below indicates the number of planned visits conducted by Landscape Services across the CLL estate. Examples of the tasks include grass cutting and hedge trimming. Despite the unseasonal weather experienced this year, there has been disruption to the schedule, but Landscape Services have recovered the schedule each month.

Grounds Maintenance		
Month	Planned	Completed
January 24	154	154

<b>February 24</b>	<b>0 (as per schedule)</b>	<b>0 (as per schedule)</b>
<b>March 24</b>	<b>128</b>	<b>128</b>
<b>April 24</b>	<b>560</b>	<b>560</b>
<b>May 24</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>266</b>
<b>June 24</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>305</b>
<b>July 24</b>	<b>264</b>	<b>264</b>

5.2 Due to inclement weather there were no works scheduled for February 2024. Having reviewed the service specification hedge works will be undertaken during February 2025.

5.3 Planned grounds maintenance is going well. The weather over this last six months has been variable, but Landscape Services have managed to catch up where there has been a weather event that has stopped a scheduled visit.

5.4 The table below shows the volume of reactive grounds, trees and pest control maintenance tasks raised and completed within the agreed SLA for the CLL estate.

<b>Reactive Tasks</b>			
<b>Month</b>	<b>Total tasks raised</b>	<b>Total tasks completed within timescales</b>	<b>Percentage completed within timescale</b>
<b>Dec-23</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Jan-24</b>	<b>77</b>	<b>76</b>	<b>99%</b>
<b>Feb-24</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Mar-24</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Apr-24</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>May-24</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Jun-24</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>100%</b>
<b>Jul 24</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>121</b>	<b>100%</b>

5.5 The table below shows the level of planned and completed Pest Control visits carried out across the CLL estate. Missed visits were due to access denial from the site as indicated.

<b>Pest Control</b>		
<b>Month</b>	<b>Planned</b>	<b>Completed</b>
<b>January 24</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>February 24</b>	<b>61</b>	<b>60 (access denial)</b>
<b>March 24</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>April 24</b>	<b>59</b>	<b>59</b>
<b>May 24</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>19 (access denials)</b>
<b>June 24</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>July 24</b>	<b>26</b>	<b>25 (access denial)</b>

5.6 The table below shows the level of planned and completed tree risk assessments carried out across the CLL estate. Tree risk assessments are planned across the estate at 18 months intervals. Trees are assessed on a traffic light basis with remedials being carried out on a case-by-case basis and channelled through our variable budget.

Tree Risk Assessments		
Month	Planned	Completed
December	16	22
January	14	14
February	39	39
March	22	20
April	15	11
May	8	8
June	14	14
July	11	9

5.7 We have overachieved the programme in previous months, but where there has been difficulty completing the surveys, this has generally been due to access denials, and these have been rescheduled.

**6. FM Performance (Non-KPI related)**

6.1 The FM team, as part of the infrastructure redesign, implemented a new team structure from 1 February 2024.

6.2 The health and safety of employees, residents, service users, and visitors as well as ensuring that KCC meets its legal and policy duties remains the highest priority.

6.3 The Infrastructure Division has been working with the Health and Safety Executive (HSE), who have been conducting Duty to Manage Audits across the Educational estates in relation to the Control of Asbestos Regulations 2012. This piece of work has now concluded with the KCC Infrastructure team and Health and Safety teams implementing a policy and procedural updates as well as training.

6.4 The HSE will be conducting further Duty to Manage Audits from October/November 2024.

6.5 The Council’s Water Hygiene Policy (hot and cold water systems – Legionella) is currently under review with a planned completion date of the end of September. The changes are to incorporate legislative and best practice updates.

6.6 The FM teams are in the planning stages for the roll out of the EES system in Dover and are in discussions with the contract chain to ensure, so far as reasonably practicable, plans are in place to maintain service the effective areas/estate. This includes the review and where necessary the rescheduling of planned maintenance and ensuring that sites have plenty of materials i.e. cleaning.

- 6.7 The FM Stakeholder Engagement team has completed recruitment to the 3 vacant Directorate FM officers following the Infrastructure redesign. The initial focus of the new team is to build professional relationships with their stakeholders.
- 6.8 The Stakeholder Engagement and Communications Strategy is being developed following the Infrastructure redesign and will proactively drive improvements in customer/stakeholder engagement giving stakeholders greater control of information across the services
- 6.9 A complete review of the Escalation process has been publicised across the estate and formal review of internal mechanisms to monitoring of customer satisfaction has been started and is linked to the FM Communications Strategy.
- 6.10 The FM team are working towards a consolidated and updated Video Conferencing solution. With the support of Technology colleagues, we are working to procure these services.
- 6.11 The FM team is working with the Digital Transformation and Technology teams to progress with a redesign of the postal services in KCC. This will begin with the digitalisation of the outbound post with further work planned to scope the incoming post.
- 6.12 The Hard Services Manager along with Procurement colleagues are reviewing the security service and finalising the service specification for the security procurement for some areas of security which include key holding, patrols, vacant properties, remote alarm monitoring and manned guarding at some sites.

## **7. Brief Look Forward To 2024/2025**

- 7.1 Along with the Infrastructure Division, the KCC FM team has undergone a significant redesign. The team has been resourced to deliver the new contract models, inclusion of the office estate (including reception) and to drive performance across the estate. Significant progress has been made in recruiting to the vacancies within the team.
- 7.2 Work has begun to review the status of the Soft FM service contracts, cleaning, waste and landscape service and pest control, which has an initially contract period of 3 years with the possibility of extending for a further 2 years. The end of October 2024 will be end of contract year 2.
- 7.3 The cleaning framework for schools managed by the Soft FM team is also due for renewal in the summer of 2025 and this will be reviewed. This is an opt in service for the schools sector currently provided for via the KCS framework.

## **8. Next 6 Months – Areas of Focus**

- 8.1 Each FM service area will be driving standards to continuously improve the service provided. The key to this is engaging more effectively with our key stakeholders and ensuring our service provision is both clear and concise. The

FM Management Team will develop a proactive communications and engagement plan, whilst redesigning our offering on KNet, the Council's intranet pages, to give ease of access to FM information.

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**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to note the report.

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**9. Background Documents**

None.

**10. Contact details**

Report Author: Tony Carty Head of Facilities Management 03000 41 72 43 <a href="mailto:anthony.carty@kent.gov.uk">anthony.carty@kent.gov.uk</a>	Director: Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure 03000 41 67 16 <a href="mailto:rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk">rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</a>
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## Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee Report – 10 September 2024

### Item: Facilities Management bi-annual update report

#### Appendix A – SLA and Indicative Scenarios

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#### 1. Background

1.1. FM works consist largely of two types of work, Planned and Reactive. These are managed via the contract and have specific tolerances and SLAs applied.

1.2. The table below identifies the tolerances for planned works. The Contractor shall deliver Routine Maintenance and provide the relevant certification and/or report within the following tolerances from the dates assigned within the Routine Maintenance Schedule:

<b>Routine Maintenance Frequency</b>	<b>Tolerance</b>
Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	Within 72 hours of the relevant date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule and in any event prior to becoming non-compliant
Inspections where Authority Policy exceeds Statutory requirements	Within 72 hours of the relevant date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule and in any event prior to becoming non-compliant
Critical Systems	On the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule
Daily save where Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	On the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule
Weekly save where Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	Within 72 hours of the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule
Monthly save where Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	Within 5 Business Days of the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule
Quarterly save where Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	Within 5 Business Days of the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule
6 Monthly save where Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	Within 5 Business Days of the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule
Annually save where Statutory Maintenance, Tests and Inspections	Within 5 Business Days of the date specified in the Routine Maintenance Schedule

1.3. To ensure swift Responses to reactive works, the contractors must meet the Service Level Agreements (SLA) time frames as outlined below. To assist the help desk teams in allocated the correct Priority Level to each reactive task, a list of scenarios have been agreed upon which is also supplied below. Failure to meet the SLA or correctly attribute the tasks with the correct level, results in a KPI failure.

<b>Priority Level</b>	<b>Description</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Service Level Core Sites</b>	<b>Service Levels Non-Core Sites</b>
A	Matters giving rise to an immediate security, health and safety or environmental risk.	Attend	Within 2 hours	Within 3 hours
		Permanent Rectification <b>OR</b> Interim Rectification and Raise Child Service Request	Within 6 hours	Within 6 hours
B	Matters which prevent or severely restrict the Authority from conducting normal operations or have an adverse impact on the Authority's reputation.	Attend	Within 3 hours	Within 6 hours
		Permanent Rectification <b>OR</b> Interim Rectification and Raise Child Service Request	12 hours	24 hours
C	Matters which impinge upon the proper working of the facilities in relation to all users but have no reputational risk.	Permanent Rectification	Within 2 Business Days	Within 5 Business Days
D	Matters of a routine nature	Permanent Rectification	Within 5 Business Days	Within 5 Business Days
E	Change or cosmetic requests	Price Schedule Complete	5 days 2 Business Days following approval. 20 days following approval	5 days 2 Business Days following approval. 20 days following approval
F	Specialist audio conference equipment	Attend	15 minutes	15 minutes
G	Lift Entrapment	Attend and Release	1 hour	1 hour
H	Quotations requested by Authority	Submission	10 Business Days	10 Business Days

Priority Level	Indicative Scenarios (Guidance Only)
A	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security intruder alarm system fault - where it's likely to cause a nuisance to the surrounding neighbours or the building cannot be secured/locked</li> <li>• Closed circuit television fault where service user safety is a concern e.g., Case conferencing</li> <li>• External windows operation – cannot close/lock to secure the building</li> <li>• Security incident i.e., theft, burglary, or problem affecting personal safety or security of the building.</li> <li>• External/entrance door operation if this impacts on fire plan/security of the building</li> <li>• Failure of gate or barrier operation – where it prevents access into or from site</li> <li>• Roof leak that gives rise to health and safety risk i.e., collapse or impacts services</li> <li>• Water leaks/ingress via roof, windows, ground source, drains or faulty plumbing that creates an unsanitary situation or immediate health and safety impact to builder users</li> <li>• Boiler failure affects the whole building and services unless boiler is not required for heating building</li> <li>• No heating where the internal temperature is below 17 degrees.</li> <li>• No hot water in the whole building or where there is a legionella risk</li> <li>• No hot water in an area of a care home, short break, or respite centre</li> <li>• Leak or plumbing issues preventing use of toilets where alternative facilities are not available.</li> <li>• Loss of water affecting the whole building</li> <li>• Loss of power affecting the whole building</li> <li>• Environmental incident e.g. flooding, fuel/oil/chemical spillage, land/air/water way contamination</li> <li>• Sewage incidents, unintentional substance release, wastewater treatment plant system or plant failure</li> <li>• General lighting failure that compromises ability of staff to work, building security plan or general health and safety</li> <li>• Complete fire alarm failure</li> <li>• Activation/Fault of the fire alarm system</li> <li>• Asbestos incident with potential exposure</li> <li>• Major electrical fault creating a hazard for occupants</li> <li>• Fire or risk of fire/explosion</li> <li>• Gas leak</li> <li>• Structural damage</li> <li>• Failure of sprinkler system</li> <li>• Ceiling collapse</li> <li>• uninterruptable power supply systems (where not integrated within IT Assets)</li> <li>• heating, ventilation and air conditioning in server rooms</li> <li>• generators</li> <li>• Vesda system in Kent History and Library Centre</li> </ul>

B	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security intruder alarm fault</li> <li>• Water leaks/ingress via roof, windows, ground source, drains or faulty plumbing that doesn't create an unsanitary situation or cause an immediate risk to building users</li> <li>• Loss of water to part of the building except care homes and respite centres</li> <li>• Loss of power to part of the building except care homes and respite centres</li> <li>• Water treatment plant pump failure – where there is no potential contamination of the water course</li> <li>• Lift breakdown without entrapment – where there are other lifts available in the building</li> <li>• Heating failure affecting parts of a building where temperature is above 17 degrees except care homes and respite centres.</li> <li>• Emergency lighting fault where there is no alternative emergency lighting within the area and no borrowed light</li> <li>• Broken window</li> <li>• Damage that prevents occupant access into building</li> <li>• Building Management System (BMS) fault – where boilers and Air handling units (AHUs) cannot be operated manually</li> </ul>
C	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Failure of CCTV camera where the overall security of the site has not been compromised (i.e. not affecting case conferencing)</li> <li>• Failure of gate or barrier operation – where it can be manually operated</li> <li>• General lighting failure that does not compromises building occupancy</li> <li>• Leak or plumbing issues affecting toilets where alternative facilities are available</li> </ul>
D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Damage to building fabric</li> <li>• Water leak that does not cause immediate damage or impact building occupancy but causes water loss</li> <li>• General lighting maintenance requirements i.e. repair and replacement of lamps</li> <li>• General building maintenance e.g. any door furniture, hardware and viewing panels</li> <li>• Non-urgent battery replacement</li> <li>• Damage to gutters with no additional impact on building or users</li> </ul>
E	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Shelf fitting, filling holes, carpet tile replacement, noticeboard installation and repairs, display cabinet repair, signage placing, clock – changing, easing and adjusting non-fire doors, painting, general repairs etc.</li> </ul>
F	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Microphones plus acoustics only applicable where required on the Service matrix</li> </ul>

1.4. The core premises are currently comprised of approximately 40 buildings. These are buildings that have statutory / regulated service provision i.e. Children Respite Services or Adult Social Care or have a key function that without the normal operation of the building the authority or key partners i.e. NHS, would not be able to perform key services i.e. Multi Agency Specialist Hubs (MASH) sites.

1.5. Core and non-core buildings can be added to the contract as required via the Contract Change Notice process and will be priced accordingly. As the provision of regulated sleeping accommodation increases, so will the number of core sites in contract.

## 2. Contact Details

<b>Report Authors:</b> Tony Carty Head of Facilities Management 03000 41 72 43 <a href="mailto:anthony.carty@kent.gov.uk">anthony.carty@kent.gov.uk</a>	<b>Relevant Director:</b> Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure 03000 41 67 16 <a href="mailto:rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk">rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</a>
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**From:** Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services  
Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10th September 2024

**Subject:** Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2030

**Decision no:** 24/00069

**Key Decision:** Yes - The decision will result in the adoption of a new strategy.

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 17 January 2024

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All

**Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes**

**Summary:** This report provides an update on the new 2024-2030 Asset Management Strategy.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services on the proposed decision to agree to the adoption of the new Asset Management Strategy 2024-2030.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The current Asset Management Strategy (AMS) ended in 2023, and a replacement AMS (2024 –2030) has been developed for adoption by the Council. The strategy has been developed alongside Kent County Council's (KCC's) core strategic objectives and seeks to build on the outcomes achieved and lessons learnt from the previous (2018-2023) AMS.
- 1.2 The previous AMS focused on six key themes in the management of the Council assets:
- Innovation and customer focus.
  - Safe, warm, dry and proactively compliant.
  - Effective asset and estate management.
  - An efficient, adequate and appropriate estate.
  - Maximising regeneration and growth in Kent.

- Reducing the estate's environmental impact and the environment's impact on the estate.
- 1.3 Internal engagement sessions have been undertaken to review the 2018-2023 AMS, which reflected on what had been achieved; lessons learnt; and areas for improvement. This also identified areas to be considered for the new strategy which included ambition, vision, and new themes.
  - 1.4 These lessons learnt have been used to inform the new AMS.
  - 1.5 An update of the progress of the new AMS was taken to the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 17 January 2024.
  - 1.6 To further develop and refine the AMS, along with feedback from the committee, engagement has been ongoing with services via Directorate Management Teams (DMT) since the end of 2023. Feedback from the various engagement sessions has been taken into consideration in the development of the Strategic Objectives of the new AMS.

## **2. Moving Forward with the New 2024-2030 Asset Management Strategy**

- 1.7 The new AMS has been devised from KCC's strategic core objectives; Securing Kent's Future budget recovery plan; the evaluation of the 2018-2023 Asset Management Plan and from feedback through stakeholder engagement.
- 1.8 This new AMS comes at a critical time as the Council faces significant financial pressures. It is, therefore, essential that our assets deliver maximum value for the Council throughout the asset lifecycle.

The **Key drivers** for the new strategy are:

- i. Securing Kent's Future:
  - Financial Sustainability: achieving sustainability requires a commercially focused approach that balances supply and demand for services.
- ii. Net Zero Targets:
  - Reducing our environmental footprint and improving efficiency of our assets are essential to achieving the Council's Net Zero emissions targets.
- iii. Adherence to Legislative Framework, Health and Safety Compliance, and Delivery of Statutory Provision:
  - Compliance with the legislative framework and health and safety regulations is paramount.
- iv. Property Enhancing Service delivery:
  - Optimising our property portfolio is crucial for enhancing service delivery.



- This includes ensuring the property service provided in buildings meets the service need and any new investment in buildings is designed to be fully fit-for-purpose to support service delivery.
- 1.9 This strategy will seek to further develop strategies to ensure that KCC's property and assets portfolio are optimised; with enhanced collaboration with partners regarding **potential shared use to ensure efficiencies can be realised; and that KCC's statutory and essential services are delivered, fulfilling statutory obligations. Securing our short-term and medium-term position is crucial for effective future planning.**
  - 1.10 The new strategy will seek to transform the Council's asset portfolio to be leaner, greener, and more financially sustainable, with greater efficiencies and aligned to the Council needs.
  - 1.11 The new strategy will be for 6 years, taking us through to 2030, with a review at the midway point; to ensure that the AMS aligns with KCC's other key strategies and creates a framework within which policies can evolve and be developed as the context of the Council changes:
  - 1.12 Following the previous 2018-2023 strategy, the outcomes and lesson learnt will continue to be strengthened to ensure we have a solid foundation, to refine our asset information into one cohesive framework. This will allow us to critically evaluate our portfolio, retaining only the essential assets that align with service needs. This process will **further develop the baseline information in relation to the Council's assets.**
  - 1.13 The accurate baseline data will ensure that KCC **can enable the implementation of long-term, lifecycle management strategies, which will capture comprehensive lifecycle information for all its assets, enabling whole-life cost analysis to inform decision-making. This will ensure KCC maintains a proactive rather than reactive approach to its estate.**
  - 1.14 By aligning assets with service requirements, our future estate will directly support the service provision's needs and integrated models. Assets will be designed and managed for multi-purpose use; flexible in terms of function; and facilitating agile working to create a fit for purpose estate aligned to the future needs of the Council and those that access our buildings including residents, service users, partners and staff.
  - 1.15 We will actively seek to engage with stakeholders both internal and external to KCC to demonstrate how assets can enable new operating models and integrated delivery to shape service transformation and support the way that we want to work and operate in the future.
  - 1.16 Environmental principles will be embedded into our asset strategies to continuously improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions, and drive sustainability with the aim of driving towards KCC's net zero targets by 2030, which may be achieved through seeking additional grant funding.

- 1.17 Robust asset data will enhance KCC's strategic capital and revenue planning and enable the forecast for long-term asset and investment needs, **which will promote spending efficiencies and building utilisation, by enhancing the performance of the estate.**
- 1.18 We will seek to adopt smart building technologies, utilise intelligent building management systems, and automation, to provide flexibility and data-driven insights where possible. This will ensure there is a holistic approach to the management of KCC's estate, where efficiencies, economies of scale and the monitoring of **the estate will seek to be proactive where possible.**
- 1.19 By embracing smart technology, **where possible we will be able to focus on improving the management of KCC's assets and have reliable, effective systems in place, to ensure rent reviews, lease renewals, building maintenance, parts replacements etc. are undertaken in a timely and efficient manner.**
- 1.20 To ensure a holistic approach, we will prioritise sites with service users' requirements. Engagement with all stakeholders will be key to ensuring that assets enable excellent services and will allow focus on positive outcomes for Kent's residents and its staff through alignment with our people and technology strategies.
- 1.21 In light of the new requirements set out in Securing Kent's future, other potential considerations are being made for the AMS which are set out in Appendix A.

## **2. Options considered and dismissed, and associated risk**

- 2.1 Do nothing – discarded - Since the current AMS ended in 2023, a replacement AMS is required to ensure that KCC obtains best value for money from its estate.

## **3. Financial Implications**

- 3.1 There are no financial cost implications in the development or establishing of this strategy.
- 3.2 Whilst there are no savings ascribed specifically to the strategy, it is anticipated the initiatives it supports will result in better value for money, by ensuring that our assets deliver maximum value for the Council and the whole impact of property decisions are fully considered.

## **4. Legal implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications.

## **6. Equalities implications**

- 6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) was completed. The implementation of this strategy does not present any impact on any of the nine areas specified by KCC.

## **7. Data Protection Implications**

7.1 There are no expected data protection implications as a result of this strategy.

## **8. Other corporate implications**

8.1 The implementation of the new AMS will have a positive impact, as it aims to optimise KCC's property portfolio to enhance service delivery, and to ensure that the property service provided in buildings meets the service need.

## **9. Governance**

9.1 In line with the Council's governance process, as this will involve the adoption of a new strategy, not included on the Policy Framework, a key decision will be required.

## **10. Conclusions/Next Steps**

10.1 The next steps are the adoption of the new AMS.

10.2 KCC to implement the new strategy, working closely and collaboratively with all stakeholders to ensure this is a live active strategy and all future decisions relate back to the principles set out in the new AMS.

10.3 As a live strategy, it will be monitored to align with any changes to KCC's core strategies, policies and service objectives, as well as any political or statutory fluctuations.

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### **Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services on the proposed decision to agree to the adoption of the new Asset Management Strategy 2024-2030.

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## **11. Background documents**

11.1 Asset Management Strategy – A Five-Year Plan 2018 -2023  
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0019/5545/Asset-management-strategy.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0019/5545/Asset-management-strategy.pdf)

11.2 Framing Kent's Future - Our Council Strategy 2022- 2026  
[https://www.kent.gov.uk/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0018/136431/Framing-Kents-Future-strategy-document.pdf](https://www.kent.gov.uk/_data/assets/pdf_file/0018/136431/Framing-Kents-Future-strategy-document.pdf)

11.3 Securing Kent's Future – Budget Recovery Strategy & Financial Report  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s120272/Cabinet%20Report.pdf>

## 12. Appendices

12.1 Appendix A – The Asset Management Strategy 2024-2030

12.2 Appendix B - Equality Impact Assessment

12.3 Appendix C – Proposed Record of Decision

## 13. Contact details

Report Author: Rebecca Anderson Job title: Head of Business Information, Strategy and Assurance Telephone number: 03000417731 Email address: <a href="mailto:rebecca.anderson2@kent.gov.uk">rebecca.anderson2@kent.gov.uk</a>	Director: Rebecca Spore Job title: Director of Infrastructure Telephone number: 03000416716 Email address: <a href="mailto:rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk">rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</a>
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# ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY 2024 - 30



**KENT  
COUNTY  
COUNCIL**

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# 1. FOREWORD

The Council's asset base, its value, location and performance are key to the experience of our residents when accessing our services and the delivery of the strategic objectives of the Council. The estate and our property strategies also have a significant role to play in the future shape of Council Services.

This Asset Management Strategy sets out Kent County Council's approach to managing its property assets over the next 6 years to optimise its value and return to the Council.

Effective asset management is critical for KCC's financial sustainability and continues the journey of transformation started under the previous 2019-2023 strategy and lessons learned during that period.

## Securing Kent's Assets



Kent County Council  
Asset Management Strategy (AMS)  
2024 -2030

## 2. INTRODUCTION

- ❑ The Asset Management Strategy (the 'AMS') is the overarching property strategy document which is aligned to the delivery of Kent County Council's (KCC) strategies, policies and services which will support Kent County Council's wider communities.
- ❑ The strategy provides a framework for the Council's management of its owned, tenanted, and leased assets. Within the constraints of the financial operating environment, it ensures that the assets used to deliver its services are fit for purpose. The strategy aims for optimal and flexible use of these assets, ensuring they are appropriately located and maintained sustainably. It also takes into account the future needs of KCC's services, with considerations for short, medium, and long-term planning. This approach ensures that the Council's assets are effectively utilised and future-proofed.
- ❑ This new Asset Management Strategy comes at a critical time for Kent County Council as it faces significant financial pressures and has launched Securing Kent's Future, the budget recovery plan to return the council to financial sustainability.
- ❑ It is therefore essential that our assets deliver the maximum value for the Council residents, and those that access our services including members of the public, service users and our staff.

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- ❑ The AMS will be for 6 years and is aligned with KCC's key strategies:
  - i) [The Kent Economic Strategy 2030](#)
  - ii) [The Kent Environmental Strategy](#)
  - iii) The Kent Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2022-2030
  - iv) [Framing & Securing Kents Future 2022-26 & 2023-25](#)
  - v) Kent & Medway Integrated Care Strategy
  - vi) [KCC's People Strategy 2022- 2027](#)
  - vii) [ICT Strategy 2020-2023](#)
- ❑ There will be a commitment to securing value for money in all spending decisions.
- ❑ This will involve a thorough business case process, rigorous procurement process, regular reviews of asset performance, and a focus on total cost of ownership rather than just initial implementation and operating costs. It will include a commitment to transparency, with clear documentation showing that best value considerations have been applied to all decisions.
- ❑ By integrating these elements, the AMS will support the delivery of "Securing Kent's Future" and "Framing Kent's Future", providing a clear and comprehensive strategy for managing KCC's assets.
- ❑ This approach will aim to achieve financial sustainability and demonstrate compliance with the Strategic Statement.

- ❑ This will ensure that the AMS 2024-2030 is aligned with the Council's priority objectives and that it will build upon the principles set out within the previous AMS 2019-2023.
- ❑ It will ensure the management of the Council's Property Assets, within the financial context of the authority, will be fit for purpose to deliver the services required for those that access our buildings whilst maximising their potential and usage.
- ❑ The previous 2019-2023 Asset Management Strategy delivered several key outcomes including rationalisation of KCC's assets, capital receipts, and energy / sustainability targets.
- ❑ The council still faces a significant backlog maintenance liability. This is intended to start to be addressed through the effective implementation of the new AMS, which is designed to align with and support the objectives and priorities within 'Securing Kent's Future'. However, it's important to note that the progress and effectiveness of this initiative is contingent upon the resources that are made available.
- ❑ We will look at the optimisation of assets to ensure it has the potential to provide economic and environmental sustainability for the budget and communities we serve, to ensure short, medium, and long-term best value, for services run by KCC over the next 6 years.



# 3. CONTEXT OF THE KCC ESTATE

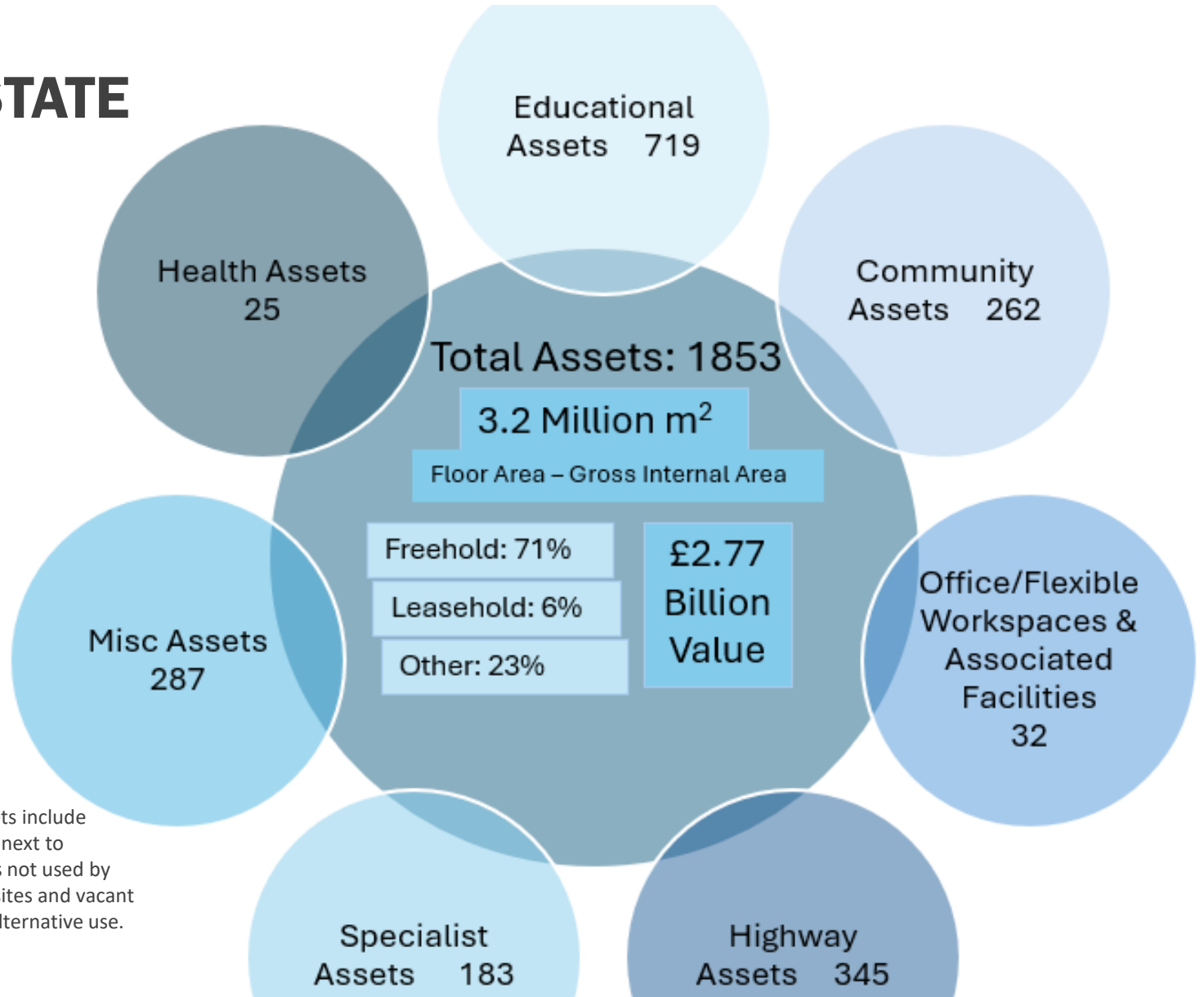
## Overview of KCC's Asset Portfolio

- ❑ Kent County Council owns an extensive and diverse property portfolio supporting frontline service delivery as well as generating significant rental income.
- ❑ Assets range from office buildings, libraries, youth centres, care homes and schools to commercial units, agricultural land, and development sites. The Council also holds various heritage properties and community facilities.
- ❑ Effective asset management is critical to optimising financial, social, and environmental value from this portfolio, whilst ensuring assets remain suitable for meeting service delivery needs.

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Miscellaneous Assets include assets such as land next to highways, buildings not used by KCC, specialist PFI sites and vacant sites for disposal/Alternative use.



## 4. THE PREVIOUS AMS

### Introduction:

- ❑ In the first two years of KCC's 2018-2023 AMS, the Global Covid 19 Pandemic flipped everyone's plans virtually overnight.
- ❑ All organisations, including KCC, had to stop what they were doing and implement emergency protocols immediately, which meant that the AMS did not fully progress as planned.

### Lessons Learnt

- ❑ The previous 2018-2023 Strategy, the outcomes and lessons learnt, will continue to be strengthened to ensure we have a solid foundation, to refine our asset information into one cohesive framework. This will allow us to critically evaluate our portfolio, retaining only the essential assets that align with service needs. This process will establish a new baseline estate.
- ❑ We will ensure that the new AMS is a live and active document and that there is effective communication, so all council members and staff have easy access to the details of the AMS and understand its importance, and relevance, in all decisions affecting council assets and property utilisation.



- Rationalised property portfolio by 10%, from 2,230 assets down to 1,816 through disposals and mergers. This released underutilised properties and generated £70.2 million in capital receipts.



- Improved quality of asset data by undertaking a full data validation exercise. Property attributes captured increased from 60% to over 90% completeness. This enables more informed asset management.



- The success of our COVID emergency implementation plans stands as a testament to our agility and commitment. Swiftly adapting to the pandemic, we ensured the safety of our staff, customers, and occupiers while maintaining essential services. These plans allowed us to navigate unprecedented challenges seamlessly.



- Embracing new technology, such as Microsoft Teams, revolutionised our communication and productivity. We leveraged collaboration tools to enhance remote work, streamline processes, and foster cross-team collaboration. Simultaneously, our ambitious zero-carbon target for 2025, supported by solar panel installations and energy-efficient LED lighting, aligns with global sustainability efforts. Our strategic investment decisions, shared spaces for collaboration, and successful project completions demonstrate our resilience, adaptability, and commitment to creating a better future.

## 5. AIMS OF THE ASSET MANAGEMENT STRATEGY

- ❑ This strategy will ensure that the KCC's assets are utilised efficiently and, where possible, collaboration will be undertaken with partners regarding the potential for shared use to ensure efficiencies can be realised to deliver KCC's statutory and essential services. Securing our short and medium-term position is crucial for effective future planning.
- ❑ The key drivers for the new strategy relate to ensuring compliance, active lifecycle management, consolidation, income maximisation from commercial assets and embedding sustainability principles.
- ❑ The focus will be to take a holistic approach to assets, enhance data and performance management to support evidence-based decision making.
- ❑ KCC's focus will be to take a comprehensive approach to assets (owned, leased, and tenanted), which are for the purpose of KCC services (which may be commissioned) to ensure buildings maintain optimum use and benefits for the wider community and those that use them including residents, service users, partners and staff.
- ❑ To ensure the successful delivery of the new AMS, there will be a required culture shift towards asset sharing, flexibility, and cross-service collaboration to make the most of resources available aligned to the principles in KCC's service, technology and people strategies. Stakeholder meetings have been instigated to ensure this can be achieved successfully and will continue as part of the review of the AMS.
- ❑ Over the next 6 years there will be a transformation in how assets are managed, unpinned by accurate data, shared resources, environmental performance, and transparent evidenced decision-making regarding optimisation.
- ❑ Effective asset management will be integral to long-term financial sustainability.

### KCC's mission statement for the AMS is:

“To ensure that there is commitment to provide an efficient estate of the right size and type to meet its operational business needs. The estate must be adaptable to change and be affordable and sustainable to cater for its services and users.”

### This will be achieved through: -

- ❑ Asset data accuracy ensuring baseline data is regularly updated to ensure assets are adhering to current standards / regulations and performance ratings.
- ❑ The estate will be evaluated in respect of its use; landlord responsibility; maintenance liabilities; income and expenditure; and potential for partnership, to enable KCC's assets KPIs (Key Performance Indicators) to be measured through performance and outcomes.
- ❑ The strategy will be reviewed at key intervals to ensure that it continues to be aligned with KCC's core strategic and emerging objectives, and where required, amended to reflect these.

## 6. KEY PRINCIPLES THAT UNDERPIN THE AMS

These principles are designed to optimise asset management within KCC, emphasising efficiency, strategic utilisation, sustainability, and inclusivity.

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**Priority: warm, safe, and dry.** In the new AMS, the previous theme of 'Warm, Safe & Dry' has been repositioned to a key principle. This shift signifies the recognition of these elements as fundamental requirements for all operational assets. The principle ensures that all assets are safe for everyone interacting with them, including KCC staff, customers, visitors, and the public. This commitment to safety extends to both the interior and exterior of the buildings, reinforcing KCC's dedication to providing a warm, safe, and dry environment across its estate.



**Corporately Managed:** Assets continued to be managed as a corporate landlord.



**Utilisation:** Asset utilisation must demonstrate the best value for money of its use.



**Maximisation:** Use of assets will be maximised through co-location of services.



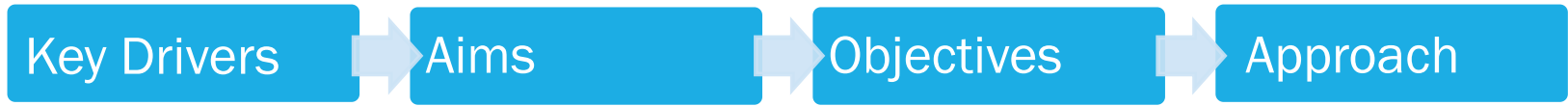
**Robust Business Cases:** Us: All asset-related decisions, including changes in property requirements, will require robust business cases. These cases must align with the principles and consider not only the initial investment but also ongoing and future costs.

Proposals that increase the building footprint or hinder carbon reduction must include carbon offsetting costs to prevent negative impacts on the 2030 carbon neutral target, which requires a 35% reduction in building footprint. Furthermore, any changes must be thoroughly understood, taking into account the budgets needed to meet the asset's future requirements.



**Inclusivity:** Inclusivity will be critical on all levels, from design concept and layout through to decision making, staff engagement and ongoing operational management.

# 7. ALIGNMENT OF DRIVERS, AIMS, OBJECTIVES, AND APPROACH:



## Alignment of Drivers, Aims, Objectives, and Approach:

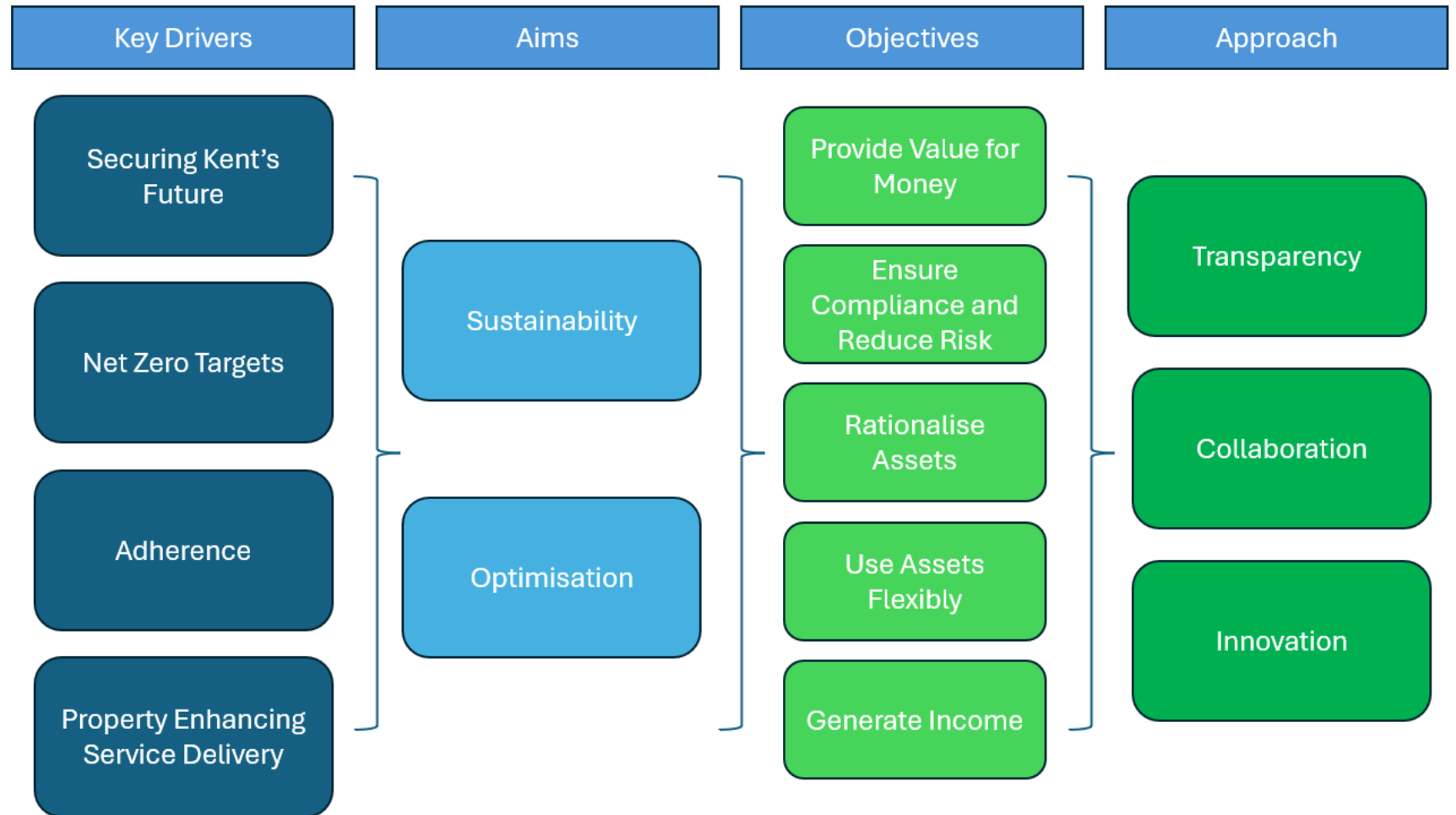
Ensuring alignment between our drivers, aims, objectives, and approach is crucial to the successful implementation of our AMS.

Our drivers inform our key aims, which in turn guide the development of our objectives.

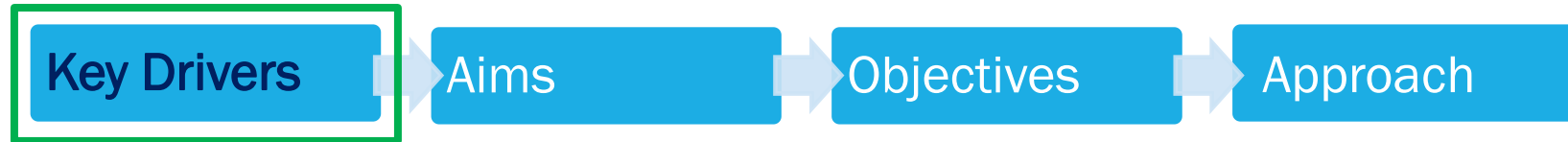
Our approach is designed to effectively achieve these objectives, thereby fulfilling our key aims in response to our drivers.

This will require a culture shift towards asset sharing; flexibility; and cross-service and external collaboration.

This will ensure best value, economies of scale, efficiencies and services which are fit for purpose in a positive and focused environment, which is critical to Securing Kent's Future.



## 8. KEY DRIVERS OF THE AMS



Key drivers for the new strategy are:

### Securing



#### Securing Kent's Future

Financial sustainability: achieving sustainability requires focused approach that balances supply and demand for services.

### Net Zero



#### Net Zero Targets

Reducing our environmental footprint and imposing efficiency are essential to achieving our Net Zero emission targets.

### Adherence



#### Adherence to Legislative Framework and Health & Safety Compliance, and Delivery of Statutory Provision

Is essential to ensure the safety and wellbeing of our users

### Property

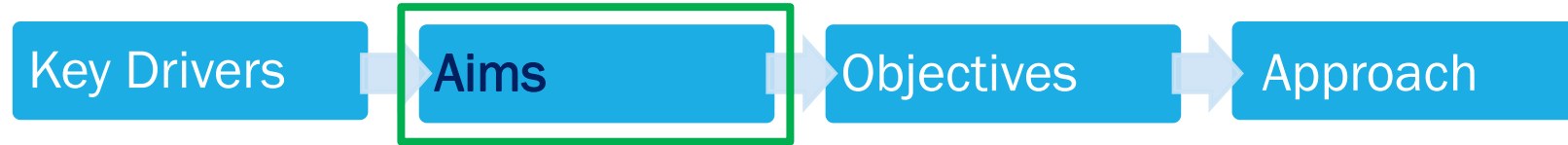


#### Property Enhancing Service Delivery

Optimising property portfolio to enable service delivery which meets the needs of the service and ensures the building is fit for purpose for those that use of buildings including residents, service users, partners and staff.



## 9. THE AIMS OF THE AMS



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- Within the approach, and in-line with the People Strategy, the key enablers are having the right data, the right skills, the right reporting structures, the right capacity, and people in the right place, doing the right thing with access to robust data.

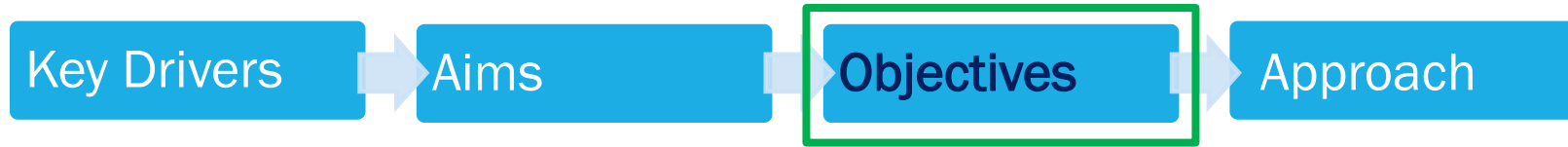
### Sustainability

- Properties are valuable assets that can contribute to economic and environmental sustainability.
- The goal is to manage these properties to meet current service needs and ensure future services align with service needs.
- This management strategy considers environmental impact, cost efficiently and benefits to the community.

### Optimisation

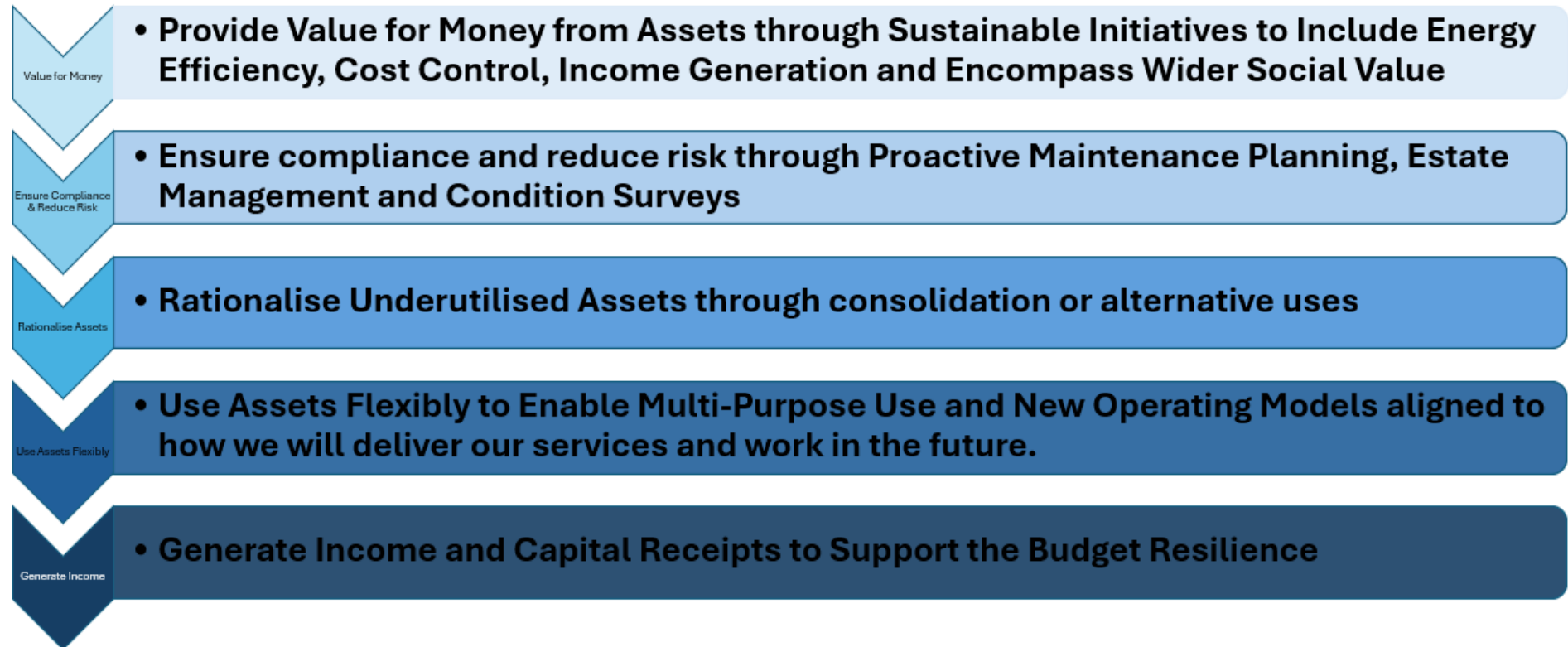
- Long-term value is crucial to our best value considerations.
- The aim is to utilise our buildings for services provided by KCC as much as possible.
- The strategy involves aligning KCC's asset portfolio with service delivery goals for optimal efficiency and effectiveness.
- There is a commitment to remain responsive to the changing needs of our communities, services and our staff.

# 10. STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES



- Developed through engagement sessions KCC developed five Strategic Objectives:

- KCC’s strategic objectives will provide a holistic view by looking at both the aims and approach to ensure a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to asset management that aligns with its service delivery objectives and the broader goals of sustainability and innovation.





# FIVE KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: ONE

## What?

- 1. Provide Best Value from Assets through Sustainable Initiatives, Energy Efficiency, Cost Control, and Income Generation:**
  - ❑ **Evidence-Based Decision Making:** Accurate asset data will inform decisions regarding compliance, sustainability, and cost control.
  - ❑ **Energy Efficiency Measures:** Implement energy audits and sustainable practices to reduce emissions and operating costs.
  - ❑ **Whole-Life Cost Analysis:** Evaluate total cost of ownership to inform decision-making and information budget requirements.

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## How?

- ❑ Ensure robust data on all assets.
- ❑ Establish protocols for regular review of asset performance against KPI's
- ❑ Trial new technology to improve environmental efficiency and identify which solutions are worth investing in across the estate
- ❑ Conduct Energy Audits: Carry out comprehensive energy audits across all facilities to identify areas of high energy consumption.
- ❑ Develop a framework for assessing the total cost of ownership that includes initial acquisition costs, operation costs, maintenance expenses, and disposal costs.
- ❑ Include non-financial factors such as environmental impact or social value in the whole-life cost analysis model.
- ❑ Ensure that findings from the whole-life cost analysis are aligned with AMS principles to inform budget allocations.
- ❑ Embed sustainability principles into asset management and meet sustainability goals and reduce environmental impact.
- ❑ Exploring reserve models to ensure available funding for proactive maintenance and going beyond DDA compliance.

## Key Performance Indicators

### Examples:

- ❑ Size and running cost of each portfolio
- ❑ Number of assets with whole life-cycle plan
- ❑ Number of technologies trailed and proposed to seek investment.
- ❑ Asset Utilisation
- ❑ Total cost of maintaining assets
- ❑ Asset Down-time
- ❑ Disposal - receipt vs cost of disposal
- ❑ Percentage of energy audits passed
- ❑ A score based on non-financial impacts such as environmental or social value.
- ❑ Space used vs. total space available.
- ❑ Cost of running asset to KCC against budget.
- ❑ Measure energy consumption.

# FIVE KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: TWO

## What?

### 2. Ensure Compliance and Reduce Risk Through Proactive Maintenance Planning, Estate Management and Condition Surveys:

- ❑ **Robust Compliance Regime:** KCC will ensure assets comply with health and safety regulations. Regular inspections and maintenance schedules will maintain asset suitability.
- ❑ **Lifecycle Strategies:** Develop comprehensive lifecycle management strategies based on accurate data. Prioritise maintenance and renewals.
- ❑ **Estates Management:** Ensure properties support KCC's statutory services.

## How?

- ❑ Continuation to existing compliance reporting,
- ❑ Percentage of estate with current lifecycle condition survey.
- ❑ Establish a routine of regular inspections to ensure that all assets comply with health and safety regulations.
- ❑ Ensure assets are legally compliant and fit for operational purposes to support service delivery.
- ❑ Create a comprehensive maintenance schedule for each asset. This schedule should include regular checks and necessary maintenance work to keep the asset in good condition and ensure its suitability.
- ❑ Develop a prioritised list of maintenance and renewal tasks. Assets that are critical to operations or have a higher risk of failure should be prioritised.
- ❑ Ensure that each property is being used in a way that supports KCC's statutory services.
- ❑ Conduct regular reviews to ensure that each property is being used effectively. If a property is not supporting KCC's services, consider alternative uses for the property.
- ❑ Warm, Safe and Dry Policy.

## Key Performance Indicators

Examples:

- ❑ Percentage of assets that meet health and safety regulations.
- ❑ Percentage of maintenance activities completed on schedule.
- ❑ Measure of how effectively maintenance and renewals have been prioritised, which could be calculated based on the number of unexpected asset failures.
- ❑ The ratio of the total cost of asset maintenance to the value derived from the asset over its lifecycle.
- ❑ Percentage of properties that support KCC's statutory services.
- ❑ Total cost of estate management relative to the value of the properties managed.
- ❑ Number of property usage reviews conducted per year.
- ❑ Number of safety incidents reported.

# FIVE KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: THREE

## What?

### 3. Rationalise Underutilised Assets through consolidation or alternative uses:

- ❑ **Utilisation Studies:** Identify underutilised assets through utilisation studies.
- ❑ **Co-Location Opportunities:** Explore co-location opportunities to consolidate assets while minimising liabilities.
- ❑ **Effective investment:** Ensure when funding is available to invest in assets, either through developer contributions or grant funding, that the investment is supporting asset use efficiency and forward thinking.

## How?

- ❑ Definition of utilisation of each asset type.
- ❑ Regularly perform utilisation studies to identify underutilised assets. This could involve assessing the usage rates of different assets and identifying those that are not being fully utilised.
- ❑ Rationalise underutilised asset and consolidate estate by collaboration internally and with external stakeholders to identify co-location opportunities.
- ❑ A whole portfolio view of assets, recognising the capital employed and the potential value to KCC priorities from repurposing or disposal.
- ❑ Work closely with KCC regeneration team to identify investment opportunities including developer contributions, to maximise the long-term benefit of the funding.
- ❑ When funding is available, ensure it is invested in a way that supports asset use efficiency and forward thinking. This could involve investing in new technologies that increase asset efficiency or in training programs that help employees make better use of assets

## Key Performance Indicators

Examples:

- ❑ Percentage of assets identified as underutilised in the utilisation studies.
- ❑ The number of assets successfully consolidated through co-location.
- ❑ Percentage of investments that lead to improved asset use efficiency.
- ❑ Percentage of time that assets are in use compared to their total available time.
- ❑ Percentage of available space that is being effectively used after co-location.
- ❑ Reduction in liabilities, such as maintenance costs achieved through co-location.
- ❑ Return on investment for each asset investment. This could be measured in terms of increased efficiency, reduced costs, or other relevant metrics.
- ❑ The improvement in asset use efficiency achieved through investment.

# FIVE KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: FOUR

## What?

### 4. Use Assets Flexibly to Enable New Operating Models aligned to how we will deliver our services and work in the future.

- ❑ **Multi-Purpose Design:** Design and manage assets for multi-purpose use, flexibility, and agility, ensuring this aligns with the People Strategy and ICT Strategy.
- ❑ **Adapt Portfolio to Support the Changing needs in Service Delivery and staff wellbeing:** Support shifting service needs to outreach or digital models instead of permanent physical presence.
- ❑ **Non-Public Facing Functions:** Develop models for shared spaces that accommodate non-public facing functions.

## How?

- ❑ Use assets flexibly to go further than co-location (where services have separately defined spaces in the same building) to include sharing of space by compatible services.
- ❑ Incorporate flexibility and agility into design and management of assets. This could involve designing spaces that can be easily reconfigured for different uses or investing in equipment that can perform multiple functions. Management of assets adapts as service needs change.
- ❑ Implement modular designs that allow for easy reconfiguration of spaces or equipment to serve different purposes as needed, either so spaces can have multiple uses or to enable service delivery to change.
- ❑ Engage in regular reviews of service delivery models and adapt the asset portfolio to support shifting service needs. This could involve moving towards outreach or digital models instead of maintaining a permanent physical presence.
- ❑ Develop models for shared spaces that can accommodate non-public facing functions. This could involve creating communal areas that can be used by multiple teams or departments.

## Key Performance Indicators

- ❑ Number of assets designed for multi-purpose use and the percentage of time these assets are utilised.
- ❑ Number of shared spaces created, and the percentage of back-of-house functions accommodated in these spaces.
- ❑ Reduction in dedicated non-public facing spaces, while maintaining employee satisfaction.
- ❑ Customer satisfaction for all, with additional questions for those that are shared service space.
- ❑ Number building user group meetings.
- ❑ Employee satisfaction feedback on adaption of building management approaches to meet customer needs

# FIVE KEY STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES: FIVE

## What?

5. **Generate Income and Capital Receipts to support the Budget sustainability:**
- ❑ **Strategic Disposal:** Identify surplus assets and determine the best value disposal method.
  - ❑ **Effective Marketing:** Market properties effectively to achieve best consideration.
  - ❑ **Maximise Income from assets:** Actively manage commercial tenancies and explore sub-division opportunities.

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## How?

- ❑ Manage property as a corporate resource.
- ❑ Explore asset development opportunities supporting growth, regeneration and encompass wider social value.
- ❑ Conduct regular audits to identify surplus assets that are no longer needed.
- ❑ Analyse different disposal methods (e.g., auction, direct sale, trade-in) to determine which will yield the best value.
- ❑ Develop and implement marketing strategies tailored to the unique features and potential uses of each property.
- ❑ Regularly review commercial lease agreements and adjust rental rates as needed to reflect current market conditions.
- ❑ Consider dividing larger properties into smaller units that can be leased separately, potentially generating higher total rental income.

## Key Performance Indicators

Examples:

- ❑ Number of surplus assets identified and disposed of; total income generated from asset disposal.
- ❑ Number of inquiries or bids received per property; total income generated from property sales or leases.
- ❑ Total rental income; occupancy rate; number of properties successfully subdivided.
- ❑ Ratio of the actual proceeds from the disposal of assets to the estimated market value of those assets.
- ❑ Ratio of inquiries or bids that result in a sale or lease. A higher rate indicates more effective marketing.
- ❑ Annual rental income from an asset as a percentage of its market value. A higher yield indicates more effective income maximisation.
- ❑ Ratio of performance of investment assets verses targeted return.

# 11. HOW WE WILL MEASURE PERFORMANCE

- These approaches align with KCC’s strategic objectives and contribute to long-term financial sustainability. The AMS will be a dynamic document, reviewed periodically to adapt to emerging priorities and objectives, and underpinned by asset management plans to determine service delivery and individual asset plans.

## How we will measure Performance:



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- Performance metrics will be established for each portfolio to measure performance and guide estate management decisions, against delivery of the five strategic objectives. These metrics and other relevant financial indicators, will provide a clear and measurable understanding of each portfolio’s performance. Regular reviews of these metrics will ensure they remain relevant and reflective of our strategic objectives.



- We will define the Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) as part of the Asset Management Plans for each sub-portfolio, so the KPI’s are appropriate for each asset type. These KPIs will be **SMART** - Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and Time-bound. They will include measures such as **Net Running Cost Benchmarking, Rate of Utilisation of Spaces, Maintenance Costs, and Asset Down time**. The KPIs will align with our overall business objectives and provide a clear picture of each asset’s performance.



- By establishing this baseline and defining our KPIs, we will be able to measure asset performance effectively and make informed decisions about asset management. This approach will ensure that our assets are managed strategically, with a focus on maximising value and minimising risk.

## 12. THE APPROACH:

Key Drivers

Aims

Objectives

Approach

Transparency

- Ensuring both internally and externally, we make a commitment to open communication about asset management decisions, including the rationale behind asset acquisitions, disposals and maintenance plans.
- When you deal with us you will find we are transparent, open and deal with you fairly.

Collaboration

- Ensuring inclusive collaboration with stakeholders, employees and other organisations to enhance asset management practices and drive innovation.
- We will aim to foster a more integrated and inclusive approach to asset management by encouraging resource sharing across different KCC services. This will ensure that KCC meets the diverse needs of the community and KCC services.

Innovation

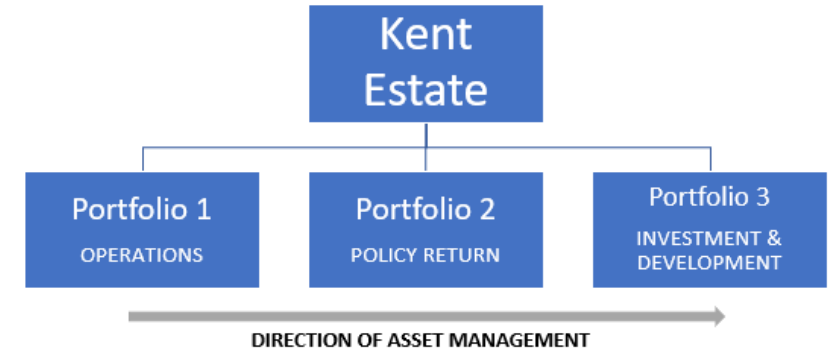
- Investment in a culture of continuous improvement and constant innovation of asset management by embracing and utilising innovate technology, practices and processes.

# 13. REALIGNMENT OF THE ESTATE TO FACILITATE THE APPROACH OF THE AMS:

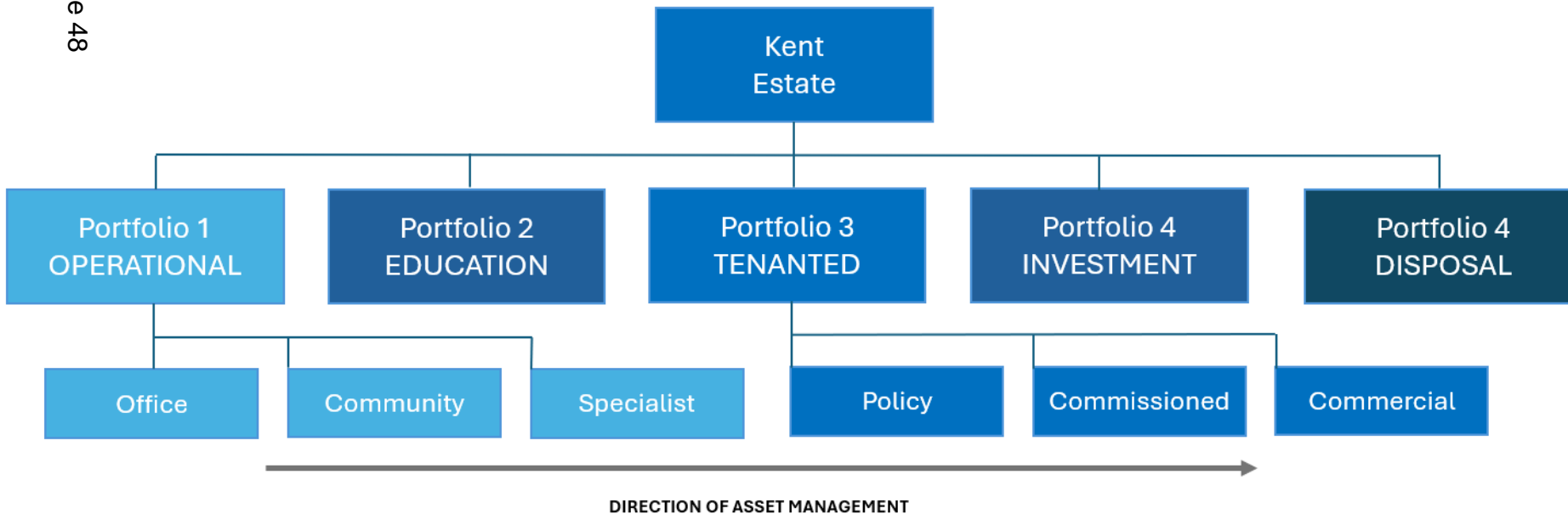
## Establishing a base line to measure asset performance

- To effectively manage our assets and measure their performance, we will first re-define the baseline. This involves the updating of the portfolio classifications used in the previous AMS. Our assets will be classified based on their **type (operational, education, tenanted, investment or disposal)** and then **sub-categorised by the use**. This classification system will allow us to better understand our asset portfolio and identify areas for improvement or investment:

The Estate from Previous AMS



The Realigned Estate for the New AMS



- Portfolio 1 – Operational:** Assets which are used to deliver services and administration, divided into 3 subcategories.
- Portfolio 2 – Education:** All Educational related assets.
- Portfolio 3 – Tenanted:** Assets occupied by non-KCC services and tenants, divided into 3 subcategories.
- Portfolio 4 – Investment:** Assets held by solely for the purposes of income generation.
- Portfolio 5 – Disposal:** Assets declared surplus and used to raise a capital receipt.



## 14. EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AMS:

Kent County Council is committed to implementing long-term, lifecycle management strategies for its assets, shifting from a reactive to a proactive approach. The future estate will be flexible, multi-purpose, and directly support service provision needs. Stakeholder engagement will be key in demonstrating how assets can enable new operating models and service transformation.

The Asset Management Strategy will be central to decision-making, fostering a culture of continuous dialogue and understanding. Environmental principles will be embedded into asset strategies to drive towards KCC's net zero targets by 2030. Robust asset data will enhance strategic planning and promote spending efficiencies.

Smart building technologies and intelligent management systems will be adopted for a comprehensive approach to estate management. Sites will be prioritised based on service users' requirements, focusing on positive outcomes for Kent's residents. Staff development and investment will be continued to provide a holistic service that embraces these technologies.

A dedicated reserve model for the corporate estate will be explored to cover ongoing maintenance requirements. Going beyond just compliance with the Equality Act, including Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) requirements, will be ensured, with a proposal to allocate a dedicated budget for making buildings accessible to meet individual needs. This will involve reprioritisation of the available funding.



### Business Continuity and Resilience Planning

- ❑ The new AMS will link and work collaboratively with KCC's Business Continuity and Resilience Planning policies. Business Continuity Planning (BCP) is a process that helps us manage risks, allowing us to continue to deliver services to our customers in the event of a disruption, big or small, right through to recovery.
- ❑ This is an important part of KCC's processes in ensuring business continuity, enabling Services to continue to provide essential services and to recover other functions quickly.

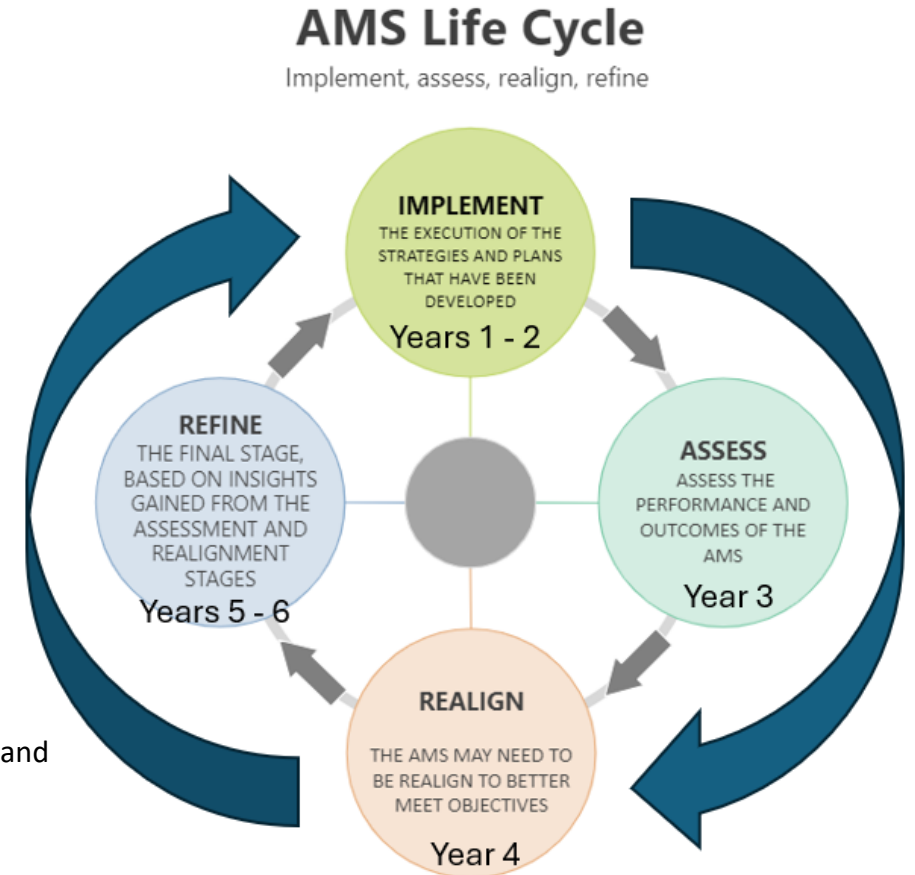
# 15. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW

- ❑ The AMS will be a live document, and progress against strategy objectives / KPI's and risks will be continually monitored and overseen by the KCC Infrastructure Business Assurance Team and monitored through the Council's risk management framework.
- ❑ The Asset Management Strategy will be reviewed and refreshed through a four-part lifecycle approach that will assess and evaluate the success of the AMS that includes a mid-term review in 2027 to ensure any new emerging priorities / objectives are considered and this will be factored into any revision of the strategy.
- ❑ It is important to note if the impact of the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy means a change in asset or service use, a further EqIA and DPIA would be required to be undertaken by the relevant Directorate service, in order to comply with governance.

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## Lifecycle approach for the Asset Management Strategy (AMS):

- ❑ **Implement:** This is the first stage where the AMS is put into action. It involves the execution of the strategies and plans that have been developed. This could include acquiring new assets, disposing of underutilised assets, or repurposing existing assets. The key focus in this stage is to ensure that the actions align with the strategic objectives of the AMS.
- ❑ **Assess:** Once the implementation stage is complete, the next step is to assess the performance of the assets. This involves monitoring and evaluating the assets using Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) to determine if they are meeting the expected outcomes. This stage is crucial for understanding the effectiveness of the AMS and identifying areas for improvement.
- ❑ **Realign:** Based on the assessment, the AMS may need to be realigned to better meet its objectives. This could involve adjusting the strategies or plans, changing the use of certain assets, or revising the KPIs. The goal of this stage is to ensure that the AMS remains relevant and effective in the face of changing circumstances.
- ❑ **Refine:** The final stage involves refining the AMS based on the insights gained from the assessment and realignment stages. This could involve making small tweaks to improve efficiency, or it could involve more significant changes to address new challenges or opportunities. The aim is to continuously improve the AMS to ensure it delivers the best possible outcomes.



## AMS Life Cycle

Implement, assess, realign, refine

## 16. OUTCOMES OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE AMS

The optimisation of our asset portfolio will maximise financial, social, and environmental value for Kent residents whilst contributing to organisational sustainability and aligning the portfolio to those that use our buildings Including residents, service users, partners and staff.

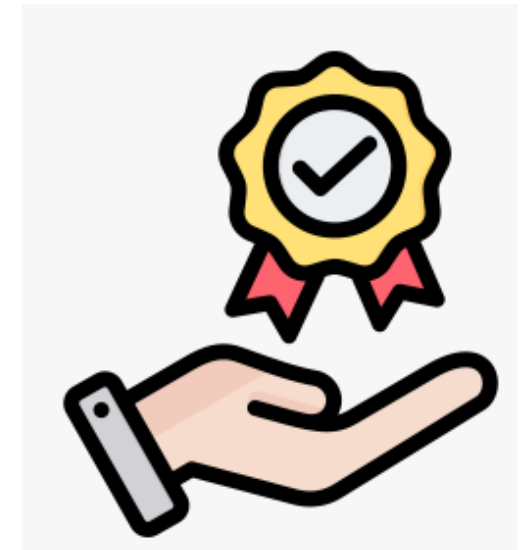
This will ensure: -

- Ensure assets are legally compliant, 'warm, safe & dry', and fit for operational purposes to support service delivery.
- Actively manage assets across their lifecycle.
- Rationalise underutilised asset and consolidate the estate by collaboration internally and with external stakeholders to identify co-location opportunities.
- Generate capital receipts from surplus assets.
- Manage property as a corporate resource, as appropriate for each portfolio class.
- Maximise rental income from commercially tenanted assets.
- Advance service transformation through asset repurposing.
- Use assets flexibly to go further than co-location (where services have separately defined spaces in the same building) to include sharing of space by compatible services
- Explore asset development opportunities supporting growth, regeneration and encompass wider social value.
- Embed sustainability principles into asset management and meet sustainability goals and reduce environmental impact.
- As service needs evolve, asset management strategies adapt accordingly, ensuring a dynamic and responsive infrastructure.



## 17. GOVERNANCE AND BUSINESS ASSURANCE

- The new AMS will aim to ensure that Members, Directorates and all officers/staff adhere to the strategy through ensuring regular engagement between Infrastructure (through the Business Partner, Infrastructure Strategy and Stakeholder Engagement teams) to ensure all services are working in line with AMS and that all considerations are taken for any initiatives/projects that change their Property requirements.
- This will be reinforced through relevant business cases being evaluated against the AMS and by all decisions across Infrastructure being underpinned by the aims and approaches set out in the AMS.
- Although ultimately the AMS is governed by the Property Management Protocol (which forms part of the KCC constitution, as a framework for how KCC assets are governed) which must be adhered to by all.
- The AMS will be a live document, and progress against strategic objectives / KPI's and risks will be continually monitored and overseen by the KCC Infrastructure Business Assurance Team and monitored through the Council's risk management framework.
- The Asset Management Strategy will be reviewed and refreshed as part of a four-part lifecycle approach that will assess and evaluate the success of the AMS that includes a mid-term review in 2027 to ensure any new emerging priorities / objectives are considered and this will be factored into any revision of the strategy.
- It is important to note if the impact of the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy means a change in asset or service use, a further EqIA and DPIA would be required to be undertaken by the relevant Directorate service, in order to comply with governance.
- The Asset Strategy Management Strategy will cover the period from July 2024 – July 2030, after which a new strategy will be implemented to follow concurrently.



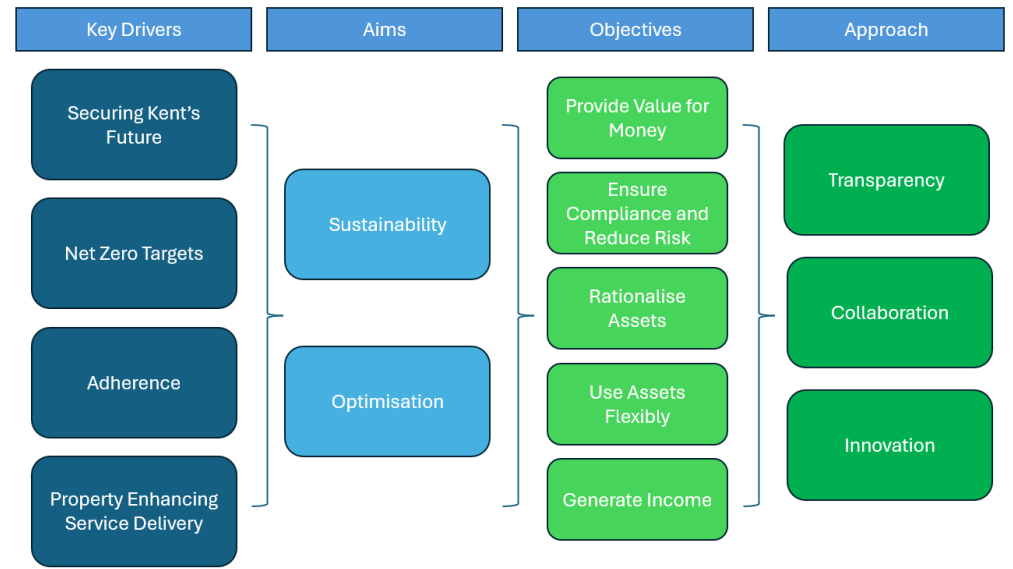
# 18. AMS SUMMARY



- ❑ The KCC’s (AMS) 2024-2030 is a comprehensive plan for managing KCC’s diverse property portfolio over the next six years.
- ❑ The strategy aligns with KCC’s key strategies to ensure that our property estate is effective and efficient.
- ❑ The AMS is designed to ensure that KCC’s assets are fit for purpose, optimally used, correctly located, appropriately maintained, and sustainable.

- ❑ The AMS is a dynamic document, regularly updated to stay relevant and effective amidst changing circumstances and service needs. It involves routine asset performance reviews, portfolio updates, and KPI adjustments. Emphasising staff development and inclusivity, it includes plans for training, mentorship, performance management, and career opportunities, ensuring KCC staff are equipped to manage assets effectively.

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**KCC’s mission statement for the AMS is:**

“To ensure that there is commitment to provide an efficient estate of the right size and type to meet its operational business needs. The estate must be adaptable to change and be affordable and sustainable to cater for its services and users.”

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## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

**EQIA Title**

Proposal for the new Asset Management Strategy

**Responsible Officer**

Gordon Edwards - DCED INF

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

Rebecca Anderson - DCED INF

### Type of Activity

**Service Change**

Service Change

**Service Redesign**

No

**Project/Programme**

No

**Commissioning/Procurement**

No

**Strategy/Policy**

Strategy/Policy

**Details of other Service Activity**

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**

Strategic and Corporate Services

**Responsible Service**

Business Information, Strategy and Assurance

**Responsible Head of Service**

Rebecca Anderson - DCED INF

**Responsible Director**

Rebecca Spore - DCED INF

### Aims and Objectives

The current Asset Management Strategy (AMS) ended in 2023, and a replacement Asset Management Strategy (2024 –2030) is being developed, alongside Kent County Council’s (KCC’s) core strategic objectives and the outcomes achieved and lessons learnt from the existing AMS (2018-2023).

The outcomes were that good progress was made to rationalise the estate, securing capital receipts, meeting environmental goals, and developing staff. However, further work is needed on strengthening capacity, data systems, property performance, and backlog maintenance.

Moving Forward with the New 2024-2030 Asset Management Strategy:-

The new AMS has been devised from KCC’s strategic core objectives; Securing Kent’s Future budget recovery plan; the evaluation of the 2018-2023 AMS and from feedback through stakeholder engagement.

The Key drivers for the new strategy are:

i) Securing Kent’s Future:

- Financial Sustainability: achieving sustainability requires a commercially focused approach that balances supply and demand for services.

- ii) Net Zero Targets:
  - Reducing our environmental footprint and improving efficiency are essential to achieving our Net Zero emissions targets.
- iii) Property Enhancing Service delivery:
  - Optimising our property portfolio is crucial for enhancing service delivery.
  - This includes ensuring the property service provided in buildings meets the service need and any new investment in buildings is designed to be fully fit-for-purpose by supporting service delivery.
- iv) Adherence to Legislative Framework and Health and Safety Compliance

The Strategy Objectives are:

1. Provide best value: Provide better value from assets through sustainable initiatives, energy efficiency, cost control and income generation.
2. Ensure compliance and reduce risk: Reduce liabilities through proactive maintenance planning and condition surveys.
3. Rationalise assets: Rationalise underutilised assets through disposal or alternative uses.
4. Use assets flexibly: Using assets flexibly to support new operating models and digital transformation.
5. Generate income: Generate capital receipts from disposal to support the budget sustainability.

KCC's strategic objectives will provide a holistic view by looking at both the aims and approach to ensure a comprehensive and forward-looking approach to asset management that aligns with its service delivery objectives and the broader goals of sustainability and innovation.

Equality Recommendations:

The strategy will adjust and continue to remove barriers or better promote equality, through a holistic approach to the use of KCC's provisions and assets.

- 1 It will allow KCC to critically evaluate our portfolio, retaining only the essential assets that align with service needs.

The accurate baseline date will ensure that KCC can enable the implementation of long-term, lifecycle management strategies, which will capture comprehensive lifecycle information for all its assets, enabling whole-life cost analysis to inform decision-making. This will ensure KCC maintains a proactive approach to its estate..

2. It will provide a holistic view, regarding KCC's service users needs and its use of its assets.

Through buy in from all stakeholders across KCC, all decisions relating to the requirement, use or need of an asset will require a robust and sound business case.

3. The strategy will look at new and innovative solutions to ensure an agile environment is provided to enable transformation.

By aligning assets with service requirements, our future estate will directly support the service provision's needs and integrated models. Assets will be designed and managed for multi-purpose use; flexible in terms of function; and facilitating agile working to create a fit for purpose estate. We will actively engage with stakeholders internal and external to KCC to demonstrate how assets can enable new operating models, digital adoption, and integrated delivery to shape service transformation.

4. Environmental Principles



Environmental principles will be embedded into our asset strategies to continuously improve energy efficiency, reduce emissions, and drive sustainability with the aim of driving towards KCC's net zero targets in line with the Council's policies within the resources that are available.

## 5. Equality

The new Asset Management Strategy will not only enhance KCC's assets to ensure full compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA), but also demonstrate KCC's commitment to going above and beyond in terms of DDA accessibility. This strategy underscores our dedication to creating an inclusive environment across all sites, surpassing standard requirements and setting a new benchmark in accessibility standards.

## 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?**

No

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

Yes

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

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

yes - ongoing with

KCC Policy and Resources Cabinet.

Internal Stakeholder Group within Infrastructure.

Business Partners.

Directorate stakeholder and partner engagement

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

Yes

**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**

No

**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**

- Assets will be fit for purpose and will align with service needs.
- Accurate baseline data will provide an informed approach regarding long-term, lifecycle management strategies which will enable budgeting in the future.

- Stakeholders will be involved in decisions relating to the requirements of sites use or need of an asset and will require a robust and sound business case.
- New and innovative solutions will be used to ensure there is a proactive and agile environment, which will include slicker digital options to shape transformation and meet compliance requirements.
- Sites will offer flexible arrangements, meaning sites are future proof and limited expenditure would need to be used to adapt and area for another service.
- Environmental principles will be embedded, ensuring continuous improvements to energy efficiency, which will aid KCC's net zero targets / budgeting and enhance the working environment.
- The enhancement of KCC's assets to aid further compliance in respect of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA) for all its users.

## Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions

### 19. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

#### Are there negative impacts for age?

No

#### Details of negative impacts for Age

Not Applicable

#### Mitigating Actions for Age

Not Applicable

#### Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age

Not Applicable

### 20. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Disability

#### Are there negative impacts for Disability?

No

#### Details of Negative Impacts for Disability

Not Applicable

#### Mitigating actions for Disability

Not Applicable

#### Responsible Officer for Disability

Not Applicable

### 21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex

#### Are there negative impacts for Sex

No

#### Details of negative impacts for Sex

Not Applicable

#### Mitigating actions for Sex

Not Applicable

#### Responsible Officer for Sex

Not Applicable

### 22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

#### Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

No

#### Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

#### Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

#### Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender

Not Applicable

### 23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race

<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

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

**DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:**

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

**DECISION NO:**

24/00069

**For publication** *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

**Key decision: YES**

*Key decision criteria. The decision will result in the adoption of new strategy.*

**Title of Decision: Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2030**

**Decision:**

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services to agree to the adoption of the new Asset Management Strategy 2024-2030.

**Reason(s) for decision:**

The existing Asset Management Strategy (AMS) is for the period 2018-2023 and so a new Asset Management strategy is required. The intention is that the new strategy will cover a period of 6 years, from 2024 to 2030.

The Asset Management strategy is a vital component of Kent County Council's (KCC) operational and strategic planning. It provides a comprehensive framework for managing KCC's diverse property assets, including those owned, leased, and tenanted. The strategy aligns with KCC's broader strategies and policies, ensuring that assets are optimally used, suitably located, and sustainably maintained.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposal for the development of a new AMS was discussed at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 17 January 2024, and is scheduled to be discussed again at the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on 10 September 2024.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Do nothing – discarded.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:** None.

.....  
signed

.....  
date

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**From:** Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance,  
Corporate and Traded Services

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10 September 2024

**Subject:** Sevenoaks Land East of High Street - Pre-Consultation and the next steps

**Decision no:** 24/00079

**Key Decision:** Yes, decision affects more than 2 Electoral Divisions

**Classification:** *Unrestricted report with exempt appendix F, not for publication under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).*

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:**

David Brazier – Sevenoaks Rural North East  
Nick Chard – Sevenoaks West  
Perry Cole – Swanley Sevenoaks  
Roger Gough – Sevenoaks North and Darent Valley  
Margot McArthur – Sevenoaks Rural South  
Richard Streatfeild – Sevenoaks Town

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**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** Yes

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**Summary:** This report provides an update on the pre-consultation activity in respect of the Sevenoaks Land East of High Street project.

This project is being led by Sevenoaks District Council who are the principal landowner and are seeking to redevelop the land east of High Street to provide sufficient residential accommodation to fully fund the redevelopment and refurbishment of Council owned properties.

Kent County Council's involvement to date is as the landowner of Sevenoaks Library which is located centrally within the subject site.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services on the proposed decision to:

1. Note the feedback from the community consultation exercise conducted by Sevenoaks District Council;
  2. Support the objectives and principles of the regeneration of the Sevenoaks Town centre, subject to KCC's red line requirements, which includes the potential relocation of County Council services to new build facilities within a future scheme; and
  3. Agree for Kent County Council to work with Sevenoaks District Council to progress the scoping of proposals and to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which will establish the principles of collaborative working between the two authorities. It should be noted that a further Key Decision will be taken in respect of the consideration of any final business case and the implementation of any proposals.
- 

## **1. Introduction**

1.1 Kent County Council (KCC) has been engaging with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) regarding SDC's ambition to regenerate the area to the east of the town centre in Sevenoaks.

1.2 The proposals, involve the relocation of KCC services, including the library function, to an alternative new facility within a future scheme. This could potentially deliver more efficient buildings for KCC's estate, supporting Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022-2026. It may also present an opportunity for KCC's facilities to be relocated closer to the Town Centre.

1.3 Approval is being sought to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SDC, which will establish the principles of collaboration to explore the viability of proposals and would establish KCC's red-line requirements and expectations. Further details on this are contained within exempt appendix F.

## **2. Key Considerations**

2.1 Public pre-consultation events were undertaken by SDC to establish the community's views on the proposed regeneration of the High Street, which includes the leisure centre, library, museum and art gallery as well as car parking.

2.2 Feedback received following this consultation commented on the following areas:

- Infrastructure
- Townscape
- Facilities
- Housing
- Transport and Accessibility
- Environmental Issues
- Community engagement and process



- 2.3 SDC is the principal landowner, however the KCC site is in the centre of the proposed development area.
- 2.4 The KCC owned site currently houses the library and its associated car parking, which was built in 1987.
- 2.5 The library building accommodates various KCC services, which include the museum, art gallery, the registrar, and adults with learning disabilities.
- 2.6 While the building is not built to current energy efficiency standards, its current display energy certificate (DEC) assessment is 58-C compared to an average of 100-D for public buildings.
- 2.7 When compared to the wider KCC estate it is considered the property is fit for purpose, given it meets current and projected service requirements and is not in need of significant planned maintenance expenditure.
- 2.8 The overarching principle of the proposed collaboration is that by combining the respective KCC and SDC land interests, a mixed-use scheme can be developed which delivers a significant amount of new housing. This housing could generate sufficient capital (land value uplift) to fully fund new and improved community facilities within the mixed-use site, benefitting both KCC and SDC service users.
- 2.9 KCC would expect re-provision of facilities for its services, at nil cost to the County Council. New facilities would be built to modern energy efficiency standards and would support KCC's aspirations for a modern estate and commitment to reduce carbon emissions.
- 2.10 SDC's ambitions are to re-provide their existing services, which include the leisure centre, alongside an ambition for a new hotel, refurbishment of other SDC owned assets including 96 High Street, and above policy compliant environmental standards.
- 2.11 Given KCC's financial position, KCC's engagement to date has been predicated on the assumption that sufficient land value capture would be released to fully fund the new community facilities, which would satisfy KCC's best value obligations, and that surplus would be generated. Any net surplus generated from the inclusion of KCC's land interest within the project would be reinvested back into the Council's Capital Programme, i.e. KCC would have a commercial, rather than a service rationale for engagement in the project.
- 2.12 The proposed MoU will establish the principles of the collaboration in respect of the project and set out KCC's red lines to protect KCC's legal and financial interests.
- 2.13 SDC, supported by KCC, have held pre-consultation events, generating feedback from key stakeholders and the community (Appendix A). This feedback would be used at the next stage to inform the brief for the project as it develops.
- 2.14 Due to the high-profile nature of the proposals and the impact the development may have on multiple electoral divisions, a key decision is being sought to endorse KCC's continued engagement with the project and to provide authority to enter into

an MoU to allow this to progress.

2.15 Further information in respect of the content of the MoU is provided in exempt appendix F.

### **3. Background**

3.1 Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) and Kent County Council (KCC) own land to the east of the High Street, Sevenoaks. The property assets which would be in the scope of the regeneration project are the: current leisure centre, the library/museum/art gallery, car parks, bus stops, Sackville House, and the former M&Co shop (Appendix C). SDC's stated ambition is to regenerate these areas to provide:

- *A new state of the art, environmentally efficient leisure centre.*
- *A new multi-use learning hub that will incorporate a library, adult education centre, art gallery, facilities for learning disabilities, registrar, museum and a community space.*
- *A new market hall to enhance the retail, cultural and dining offer and support for local and emerging businesses.*
- *A new hotel.*
- *New homes, including much needed affordable housing.*
- *Improved pedestrian connections between the town and Knole Park.*
- *Improved public transport and green travel routes.*

3.2 The pre-consultation engagement was undertaken at the end of April 2024 to seek the view of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders on the early ideas for delivering improvements to the area east of Sevenoaks High Street (around Buckhurst Land and Suffolk Way), see Appendix A.

3.3 Feedback regarding KCC's services showed support for the facilities and their retention. The benefits of co-location were acknowledged, but there was a view that the library space should not be reduced. Additionally, there was also support for these community facilities to be relocated closer to the high street as part of any future development project.

3.4 Authority is now being sought to endorse KCC's continued engagement in the project and to formalise this relationship with SDC in an MoU.

3.5 Subject to agreement for KCC to enter an MOU, the project will move to the next stage of delivery. The procurement of a strategic development partner, whose role will be to further refine masterplan proposals and work with both Councils to develop core requirements and establish the viability of proposals.

3.6 Subject to the viability of proposals being established, a further key decision will be needed, in advance of KCC legally committing to the project and relevant members will be engaged as part of this process.

3.7 Entering into an MoU does not oblige KCC to continue with the project.

3.8 Continued engagement may present an opportunity to secure a newer, more energy efficient facility, in an optimised location at nil cost to the KCC. The proposed MOU will cover the following:

- a) The key objectives of the project.
- b) The key inputs and outputs from the project, from both a financial and property perspective.
- c) The principles of collaboration.
- d) The governance structures the parties will put in place and operate. This will involve the establishment of a Project Board and Project Working Group.
- e) The respective roles and responsibilities parties will have during the project.
- f) The equitable treatment of outputs from the project to protect each party's commercial interests.
- g) Clarification that neither party's ability to exercise its statutory duties will be impacted by the MoU.
- h) The right to terminate the MoU should the project be deemed unviable or at either party's discretion with sufficient notice.

#### **4. Financial Implications**

4.1 At this stage KCC's financial exposure is limited to the legal costs associated with the drafting and negotiation of the MoU, circa £15k.

4.2 As noted, it is envisaged that for KCC to consider committing to the wider project, it will need to be established that it is viable for community facilities to be fully funded to the required specification solely from land value capture.

4.3 Limited further revenue expenditure may be required to support this assessment prior to a full business case being prepared and a subsequent key decision being sought. This expenditure will be funded through capitalisation against the currently forecast capital receipt should the project progress, which is KCC's standard practise in respect of capital generating disposals.

4.4 As noted above, engagement to date has been on the basis that the scheme could generate a financial surplus following reprovision of facilities, providing a commercial incentive for KCC's involvement.

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

5.1 While the MoU will set out the principles of collaboration between KCC and SDC it is not a legally binding document on either party, and therefore KCC's land interests are not impacted at this stage.

5.2. A future key decision will be sought before KCC enters into any legally binding documentation in respect of its landholdings. The impact on service delivery and timelines for development will be fully considered at this future stage, subject to feasibility being established.

5.3 KCC has appointed legal advisors through the Office of General Counsel to assist with the drafting of the MoU and to advise on potential collaboration structures.

## **6. Equalities & Data Protection Implications**

6.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed and no issues have been identified at this stage for EqIA, but this will be reviewed as the collaboration project continues.

## **7. Data Protection Implications**

7.1 A data protection implication assessment (DPIA) screener has confirmed that there are no DPIA implications at this time.

## **8. Other corporate implications**

8.1 Services will be fully engaged during the design stages to ensure that any proposed new facilities meet KCC's organisational requirements.

## **9. Governance**

9.1 Members in Sevenoaks were consulted on the 11 April 2024, prior to the pre-consultation events, regarding the concept of the regeneration of Sevenoaks High Street and KCC's potential involvement. Members were supportive of this concept and noted that due to the early stage of the project further information would be required as the project progresses, prior to KCC's full engagement.

9.2 The Strategic Project Management team in Infrastructure will ensure the working group will involve the relevant services across the Council as the project develops.

9.3 The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee will be provided with updates on the progress of the Sevenoaks Regeneration Project as the project progresses.

9.4 A further key decision supported by a full business case will be sought prior to KCC committing to the project.

## **10. Conclusions**

10.1 KCC has been engaging with SDC regarding the SDC's ambition to develop the land to the east of the town centre in Sevenoaks. The project can only continue in its current form in collaboration with KCC as the County Council is a key landowner and stakeholder. Authority is sought to enter into the MoU and develop proposals to the next stage.

This will include the following activities:

- Refinement of masterplan.
- Independent planning appraisal of proposals to assess deliverability.
- Independent financial appraisal of development assumptions.
- Valuation advice in respect of KCC's property inputs and property outputs.
- Consideration of co-location opportunities within the theoretical new community space.

10.2 Subject to confidence being established in the deliverability of the project, a full business case will be prepared, and a key decision will be sought prior to KCC entering any legally binding contract committing itself to the project.

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### **Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee are asked to consider and endorse or make recommendations to the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services on the proposed decision to:

1. Note the feedback from the community consultation exercise conducted by Sevenoaks District Council;
  2. Support the objectives and principles of the regeneration of the Sevenoaks Town centre, subject to KCC's red line requirements, which includes the potential relocation of County Council services to new build facilities within a future scheme; and
  3. Agree for Kent County Council to work with Sevenoaks District Council to progress the scoping of proposals and to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which will establish the principles of collaborative working between the two authorities. It should be noted that a further Key Decision will be taken in respect of the consideration of any final business case and the implementation of any proposals.
- 

## **11. Appendices**

11.1 Appendix A - Sevenoaks Pre Consultation Report

<https://cds.sevenoaks.gov.uk/documents/s58083/09%20Appendix%20F%20-%20LEHS%20Stage%201%20Engagement%20Report%20-%20Final.pdf?J=1>

11.2 Appendix B – Site Plan of ownership boundary line

11.3 Appendix C – Site Plan showing SDC and KCC Ownership

11.4 Appendix D – EQIA

11.5 Appendix E - Proposed Record of Decision

11.6 Appendix F – Exempt Report

## **12. Contact details**

<b>Report Author:</b>  Jo Taylor (Interim) Head of Capital Telephone: 03000 41 67 57 Email: <a href="mailto:Joanne.Taylor@kent.gov.uk">Joanne.Taylor@kent.gov.uk</a>  Hugh D'Alton Acting Strategic Programme Manager Telephone: 03000 41 88 35	<b>Director:</b>  Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure Telephone: 03000 41 67 16 Email: <a href="mailto:rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk">rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</a>
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Email: [Hugh.D'Alton@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Hugh.D'Alton@kent.gov.uk)

Lisa Alexander  
Project Manager, Strategic Projects Team  
Telephone: 03000 41 57 68  
Email: [lisa.alexander@kent.gov.uk](mailto:lisa.alexander@kent.gov.uk)

**SEVENOAKS**  
SO MUCH MORE

Stage 1 Public Engagement Report  
Land to the East of Sevenoaks High Street

May 2024



# Purpose of Report

**This Public Engagement Report has been prepared by Pillory Barn to provide a record of the public engagement activities undertaken by Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with Kent County Council to support and inform the emerging development plans for the Land to the East of Sevenoaks High Street.**

## **This report outlines:**

- the purpose for the public engagement exercise and its aims;
- the rationale and methodology for the engagement activity, its structure, process, engagement options and locations;
- the promotion of the events;
- how the public engaged with the project and their summarised feedback;
- how key identified stakeholder groups were engaged;
- the core themes of the feedback received;
- the statistical data from the engagement website; and,
- the conclusions and next steps.

Stage 1 public engagement exercises were well attended and gave individuals the opportunity to understand better the proposals, raise questions, queries, and comment from their perspective and also point out areas where they had concerns. Over 420 people attended the public exhibitions and 49 people attended the online webinar, and over 300 people responded to the online survey. Responses were collated and the project team sifted through all comments received and grouped them into themes, which are outlined in this report.

The responses received were generally encouraging and cautiously optimistic, with many acknowledging the need for change and appreciating the council's engagement at this early stage. Understandable concerns have also been acknowledged as important contributions that will help evolve the scheme further, emphasising the significance of incorporating these perspectives into the engagement process.





# Brief Project overview

**The project to create a new vision for the Land East of Sevenoaks High Street is being led by Sevenoaks District Council in partnership with Kent County Council.**

The area East of Sevenoaks High Street contains areas and buildings that require investment. There is a once in a generation opportunity to improve the Buckhurst Lane and Suffolk Way area of Sevenoaks, close to Sevenoaks High Street, helping to make the town a more exciting place to live, work and spend time.

Sevenoaks District Council is working with Kent County Council to explore ways to improve public buildings. The District Council and County Council own property and land in this area and together are seeking to deliver an exciting new chapter for this area within Sevenoaks town centre.

Ideas for this area of land are at an early stage. Initial ideas include a new energy efficient leisure facility, a combined library museum, art gallery, adult education centre and other environmental and cultural improvements, including a new pedestrian link to Knole Park, a new market hall and a hotel to support the local economy. Providing new homes would help to fund the wider improvements, including the leisure facility.

## THE PROJECT OBJECTIVES

This is an important opportunity to develop a vision for the land East of Sevenoaks High Street to make the town centre a more attractive, welcoming, and well-connected place. The project is based on the following set of objectives

- Encouraging sustainable travel choices.
- Reflecting and complementing the town's historic character.
- Strengthening the identity of the area.
- Supporting a greener future.
- Improving health and wellbeing.
- Supporting the town centre.
- Supporting the district's wider economy.
- Providing new homes and choice of homes.
- Developing our community services and bringing these offers together to make accessing services easier and more convenient for people.

**Plans for the Land East of Sevenoaks High Street align with the overall Vision for Sevenoaks Town Centre in 2040, which includes:**

- Raising the profile of its historic town centre and the impressive Knole Park.
- Supporting the local economy and independent shops.
- Expanding its cultural identity and diversifying the town's appeal.
- An inclusive town centre - widening the leisure offer and providing new homes that support different income levels and life stages.

# Initial engagement purpose

**Through public engagement we want to understand the aspirations and needs of the local community to better inform the vision for the Land East of Sevenoaks High Street.**

With ideas at an early stage, Stage 1 of public engagement has provided an opportunity to present initial ideas, gain feedback, gauge opinion and find out anything else that stakeholders and the public wish to be considered within the next stages of developing thinking over the coming months.

Sevenoaks District Council will prioritise its engagement with the public as ideas progress, and the intention is to provide further engagement touchpoints through the project timeline.



# Public engagement approach for Stage 1

**We went through a process of identifying engagement methods that would reach different audiences and would include a good spread of ages and demographics.**

Providing public engagement that was fully accessible was essential, so locations, days of the week and times of day were taken into account. Decision making considerations also included potential attendees' commitments to work, care and access requirements.

**It was agreed that consultation activities would comprise:**

- In-person public exhibition events.
- Online engagement event.
- Focus groups with key stakeholders including Buckhurst Lane residents, leisure centre staff, National Trust, the Knole Estate, Chamber of Commerce.
- Surveys to gather responses on different development priorities and general feedback on early ideas.

Taking place during April 2024 and closing at midnight on 6 May 2024, the Stage 1 public engagement exercise focused around presenting early ideas, providing access to the project team (Sevenoaks District Council and Kent County Council officers), answering questions and capturing feedback.

**The events and survey were promoted by:**

- Website
- Stakeholder invitations
- Direct leafleting to households
- Newspaper advertising
- Social media
- Local media coverage

# Consultation approach for Stage 1

## PUBLIC EXHIBITION EVENTS

A variety of venues were considered for the public exhibitions. Sevenoaks Leisure Centre was selected as the most appropriate location, owing to:

- Its position in the heart of the plans.
- Its accessible, town centre location.
- Its location in an area of good footfall.
- Its existing broad uses, meaning that a broad demographic audience would likely be already in the area when events took place.
- Its facilities and ease of access for attendees.

The events took place at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, Buckhurst Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1LW on:

- Wednesday 24 April 2024 from 1.30pm to 8.30pm.
- Saturday 27 April 2024 from 10am to 3pm.

The event format comprised a display of information boards outlining the project vision and early ideas. Senior members of the project team from Sevenoaks District Council and KCC together with key consultants were available for discussion and to answer questions.

## ONLINE ENGAGEMENT EVENT

Digital engagement provided an alternative for those unable to attend the in-person exhibitions or focus groups. The online engagement event used the Zoom platform and took place on:

- Monday 29 April 2024 from 7pm to 9pm.

The event was facilitated by Pillory Barn, and comprised a presentation which was followed by a Q&A session. Online attendees could submit their questions using a function on Zoom, which were then posed to the most appropriate member of the team. It was stated that any questions not covered would be answered as part of an FAQs document that would be shared on the website following the event.





# Consultation approach for Stage 1

## FOCUS GROUPS

Following personal invitations to arrange a suitable date, time and location, **individual briefings** were held with:

- Sevenoaks District Council Ward Members.
- Everyone Active (Sevenoaks Leisure Centre staff).
- KCC Members.
- Public Realm Commission.
- National Trust.
- Knole Estate representatives.
- Sevenoaks Town Council.
- Commercial tenants.
- Buckhurst Avenue residents.
- Sevenoaks Mums / Sevenoaks Women's Forum.
- Access Group.
- Chamber of Commerce.

# Promotion activity

**In line with our intention to reach and raise awareness with as many potential attendees and as broad a demographic as possible, a variety of engagement methods were used to promote the events. These are outlined below:**

## PROJECT WEBSITE

A [project website](#) was created, providing an overview of the project, outlining how the early plans fit with the Vision for Sevenoaks 2040 and to provide an opportunity to contribute feedback and further ideas.

The Stage 1 engagement survey was embedded into the website allowing people to give their feedback in a structured way, closing at midnight on 6 May.

The website also includes responses to frequently asked questions, which has assisted in dispelling certain rumours.

## INVITATIONS TO KEY STAKEHOLDERS

Invitation letters were emailed to key stakeholders inviting them to join an event. The emails were sent ahead of time to give plenty of notice.

## LEAFLET DROP

6,200 Leaflets were delivered to postcodes in the TN13 area, and was completed by 15 April to give appropriate notice of the events. A copy of the leaflet, along with the areas on the map covered by the leaflet drop, is included in the appendices.

## ADVERTISING

The project team identified two local newspapers most commonly read in the Sevenoaks and immediate surrounding area, the Sevenoaks Chronicle (circa 8,000 weekly readers) and the Kent Messenger's Weald edition (5,935 weekly circulation 43,628 weekly readership for Kent Messenger Series).

The campaign included a quarter page full colour advertisement in each title, appearing on the week commencing 15 April.

The advertisement artwork can be found in the appendices.



Leaflet

# Promotion activity

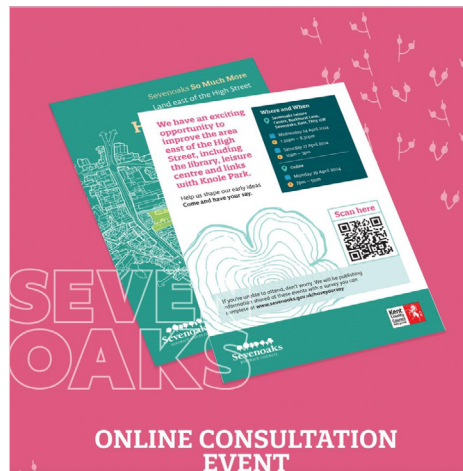
## SOCIAL MEDIA

A number of social media posts promoting the events were issued ahead of the events and on the days to remind people to attend. This included a paid for 'boost' on Facebook. Post were also issued after the events to remind people the survey remained open.

The posts were seen 48,044 times on Facebook, 4,135 times on X (Twitter), 3,622 times on LinkedIn and 2,405 times on Instagram.

In all, the posts were seen 58,206 times across all four social media platforms.

A number of people attending the in-person events referenced the social media posts being a good reminder of the events as they had received leaflets or seen the media ad, but the social media posts had jogged their memories and encouraged them to attend.



## LIAISING WITH LOCAL MEDIA

A media briefing and two press releases were issued by Sevenoaks District Council's Communications Team ahead of the events to raise awareness and remind people that the events were taking place at the Leisure Centre. Coverage appeared in the Kent Messenger and on front page and page three of the Sevenoaks Chronicle.

A post event press release was also issued to outline the number of individuals and groups that engaged with the in-person and online events and to promote the availability of the online survey. This secured substantial coverage on page 2 of the Sevenoaks Chronicle.

## COUNCIL WEBSITE

The exhibitions and survey were promoted prominently on the homepage of the Council's website prior to the engagement exhibitions until the survey closed.

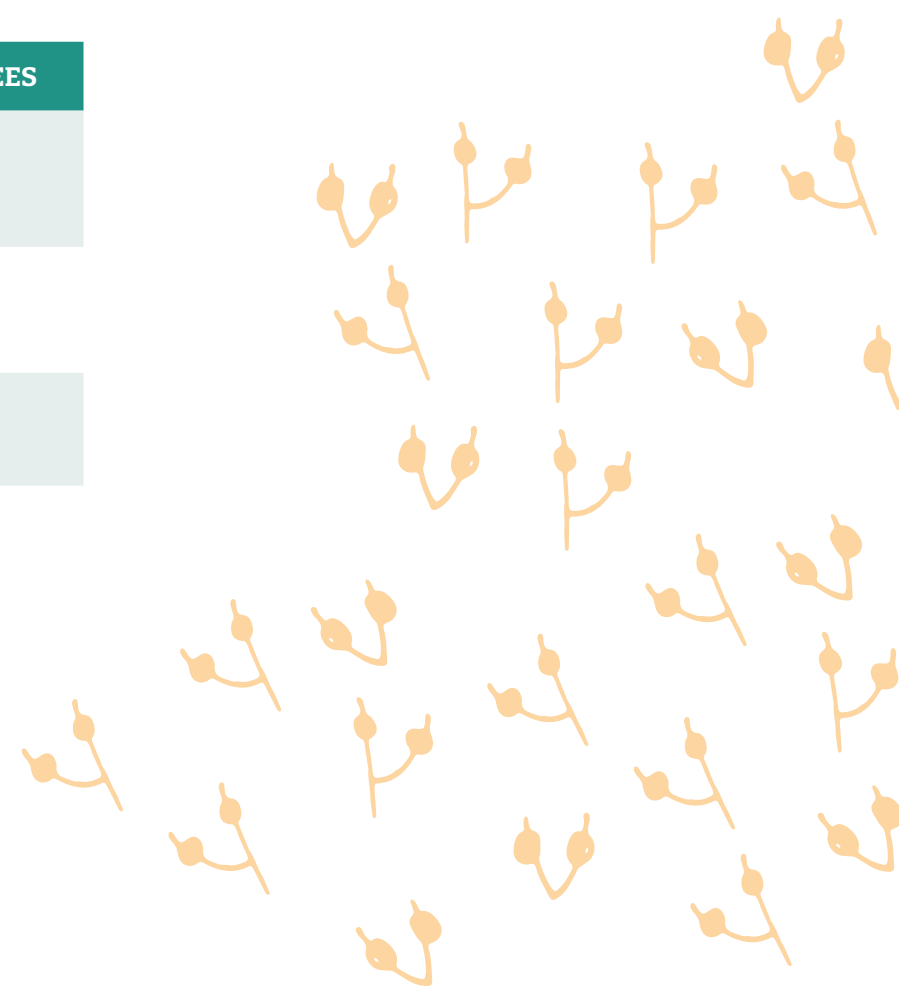
# Overview of event attendance

## PUBLIC EXHIBITION AND ONLINE EVENT ATTENDANCE

The public exhibition and online events were well attended with the Wednesday session generating the highest number of attendees. While demographic data was not formally recorded, observations were made and suggest that a broad demographic group ranging in age, sex and ethnicity reflective of Sevenoaks did attend. Youth (under 18) attendance, was however low.

EVENT DATE	EVENT TIME	EVENT LOCATION	NUMBER OF ATTENDEES
Wednesday 24th April 2024	1.30pm to 8.30pm	Sevenoaks Leisure Centre	239 attendees
Saturday 27th April 2024	10am to 3pm	Sevenoaks Leisure Centre	189 attendees
Monday 29th April 2024	7pm to 9pm	Zoom	49 attendees

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# Overview of event attendance

## BRIEFINGS AND FOCUS GROUPS ATTENDANCE

Individual briefings and focus groups allowed us to speak with key stakeholders in a more intimate environment, to ensure their individual thoughts and concerns could be raised and taken into account.

Overall the events were positive in tone with many people appreciating the need for change and the desire by the council to engage at this very early stage. The events themselves gave individual groups the opportunity to raise considerations from their perspective and also point out areas where they had concerns.

All groups welcomed the opportunity to have their individual input into the engagement events. Further summarised details of each can be found in the next section of this summary report.

## Schedule of Briefings/Focus Groups – Land East of High Street Project

FOCUS GROUPS/BRIEFING	TIME/DATE
SDC Ward Members (online)	8th April – 10.00am
Everyone Active (leisure centre) Staff, (leisure centre)	10th April – 10.00am
KCC members briefing (online)	11th April – 3.00pm
Public Realm Commission (online)	19th April – 2.30pm-3.30pm
National Trust (online)	19th April – 1.00pm-2.00pm
Knole Estate Reps (online)	22nd April – 9.00am-10.00am
Sevenoaks Town Council – (Sevenoaks TC office)	15th April – 6.00pm – 6.45pm
Commercial Tenants (leisure centre)	22nd April – 6.00pm-7.00pm
Buckhurst Avenue Residents (leisure centre)	22nd April – 7.30pm-8.30pm
Sevenoaks Mums/ Sevenoaks Women's Forum (Online)	26th April – 12.30pm-1.30pm
Access Group (online)	18th April – 12.30pm-1.30pm
Chamber of Commerce (leisure centre)	23rd April – 10.30am-11.30am
Chamber of Commerce (networking event)	1st May – 12.00pm-12.30pm

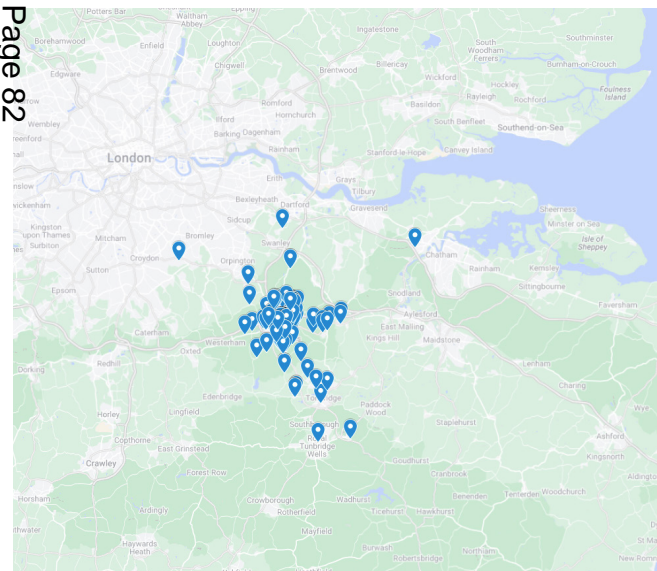
Total  
**129**  
attendees

# Engagement by postcode

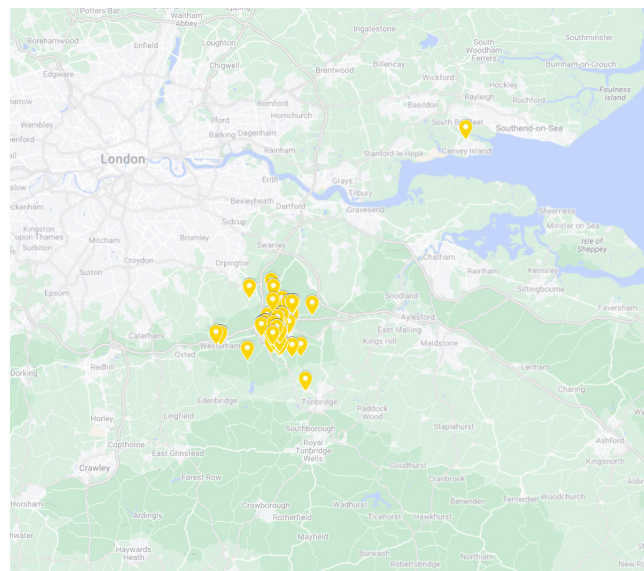
We have mapped postcode data supplied during engagement, which can be viewed on the following link.

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/o/edit?mid=1822vw9TBZiZK1BTMLq\\_jQIUdqCIEi08&usp=sharing](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/o/edit?mid=1822vw9TBZiZK1BTMLq_jQIUdqCIEi08&usp=sharing)

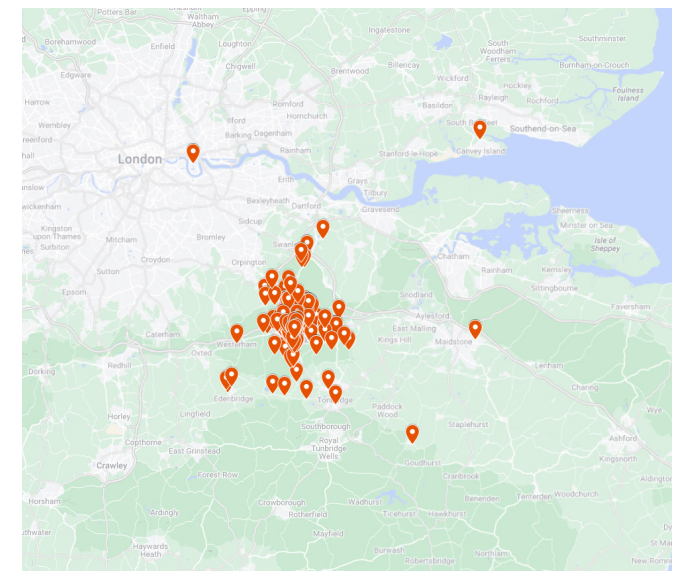
Wednesday



Saturday



Website Survey



# Focus Group Summary

## Everyone Active Team, Leisure Centre Project Discussion

10 April 2024

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Overall the team were positive and supported the need for a new or improved leisure centre and offering. The attendees highlighted the need to ensure the new centre is ready ahead of the closure of the existing centre. The team cited that the position of the current centre is not optimal and outlined the importance of improving the facilities and services offered including the direct suggestion to add 'day-spa' type facilities and a soft-play area for children, additional studio space and a larger gym. There was a general consensus that the current building had a poor layout, and was not environmentally efficient. The team were keen that everything was done to retain membership throughout by not losing any facilities, and including a focus on attracting new users to the Leisure Centre. A specific focus area includes facility upgrades, member communication, and ensuring minimal disruption during renovations.

Concerns raised focussed on car parking for staff, disruption during the construction process, the need to maintain services for children and young adults and the need to offer a 'safe space'

Word cloud summarising most frequent words and topics discussed.



# Focus Group Summary

## KCC Members

11 April 2024

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

The meeting was constructive, with attendees recognising the need for regeneration and noting the benefits of developing the early concepts. The market hall was seen as a “great idea” but the consensus was that more detailed information is needed. Feedback highlighted the need for careful planning around the market hall and housing, especially concerning service continuity and community impact. The team was keen for there to be detailed planning including a risk register as a priority.

The potential loss of parking spaces was a concern, and the importance of addressing parking availability and solutions for residents and visitors was expressed. It was requested that work undertaken to date is shared with council members and the updates continue, to enhance transparency and facilitate informed decision-making.

Word cloud summarising most frequent words and topics discussed.



# Focus Group Summary

## Sevenoaks Town Council

15 April 2024

Word cloud summarising most frequent words and topics discussed.

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

The town council recognised the opportunity to refresh and retain town centre leisure facilities and deliver a cultural quarter, deliver much needed affordable housing and a rare opportunity to open up the connection between the town centre and Knole Park.

The meeting addressed various concerns and suggestions. The attendees highlighted concerns about parking, smaller footprints for leisure centre and library, the housing density, building heights and proportion of affordable housing.

There was discussion about the hotel's feasibility and the need for its design to cohere with the whole scheme. The team were keen to incorporate a larger cultural quarter in the plans and expressed the idea of integrating the cultural hub within the Sevenoaks Neighbourhood Plan, including collaboration with the Stag Theatre. A further suggestion was creating a strong brand identity for the project.







# Focus Group Summary

## Knole Estate - National Trust

19 April 2024

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

Discussion topics were wide-ranging in this constructive meeting and The National Trust expressed willingness to collaborate.

A specific focus area on visitor access focused on the interface with access routes to Knole Estate, capacity issues and the entry process. Plans should consider a differentiation between different types of users (local users and destination visitors), visitor numbers and revenue protection / pay barriers, recognising the valuable contribution to heritage conservation. Increased levels of anti-social behaviour in the environmental park were noted, emphasising the need for controlled access and management. Concerns were also voiced about the increased use of the Gallops Area and the potential impacts on local wildlife, including bats. The team was also keen to preserve views from the estate and heritage buildings, and manage the cumulative impact of development encroachment.



The proposed housing development raised concerns in terms of scale, density, and height relative to the surrounding environment. The team was keen to ensure the character of the existing town is maintained.

Further ideas included the potential for collaborative energy generation and joint environmental initiatives.







# Meeting Summary

## Sevenoaks Mums Group

26 April 2024

### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

This meeting provided valuable insights into the practical concerns of local residents, particularly families. The overall regeneration concept received positive feedback. Issues faced by this group included the volume of traffic in Sevenoaks, with ongoing construction contributing to temporary traffic disruptions and impacting daily commuting. The group perceived parking to be adequate, however proposed car parking charge revisions to encourage local shopping. The multi-storey car park was described as dark and unsafe, deterring use.

The concept of a car-free development was criticised in the context of local needs, especially for families. The group also felt it is crucial for the leisure centre and library to remain close to the High Street to be accessible and meet community needs in terms of size and location, noting that the proposed new library appears smaller than the current facility.

Word cloud summarising most frequent words and topics discussed.



# Meeting Summary

## Chamber of Commerce

23 April 2024

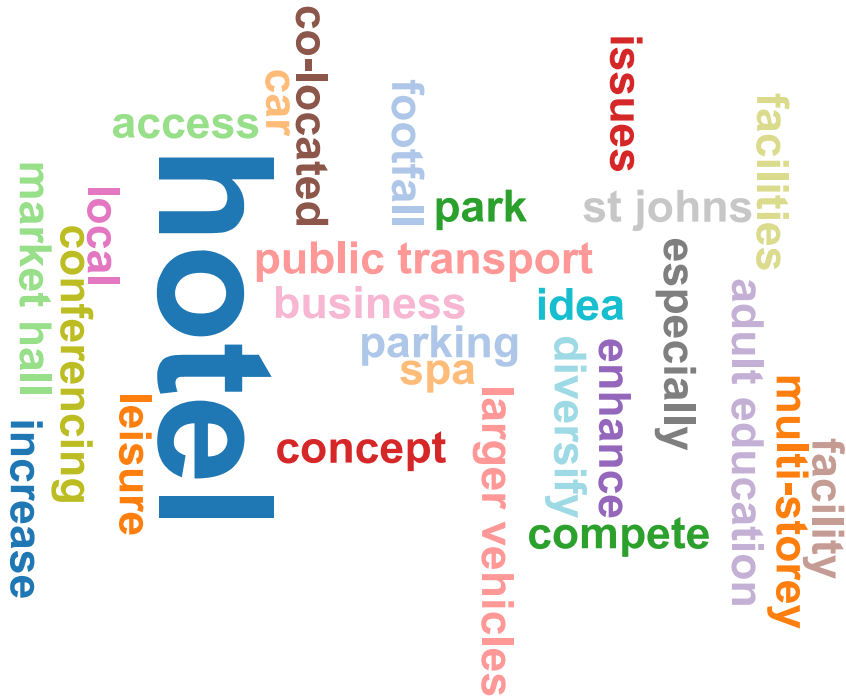
### SUMMARY OF DISCUSSION

This meeting provided valuable insights. The attendees highlighted concerns regarding the multi-storey car park’s capacity and accessibility; observing it already has high usage which could impact future developments. There was a strong push for enhancing public transport to alleviate some of the traffic and parking challenges associated with the town centre.

A new leisure spa should complement existing amenities rather than compete and was discussed as potentially beneficial if managed correctly.

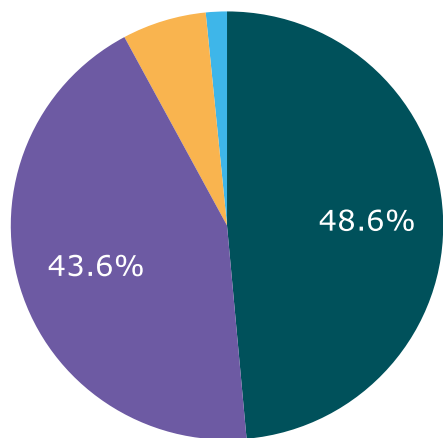
Relocation of adult education into a new co-located facility within the town centre was discussed, with recognition that potential impact on other local businesses would be minimal. A hotel with conferencing facilities was welcomed, and its potential to diversify the local economy and increase footfall and support a night time economy was noted. It was noted that the inclusion of such facilities could make the town a hub for business and leisure tourism.

Word cloud summarising most frequent words and topics discussed.





How often on average do you visit the town centre?

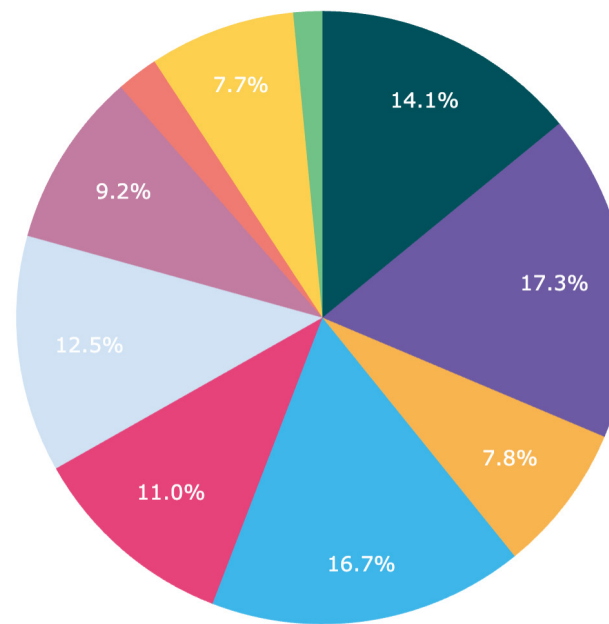


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● Daily ● Weekly ● Monthly ● Less than once a month

Daily and weekly visits to the town centre were the most common responses. The results show a strong trend of daily visits to the town centre by the majority of respondents.

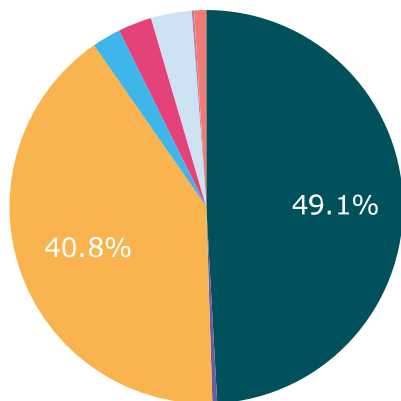
Currently what aspects of Sevenoaks town centre do you find most appealing?



● Choice of shops ● Places to eat and drink ● Selection of services  
 ● Nearby open spaces ● Leisure facilities  
 ● Library, museum, art gallery and cultural facilities  
 ● Parking availability ● Public transport ● Market stalls ● Other

Results show that many aspects of Sevenoaks town centre appeal to respondents, with some of the most popular aspects being places to eat and drink, the choice of shops and nearby open spaces.

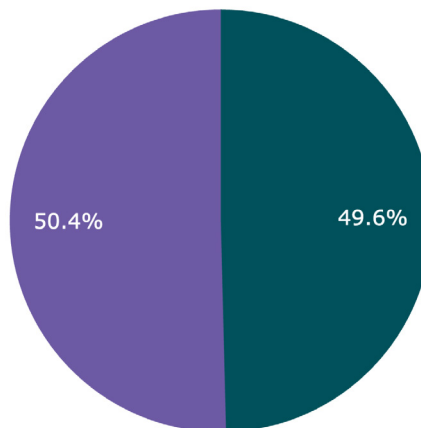
How do you most commonly travel to Sevenoaks town centre?



● Car ● Motorbike ● Walk ● Bus  
 ● Train ● Cycle ● Taxi ● Other

The car is the most popular mode of travel to Sevenoaks town centre (49.1%). The second most common response was walking (40.8%). Taxi, motorbike and bus were three of the least popular ways to travel to the town centre.

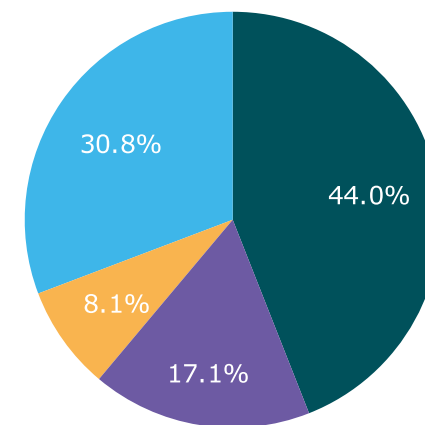
Do you use the existing Sevenoaks Leisure Centre?



● Yes ● No

There was a broadly even split between respondents that do and do not use the existing Leisure Centre with 49.6% saying they do use the centre and 50.4% stating they do not.

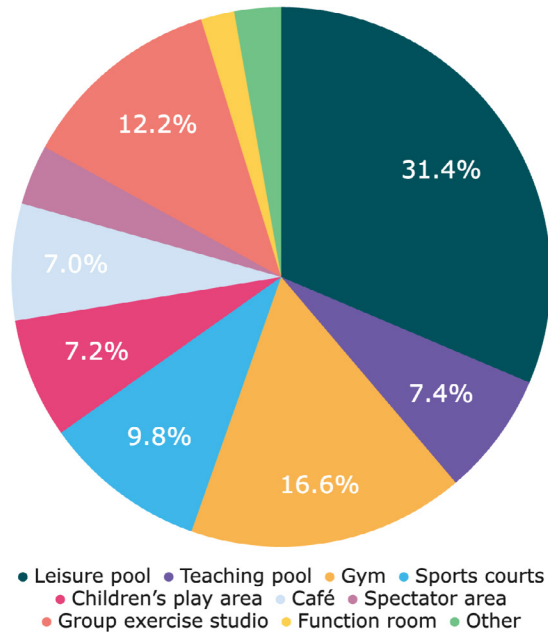
How often do you use Sevenoaks Leisure Centre?



● Weekly ● Daily ● Monthly  
 ● Less than once a month

Of those that use the leisure centre, 44% of respondents use the Leisure Centre weekly and 17.1% of respondents use the centre daily.

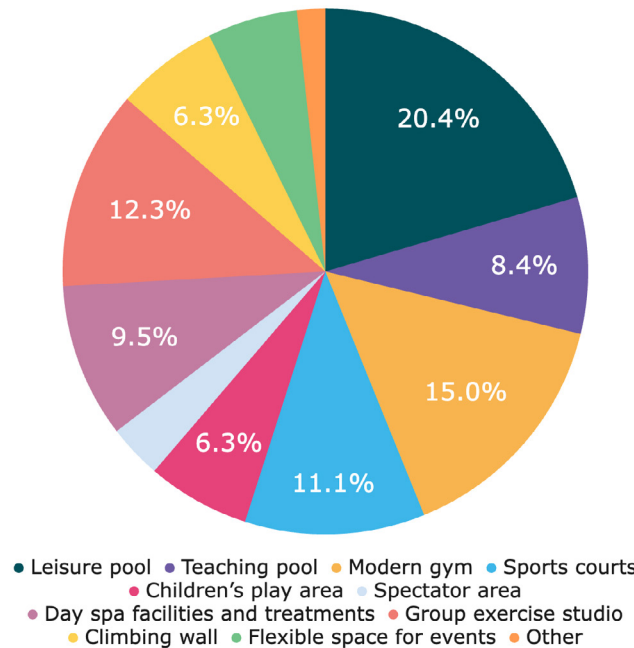
**What facilities do you currently use at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre?**



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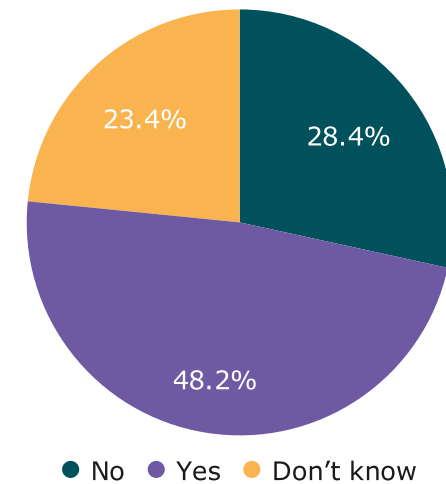
The pool is the most commonly used facility, with 31.4% of respondents selecting this. The gym was the second most common response selected (16.6%) followed by the group exercise studio and sports courts.

**If a new leisure centre was provided in Sevenoaks town centre please tell us which facilities would be most important to you?**



The responses show the wide variety of facilities that are important to respondents, with the leisure pool and gym eliciting the most responses.

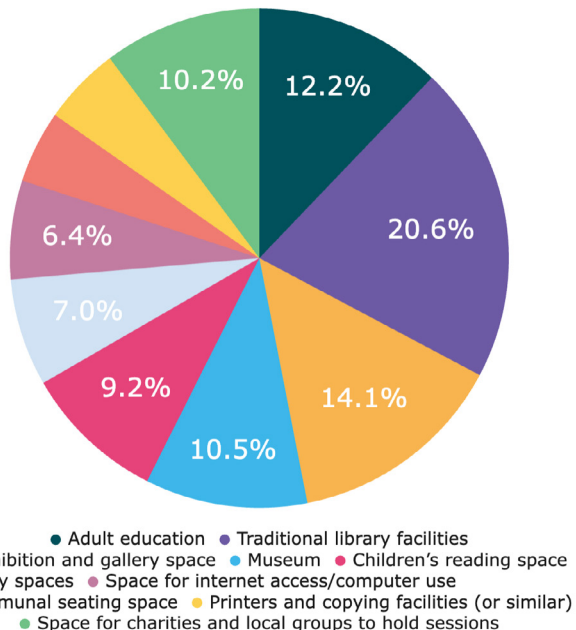
**Do you feel that combining the KCC Adult Education Centre currently in Bradbourne Road with a library in a new energy efficient building with multi-purpose rooms close to the High Street would benefit users?**



48.2% of respondents stated they agreed with this statement. Close to a quarter of respondents indicated they did not know, and this reflects comments received at the public exhibitions that people would like to see more details but that the co-location could potentially be beneficial.



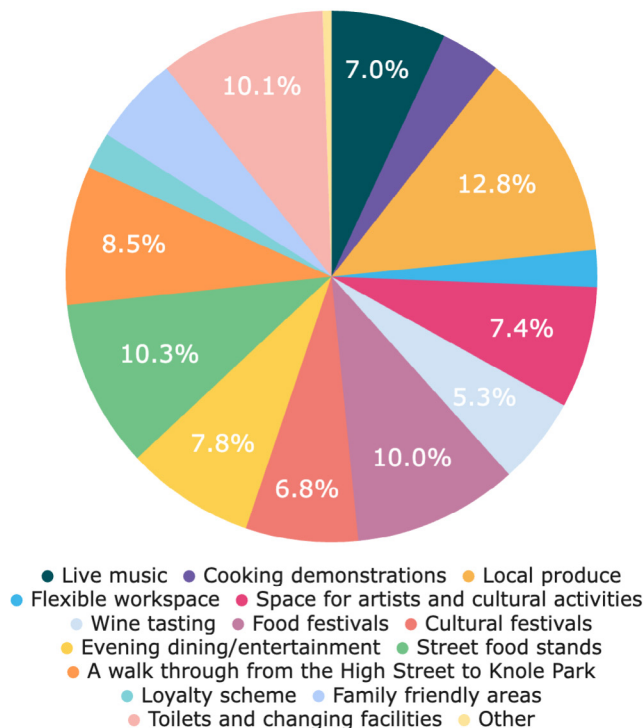
Please tell us which of the following you would use in a new library, museum, gallery and education space



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The responses show the wide variety of features that respondents state they would use. Traditional library facilities and exhibition / gallery space were the most common answer.

We are proposing to build a new Market Hall in the former M&Co shop in the High Street currently Hospice in the Weald. What amenities and features would you use in a new Market Hall?

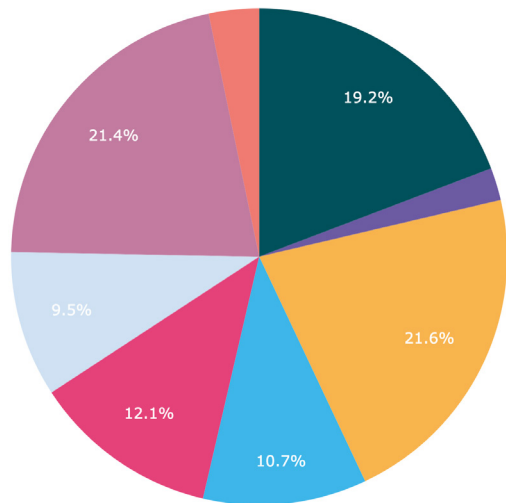


There was also an option for people to share other ideas and features they may use, these included:

- Fresh, seasonal food including a bakery.
- Local crafters and artists.
- Youth facilities / youth club / soft play.
- Events - repair hub, antiques.
- Retention of Hospice in the Weald shop.
- Features that appeal to the older generation.
- Seating to support street food stands and event attendance.
- Toilets and changing facilities.
- Request for it to be affordable to stallholders.
- Shrewsbury indoor market and the London market halls were noted as a good examples.



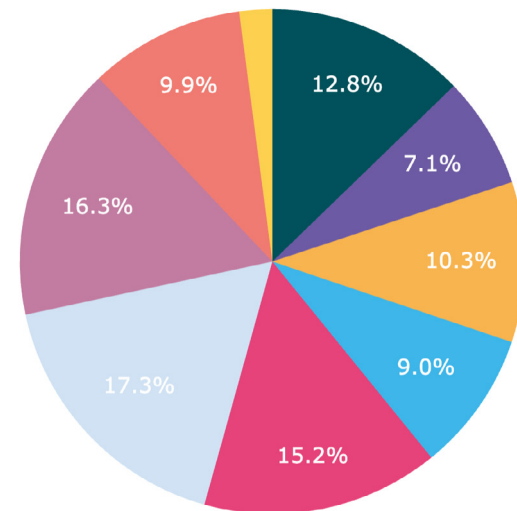
Sevenoaks needs a range of housing to ensure that people can afford to live and bring up their families in the town. What type of housing would you like to see most as part of this development?



- Senior living
- Assisted living
- Affordable homes to rent
- Student accommodation
- Shared ownership
- Market Rent
- Family homes
- Private sales

The results to this question suggests that there was a strong request (29.9%) for “scaling-down” properties aimed at senior living and assisted care homes. This strongly reflects views expressed at various focus groups and at the public exhibitions that many residents considered Sevenoaks Town to be an attractive place for senior living and that the development site given its proximity to proposed amenities would be ideal. The need for rented affordable homes also comes out strongly in the survey as does the need for more family homes.

Protecting our environment and tackling the challenge of climate change is important as we develop our plans. What environmental features should the development contain? If others please state.



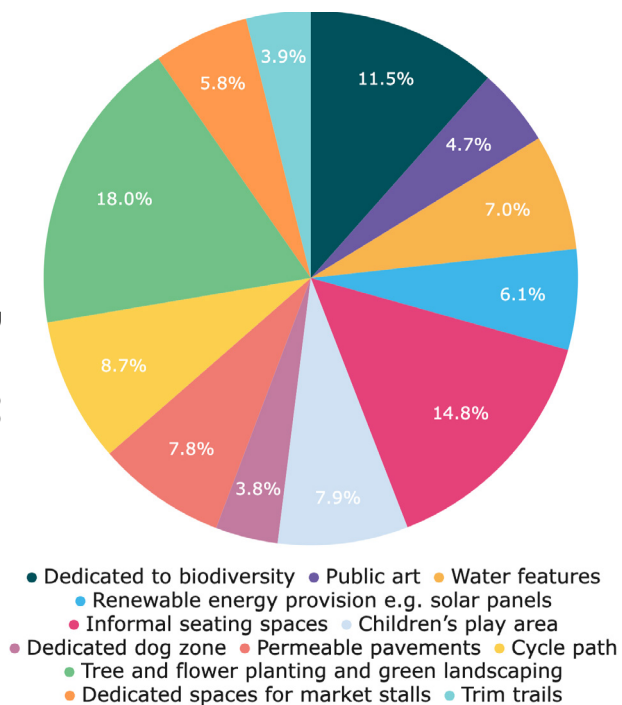
- Electric vehicle charging points
- Smart technology for energy monitoring
- Smart technology for automated lighting
- Smart technology for temperature control
- Eco-friendly building materials
- Solar panels
- Rainwater harvesting
- Air source heat pumps
- Other

There was also an option for people for people to share additional feedback on this question and things that stood out were:

- Air source heat pumps.
- Green roofs and walls, wildflowers, drought resistant planting.
- Renewable energy methods inc. solar.
- Public transport improvements and provision for pedestrians and cyclists.
- Integrating building design with Sevenoaks’ character.
- Retention and refit of existing buildings.
- Exeter Data Centre noted as example of repurposing heat.

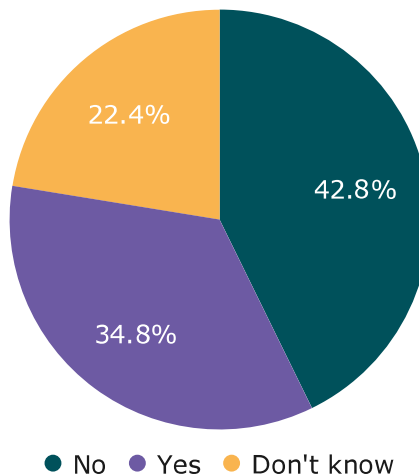
We would like to create better links from the town centre to Knole Park, what features would you like to see included in a new green corridor from the High Street?

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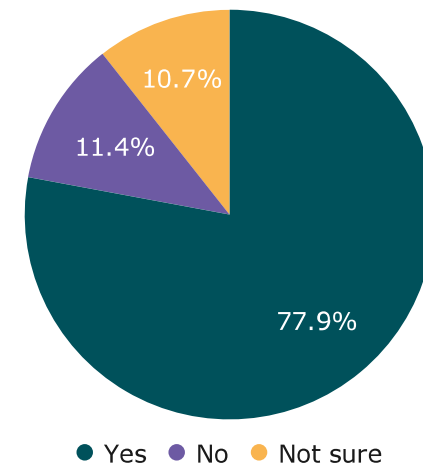
The survey results show that tree and flower planting and green landscaping would be the most popular feature (18.0%), followed by informal seating spaces and areas dedicated to biodiversity.

Do you feel that a new quality hotel would support existing businesses by increasing visitor numbers and spending in the town?



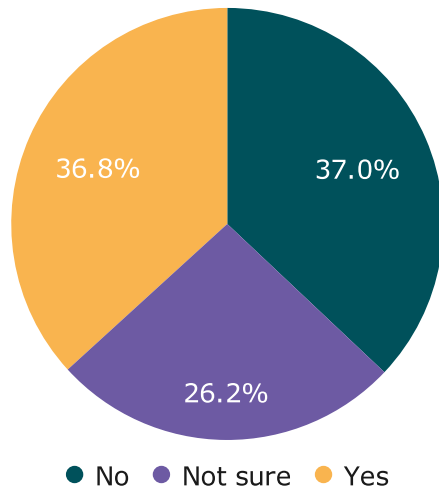
Over a third (34.8%) of respondents felt that a new hotel would support existing businesses with a further 22.4% indicating that they did not know. 42.8% did not feel this would be the case. This correlates with feedback received at the in-person events and focus groups where there was general support for a new hotel provided it was aimed at the right market and had appropriate facilities for the user group. It potentially reflects concerns people have about parking. It is evident that people would like to see more details.

Is it important to you that bus stops are retained in the centre of the town?



A strong majority (77.9%) of respondents felt that retaining bus stops is important to them.

**From the early information that is available are you generally supportive of our proposals to redevelop the Land East of the High Street?**



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Results revealed an even split of yes and no responses to this question. A significant number are not sure (26.2%), highlighting that ongoing engagement is important and that many people would like to see more details.

For those that say they are not supportive of the overall scheme the accompanying commentary suggests that some respondents were supportive of some elements of the scheme however, their concerns about other areas in the concepts outweighed their support.

Specific commentary showed some were supportive of a new leisure centre, hotel, green corridor and combined adult education and library provision.

However, overriding concerns were around loss of parking without the necessary public transport infrastructure and concerns around the suitability of the multi-storey. There were also comments around the scale of housing development and the perception that the new facilities looked smaller in the images and could mean that some services/facilities would be 'inferior' to that already offered – this was particularly true of the combined library and adult education centre.

**Finally is there anything else you'd like to say about our early ideas?**

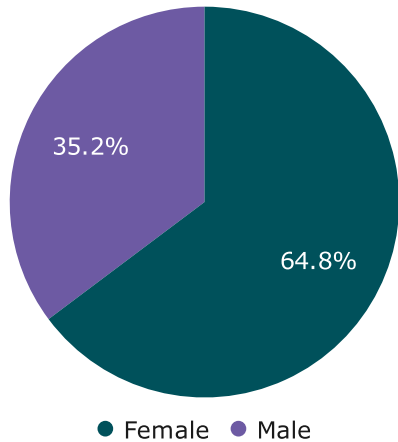
Themes emerging from this final question were:

- Concerns about overdevelopment: the volume of new housing proposed, fearing overcrowding and strain on infrastructure like schools and healthcare.
- Infrastructure: the need for adequate parking, preservation of current amenities and public transport improvements, especially bus service.

- Impact on traffic and parking: concerns about increased congestion and the reduction of parking spaces.
- Accessibility and inclusivity: Accessibility issues, such as lack of lift in multi-storey car park and the need for provision for disabled and elderly residents. Ensuring facilities are accessible to all (families and older generations in particular). Provision of affordable housing.
- Community engagement: appetite for continued information sharing and community involvement.
- Preservation of character: as a market town, buildings and green spaces.
- Quality of life: for example noise pollution during construction, impact on local businesses.

**ABOUT THE SURVEY RESPONDENTS:**

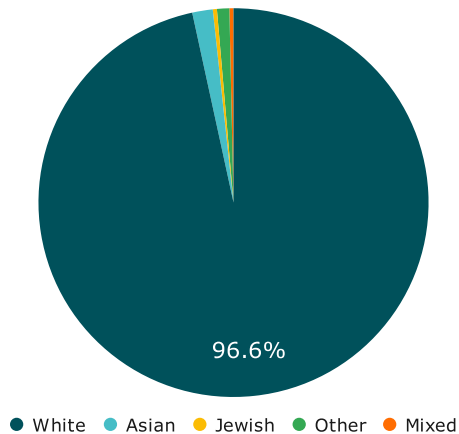
**Your gender**



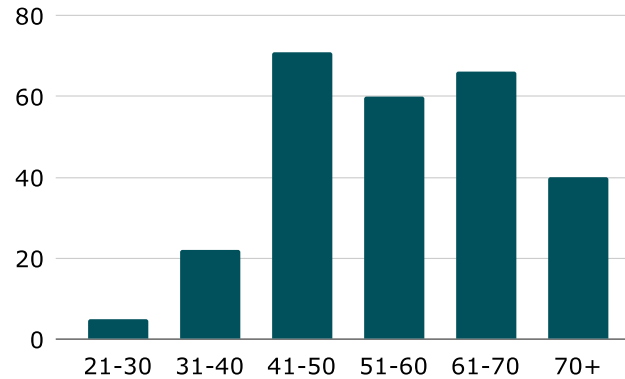
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A significant majority of our survey respondents were female.

**Your ethnicity**



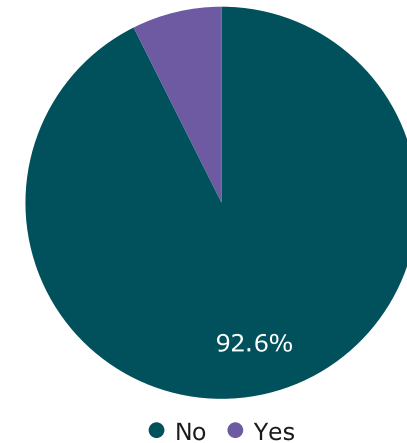
**Your age**



The marketing and publicity methods adopted for the public engagement helped to achieve a level of demographic identity that is reflective of Sevenoaks.

Demographic data captured shows a greater percentage of female respondents, and the results broadly reflect the town’s demographic composition. It has been noted that youth engagement was low and subsequent engagement activities will ensure this group is targeted. Likewise with the ethnicity data we have noted that a strong majority of respondents are White.

**Do you have a disability?**



The majority of survey respondents stated that they do not have a disability, however a wide range of disabilities were noted by survey respondents within this section and it is essential that everyone is considered in developing the plans and ongoing engagement.



## 1. INFRASTRUCTURE:

- The need for a medical centre.
- Suggestions to utilise the market hall as a hub for local produce, enhancing the current shopping experience.
- Concerns about parking availability and view that the current town centre car park is well utilised.
- Surface car parks are used in the morning for school drop-offs.
- Public transport needs to be integrated and connectivity to train station is important.
- If a bus station is not provided then the location of bus stops needs to be considered and ensure bus stops have seating, are covered and have real time information.
- Concern with loss of bus station.
- More play equipment and facilities at the Environmental Park will be needed.
- Better street lighting is required. Consideration should be given to incorporate lighting into design.
- Security cameras needed and possible help points along the green link.

## 2. TOWNSCAPE:

- Desire for buildings to be kept at a reasonable height.
- Desire for housing not to be too dense.
- Character and aesthetics to reflect local vernacular where appropriate.
- Different buildings need to have a coherent design that complement each other.
- Consideration must be given to the streetscape between new development on former Tesco site and the proposed development.
- Scale between the development and the cottages on Buckhurst Lane needs to be sensitively considered.
- View from Knole Park to be taken into account.
- Frontage onto the Environmental Park and Knole Estate must be sensitively done.
- Improvement of the High Street is required and consideration be given to provide more green space, breathing space to certain buildings and that the High Street improvements need to be seamless with the proposed development.

## 3. FACILITIES:

- Calls for a larger library as this looks smaller than the current size on the plans.
- Accessibility for everyone is a crucially important principle in the design of the facilities.
- The Kaleidoscope gallery is an asset and could be provided with its own front door and a larger space should be provided. Ideas to also ensure the gallery has frontage to the street/ pedestrian area.
- Café as part of the library, museum and art gallery.
- Emphasis on maintaining size or even expanding current leisure centre facilities, particularly the swimming pool, with requests for features like flumes.
- Consideration be given to include a hydro-therapy pool that can also be used for other activities too.
- Concerns about potential reductions in leisure centre facilities.
- A call to have an Olympic size swimming pool as this would attract more people to the town.
- Calls for improved public toilets and seating, especially for seniors.

- Concern that the market hall will compete with the current open-air markets.
- Views expressed that the market hall is a wonderful idea as long as it offers good quality products and services and is artisanal.
- More studio spaces for artists.
- Multistorey car-park requires better lighting, a lift, and greater vigilance/security presence.
- Need to look at anti-social behaviour issues in the town.

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- View expressed that multi-storey car park is too narrow for larger vehicles. Need to consider emergency situations.
- Calls for inclusion of amenities for young people and families and ensuring activities cater to diverse age groups.
- Hotel development is supported but needs to also have conferencing facilities.
- Concern with where coach drop off will be for hotel.
- No to budget hotels yes to mid-to upper tier hotels.
- Suggestions to preserve and enhance the town's cultural heritage, including maintaining access to cultural facilities like libraries and galleries.

- “Dog” exercise area should be included.
- Play facilities be included in the green link.
- Green link could be used for public art or used as market space.
- Need to look at the access into Knole - the path highlighted is too steep.
- Concern that proposed open area for the week day market is too small.

#### 4. HOUSING:

- Concerns about the suitability and affordability of housing.
- Many comments about parking and that appropriate car parking provision needs to be made.
- Suggestions to prioritise affordable housing over luxury developments.
- Questions about the impact of increased housing on traffic congestion and existing infrastructure.
- Mix of housing should be provided but a sense that this would be an ideal location for senior living and allowing people to “downsize”.
- Recognition that housing will be needed to cross subsidise the public buildings.

#### 5. TRANSPORT AND ACCESSIBILITY:

- Requests for a comprehensive transportation plan, including considerations for a new bus station and improved bus services.
- Request for parking study and traffic studies to be undertaken.
- Suggestions for pedestrian-friendly initiatives, such as pedestrianised areas but ensure conflict with cyclists is minimised.
- Provision of secure bike parking facilities especially close to the Environmental Park.
- Provide charging points for mobility scooters.
- Park and Ride suggestion to reduce cars in the town centre.
- More parking needs to be provided.
- Buckhurst Lane residents car parking bays need to be safeguarded.
- Access to Locks Yard needs to be maintained.
- Disabled parking bays need to be provided closer to the library/adult education centre.
- Concerns about the potential negative effects of increased traffic congestion on the town's infrastructure and liveability.



- Concerns about people using adjacent side streets for parking and parking spilling out into other parts of the town, especially with new charges and if not sufficient parking is provided.
- Concern with amount of construction traffic that will be generated over a long period of time and how this could be exacerbated by other developments. Need to have a comprehensive plan on how future developments will be co-ordinated.

Page 104

Suggested pedestrianised green link is supported but must also take into account the new pedestrian access way adjacent to the Tesco site and these need to be linked. This is also an important access way.

## 6. ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES:

- Calls for environmentally friendly design and construction practices.
- Calls to ensure buildings are energy efficient and reduce use of carbon.
- Consideration be given to on-site renewable energy sources, such as PVs and ground source heat pumps.
- Views expressed that we should be reusing the existing buildings and refurbish them rather than build new.
- Biodiversity features be included (bat boxes, bird boxes, insect hotels etc).
- Use of native species.
- Highlighting the need for more trees and greenery in the town centre.

## 7. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND PROCESS:

- Requests for transparency and engagement throughout the planning process.
- Questions about the project timeline.
- Concerns about disruptions caused by construction activities, as well as the impact on existing services during the transition period.
- Suggestions for community involvement, including collaboration with local artists and creatives.
- “Have you thought about a name for the project?”

The feedback submitted at the in-person events reflects a diverse range of perspectives and priorities within the Sevenoaks community, highlighting the importance of community engagement in shaping the town’s future development.

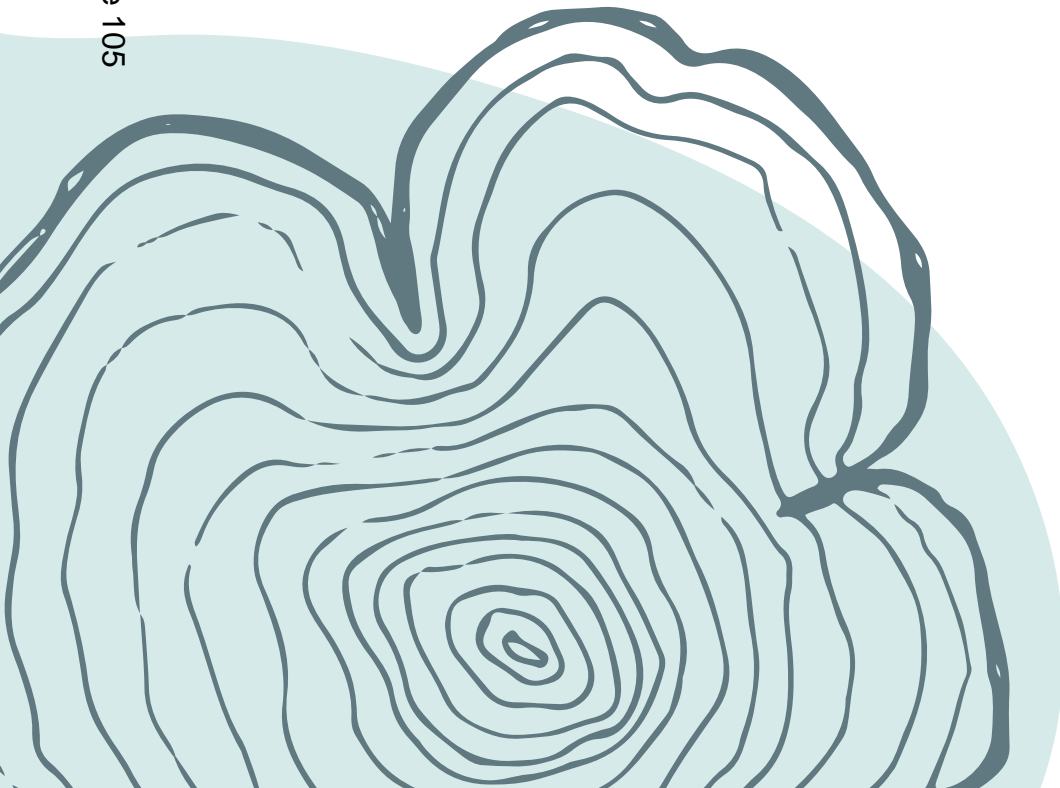


## Alternative options presented at events

### Some individuals made direct suggestions for amendments to the current scheme for consideration including:

- Moving the green pathway to link to a wider and safer pathway on the high street.
- Moving the hotel closer to the high street or utilising another site closer to the station.

- Combining a health provision into the leisure centre to create a health and wellbeing hub.
- Suggestion of incorporating spa-type facilities into the hotel as opposed to the leisure centre.
- Whatever is decided, it has to have good placemaking so that there is a sense of place - concept of a new 'Quarter'.
- Signage and wayfinding needed in order for people to be properly welcomed and know where they are and to provide better linkage to rest of town and Knole Park.
- The addition of a hydrotherapy pool was raised on a number of occasions as there are no other facilities sub-regionally.
- Suggestion to consider relocation of the Stag Theatre to increase its size and give it the ability to attract West End productions.
- Suggestion to include library/adult education centre into 96 the High Street and utilise the space allocated for the library for alternative uses i.e. housing or moving leisure centre closer to the High Street.
- Suggestion to move the Civic Offices and incorporate as part of the development which would release the land there for alternative use.



# Consolidated overview of key issues from all events

Below outlines the key themes raised throughout the face-to-face and online engagement events, as well as the online survey and feedback.

THEME	DESCRIPTION
<b>Parking</b>	A consistent theme throughout all engagement centred around the loss of surface parking and the constraints with the existing multi-storey car park. People wanted reassurance that there would still be sufficient capacity for parking once the increased footfall from the development was included - some suggested that at times the car park was already full. Concerns around the multi-storey car park were around a lack of lift for those with pushchairs etc., concerns around the size of the car park for larger vehicles as well as safety concerns from poor lighting. Concerns from residents in surrounding roads were also raised with the suggestion of expanding the permit scheme.
<b>Traffic</b>	This was also a consistent theme throughout the engagement exercises. Attendees and respondents to the survey expressed concern that the development will potentially overload the existing road network. The road junction between the High Street and Suffolk Way was highlighted as a potential pinch point. While there was acknowledgement for the need to be less car-centric and that other modes of transport needed to be supported, this was considered to be in part dependent on having a good public transport system. Traffic movement within the town centre needed to be carefully considered and be an integral component of this project.
<b>Public Transport and active travel</b>	There were a number of concerns raised around public transport, namely the need to increase both the frequency and reliability of bus services throughout the town to encourage more people to utilise these services and/or the active travel options available. Also the linking up of different transport modes was important. There was recognition that developments need to be less car-centric but this was considered only possible if public transport is improved. Similarly, it was recognised that more housing in appropriate locations could enhance the viability of public transport.
<b>Leisure centre services</b>	Feedback received highlighted the need to maintain the size of the main pool, whilst also adding another pool that could be used for swimming lessons etc. The addition of a hydrotherapy pool provision was raised on a number of occasions as there are no other facilities locally with residents having to travel long distances to access them in Medway or Canterbury. Additional studio space and a larger consolidated gym area were also specifically requested and considered important.
<b>Library and adult education</b>	The benefits of co-location were acknowledged but there was very strong view that the library space must not be reduced. Additionally there was also support for these facilities to be closer to the high street and that the gallery should be larger and potentially have its own front door. Disabled parking facilities closer to the new building needed to be also taken into account.

## Consolidated overview of key issues from all events (cont.)

THEME	DESCRIPTION
<b>Continuity of service provision - library and leisure centre</b>	There was overriding support for the continuity of service for both the leisure centre and library throughout the development process to ensure that the local community could continue to access these essential services throughout. Some concern was raised that the scheme would see the library, museum and art gallery close which the team want to quickly dispel as the library, museum and art gallery will be re-provided under this scheme.
Page 107 <b>Housing</b>	The scale of housing compared to the relative size of the other facilities was questioned by some attendees. Concerns were raised over the density and heights of the development as well as the tenureship of the housing with a request for affordable/social housing to be considered, although many accepted that this was not yet known at this early concept stage. However, there was a strong view that the site could afford itself to senior living. Many individuals raised the need to ensure housing had allocated parking to reduce pressure on other local streets.
<b>Environmental and sustainability</b>	Attendees at the events were supportive of the need to make the leisure centre more environmentally friendly and fit for purpose in the future. This applied to the other buildings too. In addition the idea of a green corridor linking the High Street to Knole Park was well received. The local community, particularly those living alongside the proposed green corridor would like to continue to be involved in how that evolves, as while they are generally supportive of the proposal, they are concerned about losing their parking bays.

## Key findings and conclusion

The engagement and response from the public and stakeholders was exceptional. One local stakeholder commented, *“I wanted to take a moment to express my appreciation for your efforts in spearheading this new and exciting town project. It is so heartening to see the level of stakeholder engagement and your team’s genuine effort to involve the local community in the decision-making process. Your emphasis on open dialogue and collaboration is much appreciated, and it fills us with hope for the future of our town.”*

Continuing to harness the value of this early and continued engagement by continuing to keep the community and stakeholders informed and allowing them to help shape the future proposals will be critical to the success of the project. Adopting how the engagement has been delivered for this project should be considered for future engagement across the district.

Stage 1 public engagement feedback for the Land East of Sevenoaks High Street will now support the drafting of the development brief. The development brief will in particular explicitly outline the Council’s requirements (such as a 25m metre swimming pool and learner pool with a movable floor and incorporation of a hydro-therapy pool and cover the size of the library, gallery, museum and adult education centre) to provide reassurance of the capacity of the new buildings to re-provide and enhance the proposed services. This will also note the numerous suggestions made by the public where possible. Through the tender process, prospective development partners will be requested to outline how several concerns/recommendations will be factored into their proposals.

## Key findings and conclusion (cont.)

Feedback received will enable a deeper look at some elements that have been raised in detail, highlighting the need for us to refresh certain studies such as the parking and traffic assessments, review legal issues regarding the council's market rights, and the need to provide an appropriate housing mix and tenure to mention a few. Bus stop requirements will also be carefully considered as well as the need to ensure disabled parking facilities are appropriately located.

Certain feedback points will also be passed onto other sections within the Council, such as Strategic Planning (on planning matters relating to the wider town centre and for possible consideration in the local plan's development) and Direct Services (for example on issues relating to the multi-storey car park and car parking charges).

The public engagement undertaken to date has also highlighted take-aways in the form of lessons learnt such as explaining the stage of public engagement i.e. that these were extremely early concepts and the engagement was outside of the usual requirements at this early stage.

The project team will continue to update the website while the development brief is in progress. With hundreds of stakeholders having committed their time and opinions to the engagement, it is important, and an opportunity, that all stakeholders remain up-to-date with the latest plans related to this area of Sevenoaks and opportunities for further engagement as plans progress.

# Appendices

## Survey

### Question 1

Please let us know your postcode so that we know if you live locally. This will not be used for marketing purposes.

Your postcode

### Question 2

How often, on average, do you visit the town centre?

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than once a month

### Question 3

Currently, what aspects of Sevenoaks town centre do you find most appealing?  
Please select your top five options.

- Choice of shops
- Places to eat and drink
- Selection of services (for example hair dressers, travel agents, opticians etc.)
- Nearby open spaces (such as Knole Park)
- Leisure facilities
- Library, museum, art gallery and cultural facilities
- Parking availability
- Public transport
- Market stalls
- Other

### Question 4

How do you most commonly travel to Sevenoaks town centre?

- Car
- Motorbike
- Walk
- Bus
- Train
- Cycle
- Taxi
- Other

### Question 5

Do you use the existing Sevenoaks Leisure Centre?

- Yes
- No

If your response is no please tell us why?

### Question 6

How often do you use Sevenoaks Leisure Centre?

Please skip this question if you do not use the Leisure Centre.

- Daily
- Weekly
- Monthly
- Less than once a month

### Question 7

What facilities do you currently use at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre?

Please skip this question if you do not use the Leisure Centre.

- Leisure pool
- Teaching pool
- Gym
- Sports courts
- Children's play area
- Café
- Spectator area
- Group exercise studio
- Function room
- Other (please state)

If other facilities used, please state.

### Question 8

If a new leisure centre was provided in Sevenoaks town, please tell us what facilities would be most important to you.

Please skip this question if you do not use the Leisure Centre.

Please select your top five options.

- Leisure pool
- Teaching pool
- Modern gym
- Sports courts
- Children's play area
- Spectator area
- Day spa facilities (sauna, steam, plunge pool, Jacuzzi) and treatments
- Group exercise studio
- Climbing wall
- Flexible space for events
- Other

If other facilities are important, please state.

### Question 9

Do you feel that combining the adult education centre (currently in Bradbourne Road) with a library in a new, energy efficient building with multi-purpose rooms, close to the High Street, would benefit users?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

### Question 10

Please tell us which of the following you would use in a new library, museum, gallery and education space?

Select your top five options.

- Adult education
- Traditional library facilities
- Exhibition and gallery space
- Museum
- Children's reading space
- Study spaces
- Space for internet access/computer use
- Communal seating space
- Space for charities and local groups to hold sessions
- Printers and copying facilities (or similar)

### Question 11

We are proposing to build a new Market Hall in the former M&Co shop in the High Street (currently Hospice in the Weald). What amenities and features would you use in a new Market Hall?

Tick all that apply

- Live music
- Cooking demonstrations
- Local produce
- Flexible workspace
- Space for artists and cultural activities
- Wine tasting
- Food festivals
- Cultural festivals
- Evening dining/entertainment
- Street food stands
- A walk through from the High Street to Knole Park
- Loyalty scheme
- Family friendly areas
- Toilets and changing facilities
- Other

If other amenities and features, please state.

### Question 12

Sevenoaks needs a range of housing to ensure people can afford to live and bring up their families in the town. What type of housing would you like to see most of as part of this development?

Select the top three that you believe are important and should be considered.

- Senior living
- Student accommodation
- Family homes
- Assisted living
- Shared ownership
- Market rent
- Private sales
- Affordable homes to rent

### Question 13

Protecting our environment and tackling the challenge of climate change is important as we develop our plans. What environmental features should the development contain?

Select your top five options.

- Electric vehicle charging points
- Smart technology for energy monitoring
- Smart technology for automated lighting
- Smart technology for temperature control
- Eco-friendly building materials
- Solar panels
- Rainwater harvesting
- Air source heat pumps
- Other

If other environmental features, please state.

### Question 14

We would like to create better links from the town centre to Knole Park. What features would you like to see included in a new green corridor from the High Street?  
Please select your top five options.

- Dedicated to biodiversity
- Public art
- Water features
- Renewable energy provision e.g. solar panels
- Informal seating spaces
- Dedicated spaces for market stalls
- Children's play area
- Dedicated dog zone
- Trim trails
- Permeable pavements
- Cycle path
- Tree and flower planting and green landscaping

### Question 17

From the early information that is available, are you generally supportive of our proposals to redevelop the land east of the High Street?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

### Question 18

Finally, is there anything else you'd like to say about our early ideas?

### Question 15

Do you feel that a new quality hotel would support existing businesses by increasing visitor numbers and spending in the town?

- Yes
- No
- Don't know

### Question 16

Is it important to you that bus stops are retained in the centre of Sevenoaks town?

- Yes
- No
- Not sure

### Question 19

Tell us about yourself. This information will not be used for marketing purposes. We are not asking for your name and any information you provide will be treated in accordance with our [Privacy Policy](#)

Your gender

Your age

Do you have a disability?

Your ethnicity



Display boards

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Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Land East of Sevenoaks High Street



- Improved leisure
- Homes
- Education Hub
- Jobs
- Vibrant town centre
- Economy
- Environment

Welcome...

Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Introduction

Sevenoaks town centre is a great place to be.

We have a once in a generation opportunity to improve the town as a place to live, work and spend time, using land that we own. Here are some of our ideas.

We would like to hear your views and ideas to help us develop our thinking over the coming months.

**Why are we doing this project?**

There are areas and buildings near the town centre that require investment. For example, the leisure centre could be improved and made more energy efficient. We are working with Kent County Council to explore ways in which we can improve our public buildings.

We will also be able to improve links between the town centre and Knole Park and release some land for much needed new homes. Providing new and affordable homes would help to fund the wider improvements such as a new or upgraded leisure centre.

Our ideas are at an early stage and there will be more opportunities to share your views as we seek to deliver an exciting new chapter for Sevenoaks town centre.




Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Project area

This is the area of Sevenoaks that we are looking to improve - from streets close to the High Street across to Knole Park.



- 1 Bus station and café, car park and Sackville House
- 2 Library, museum, art gallery and car park
- 3 Leisure Centre
- 4 Highways, pathways, and public spaces
- 5 96 High Street (previously M&Co)




Sevenoaks - So Much More

## The principles

This is an important opportunity to develop a vision for the land east of Sevenoaks High Street to make the town centre a more attractive, welcoming, and well-connected place.

- Encouraging sustainable transport choices.
- Supporting a greener future.
- Reflecting and complementing the town centre's historic character.
- Strengthening the identity of the area.
- Improving health and wellbeing.

**The vision for Sevenoaks town centre in 2040 includes:**

- Raising the profile of its historic town centre and the impressive Knole Park
- Supporting the local economy and independent shops.
- Expanding its cultural identity and diversifying the town's appeal.
- An inclusive town centre - widening the leisure offer and providing new homes that support different income levels and life stages.




Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Neighbourhood Plan

The Neighbourhood Plan, which was adopted in 2023, sets out the policies and objectives for Sevenoaks. Below are the key objectives that we believe will guide the project.

### Character

- ✓ Respect the town's character and heritage.
- ✓ To protect landmarks and landscapes.
- ✓ Enhance gateways.

### Improving the environment

- ✓ Enhance biodiversity and respond to climate change.
- ✓ Publicly accessible open spaces.
- ✓ Plant more trees.

### Getting around easier

- ✓ Reduce traffic congestion.
- ✓ Provide better public transport access.
- ✓ Improve links for pedestrians.

### Local economy

- ✓ Support local businesses and shopping areas.

### Community and Culture

- ✓ Create a cultural quarter.
- ✓ Provide better recreation and leisure.

### Development & Housing

- ✓ Complement the area's heritage and character.
- ✓ Improve the appearance of Suffolk Way and Buckhurst Lane.
- ✓ Consider the scale or density of any future development.
- ✓ Retain access to High Street service yards and conceal from public view.
- ✓ Retain and enhance pedestrian connections through the area.



Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Initial ideas



### Leisure Facilities

We want to make this area of Sevenoaks a better place for everyone. We also want to improve connections between the High Street and Knole Park.

Our vision is to provide a new, state-of-the-art, leisure centre that meets energy efficiency standards and provides significantly improved facilities for the local community. Keeping the existing centre open until the new leisure centre is complete is a priority.

The early ideas for the leisure centre include a larger gym, new fitness studios and exercise spaces, a luxury day spa, and an enhanced food and drink offer. This could make Sevenoaks Leisure Centre one of the leading leisure facilities in the region.



### Library, Museum and Art Gallery

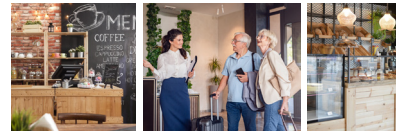
Our vision with Kent County Council is for a new multi-purpose space closer to the High Street. In addition to a library, the new building would include an art gallery, co-working space and an adult education centre.

Our suggested location would create a more accessible learning hub for the town, encouraging more people to visit and spend time in the town centre.



Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Initial ideas



### New Town Centre Hotel

Sevenoaks requires additional hotel capacity to encourage overseas and group travel to the area.

Our early ideas include a new, centrally located hotel, with good transport links and access to the High Street and Knole Park.

Encouraging people to visit and stay overnight at a new town centre hotel will improve our visitor economy, support local business and increase spending in the town.

### Market Hall

Our new market hall proposal for 96 High Street would breathe new life into the area, bringing activity and interest that would help generate return visits.

### The proposed market hall space would:

- Create a hub for artists and cultural businesses in the heart of Sevenoaks.
- Create a new space for locally produced food, goods and products to be showcased and celebrated.
- Create a new day-to-evening destination for residents and those who visit the town.



Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Initial ideas

To improve our environment



### Sustainability

- Improving biodiversity.
- Homes for the future.
- Multi functional, highly energy efficient buildings.
- Passivhaus standards.
- Green corridor from the High Street to Knole Park.



### Movement

- Supporting cycling, walking and other forms of active travel.
- Additional electric vehicle charging points.
- Optimising existing car parks.
- Undercroft parking for new homes.
- Improved bus transfer facilities.



Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Initial ideas

- A** New leisure centre
- B** New hotel
- C** New housing
- D** Library, museum, art gallery and education building
- E** New housing
- F** Market Hall
- G** 'Green' corridor to Knole Park

Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Benefits and opportunities

- A sizeable opportunity to enhance the town centre environment, create activity and increase the number of visitors.**
- An increased range of uses and activity in the heart of the town centre.**
- Improved connections within and around the town centre whilst supporting sustainable transport choices and optimising car parking.**
- Opportunities for landscaping, improving publicly owned areas – including footpaths and streets and limiting the impact of road traffic.**
- An option for the library, gallery and museum to include adult education in a combined town centre building, closer to the High Street.**
- A new energy efficient leisure centre and hotel with options for workspace and office accommodation to support the business and visitor economies.**
- New town centre homes including private and affordable housing that will help to pay for new public buildings.**
- A creative hub for Sevenoaks at 96 High Street with scope for a new venue for local food producers.**

Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Have your say

We need your views on how the land east of Sevenoaks High Street could enhance the town centre.

Complete our online survey to let us know your thoughts and provide any further suggestions. Our survey can be easily accessed by using your mobile phone to scan the QR code or by visiting [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/haveyoursay)

Alternatively, speak to a member of our team, who can provide paper feedback forms or sticky notes for you to add your thoughts to our display. Join our online engagement event that will include a questions and answers session, on 29 April 2024 from 7pm. Visit our website for details. Thank you.

### Indicative timescale

<b>SPRING 2024</b> Public engagement (Stage 1) Concept Ideas	<b>2025/2026</b> Design development and further chances to have your say
<b>SUMMER 2024</b> Tender for a development partner	<b>SPRING 2026</b> Submit planning application
<b>WINTER 2024</b> Appointment of a development partner	<b>AUTUMN 2026</b> Start on site, subject to planning permission

There will be opportunities throughout this process to provide further feedback on the emerging ideas.

Sevenoaks - So Much More

## Have your say

Please use the sticky notes to let us know the things you like about what you have seen today and what else we should consider.

Website

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Land east of Sevenoaks High Street

Initial Ideas The Principles Benefits and Opportunities Q&As Contact us **HAVE YOUR SAY**

## Have your say

### Land east of the High Street

We want to hear your views on a once in a generation opportunity to improve the areas around Buckhurst Lane and Suffolk Way, close to Sevenoaks High Street.


Our early ideas include a new energy efficient leisure facility, a combined library, museum, art gallery and learning hub, a new pedestrian link to Knole Park, a market hall and a hotel.

### Help us shape our early ideas.


Why are we doing this project?

There are public areas and buildings near the town centre that require investment. For example, the leisure centre could be improved and made more energy efficient. We are also working with Kent County Council to explore ways in which we can improve library, museum and art gallery provision.

We also want to improve links between the town centre and Knole Park and release some land for much needed new homes. Providing new and affordable homes would help to fund the wider improvements such as a new or upgraded leisure centre.



- 1 Bus station and cafe, car park and Saxeville House
- 2 Library, museum, art gallery and car park
- 3 Leisure Centre
- 4 Highways, pathways, and public square
- 5 96 High Street (previously M&Co)



Come and have your say

We've produced some information to explain our current thinking and present some early concepts. Please review these by clicking the download button below and then have your say by completing our survey.

Your feedback is invaluable as we consider how we can deliver an exciting new chapter for Sevenoaks town centre.

**Thank you for sharing your feedback. The consultation period has now closed.**

**DOWNLOAD BOARDS** **HAVE YOUR SAY**


## Stay informed

For the latest news on the project sign up for regular updates.

First name  Last name  Your email

By providing your personal details, you give us permission to contact you about the progress of project to the east of Sevenoaks High Street. We will not contact you for any other purpose nor share your personal data with any third-party organisations. To know more about how we use your personal data, please read our [Privacy Policy](#).

**SIGNUP**



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Advertising

Print

¼ page advert

Sevenoaks Chronicle series

Page 117

## Sevenoaks So Much More

Sevenoaks is a vibrant market town and a great place to live, work and spend time.

We have a once in a generation opportunity to improve some of the areas near the town centre including the **library, leisure centre** and links to **Knole Park**.

There are some exciting early ideas for the land that we own, and we would like to hear your views. What's important to you? What would you like to see in a new-look area to the east of the High Street?

### Have your say

#### Where and When

**Sevenoaks Leisure Centre, Buckhurst Lane, Sevenoaks, Kent, TN13 1LW**

📅 Wednesday 24 April 2024
📅 Saturday 27 April 2024  
🕒 1.30pm – 8.30pm
🕒 10am – 3pm

#### Online

📅 Monday 29 April 2024
🕒 7pm – 9pm

If you're unable to attend, don't worry. We will be publishing information shared at these events with a survey you can complete at [www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/haveyoursay](http://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk/haveyoursay)



¼ page advert

Weald edition

## Sevenoaks So Much More

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Social media posts

**Sevenoaks So Much More**  
27 April at 16:00 · 🌐

Don't worry if you were unable to attend the town centre regeneration engagement events as there's other ways to share your views.

All information from the in-person events will be shared on the website. You can also complete our online survey to ensure your feedback is heard. A virtual consultation event will also be taking place on Monday 29 April from 7pm until 9pm.

Register your interest to attend the online event and share your views online here: <https://zurl.co/qUYg> ... **See more**

**Sevenoaks District Council Official**  
29 April at 12:20 · 🌐

If you'd like to know more about our ideas to improve the Buckhurst Lane area of #Sevenoaks town centre, join us via Zoom tonight (29 April) 7pm-9pm. During the online session, you'll be able to give your views on the potential for a new leisure centre, library & learning hub, market hall & a 'green corridor' that will link the town and Knole Park.

Register & find out more here - [https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7N\\_y0VSiO\\_T8CL2nNJFYUGOw...](https://us06web.zoom.us/j/7N_y0VSiO_T8CL2nNJFYUGOw...)

**Sevenoaks So Much More**  
25 April at 08:00 · 🌐

You can shape the future of Sevenoaks town centre!

[Sevenoaks District Council Official](#) and [Kent County Council's](#) community exhibitions at Sevenoaks Leisure Centre in Buckhurst Lane, TN13 1LW are underway.

The next one is taking place on Saturday 27 April 2024 from 10am-3pm.

This will be the opportunity for you to share your views and hear about some early ideas including expanded leisure and library services; improved links with Knole Park and plans for a vibrant new market hall.

Find out more here: <https://zurl.co/NpY2>

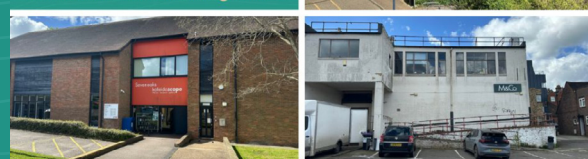
#sevenoaks #sevenoaksdistrict #moresevenoaks #towncentre #towncentreregeneration #regeneration #inwardinvestment #publicconsultation #publicengagement #engagement

**Sevenoaks District Council Official**  
5 d · 🌐

There's still time to give us your views on the early ideas to improve the Buckhurst Lane & Suffolk Way areas of #Sevenoaks town centre! Read our exciting proposals to make Sevenoaks a more exciting place & fill out our survey before midnight on Monday 6 May.

[haveyoursay.moresevenoaks.co.uk](https://haveyoursay.moresevenoaks.co.uk)

**Have your say**  
Land East of Sevenoaks High Street



**Have your say**  
Land East of Sevenoaks High Street



**ONLINE CONSULTATION EVENT**

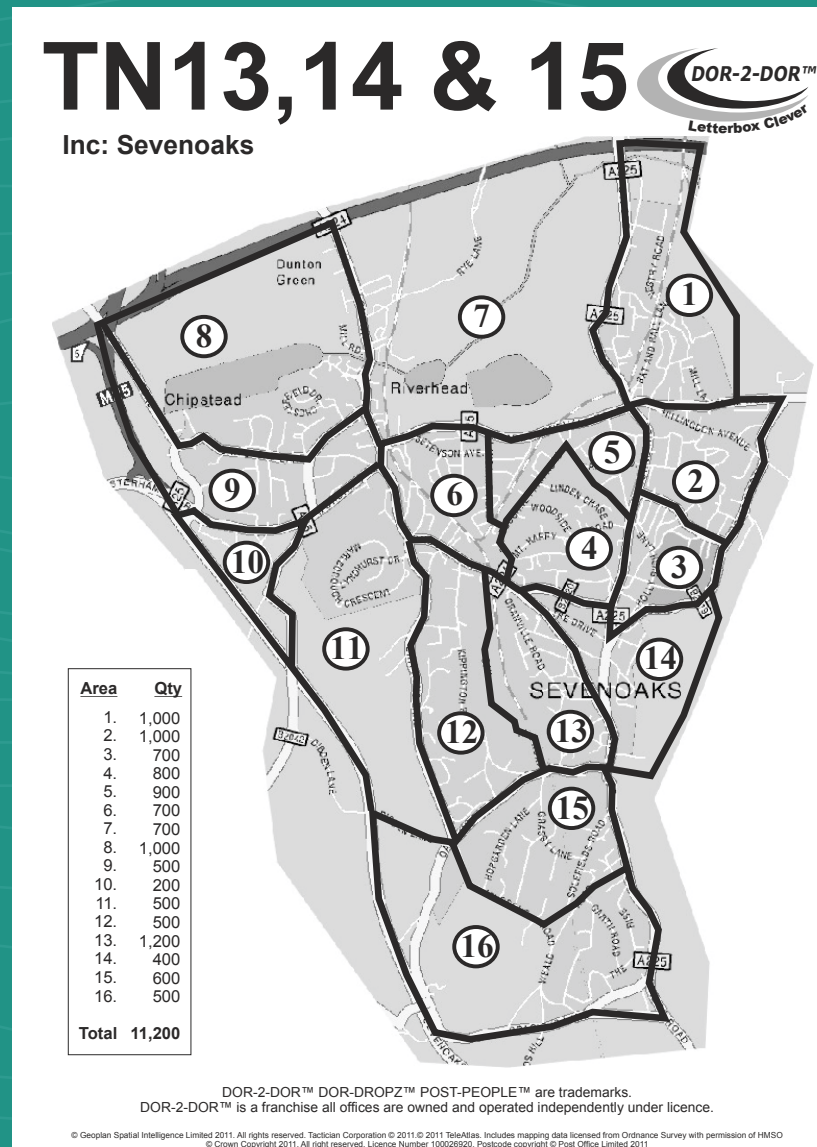
**IN-PERSON CONSULTATION EVENTS**

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Leaflet drop to local households



Map of areas where leaflets were delivered - areas 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 12, 13, 14, 15



Dor2Dor leaflet distribution report

Pillory Barn  
ME21LS

**Dor-2-Dor Delivery Report**  
Report date: April 18, 2024

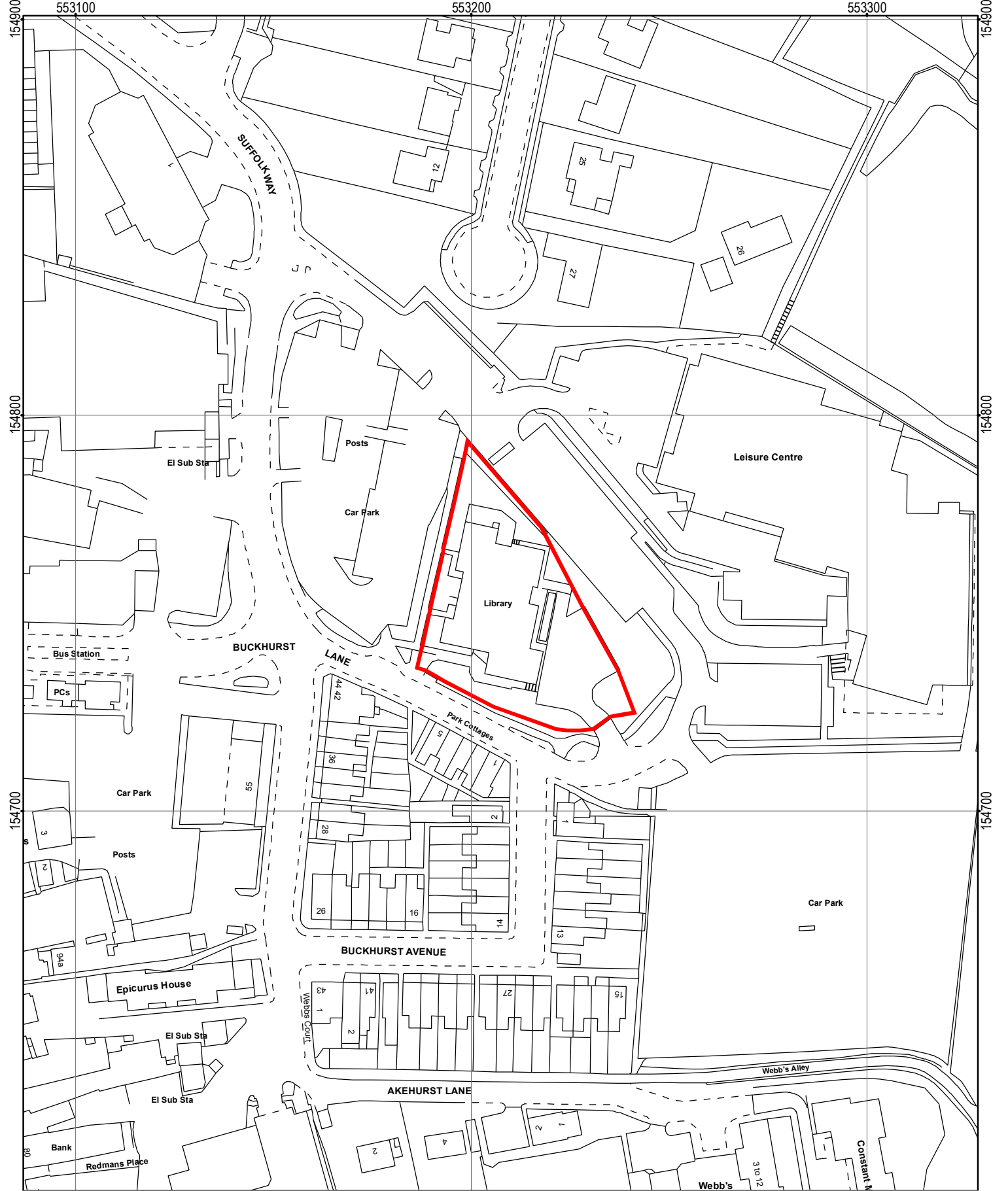
**Order information**  
Order No: 32028  
Order Date: 04 Apr 2024  
Quantity: 6,200  
Status of Order: Completed

**Complete**  
At the time this report was generated, the rounds below were delivered by the date shown.

Composite Map	Zone	Quantity	Completed Date
TN13	Sevenoaks 3	600	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 4	680	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 5	770	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 6	660	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 2	1,025	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 12	500	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 13	925	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 14	490	15 Apr 2024
TN13	Sevenoaks 15	550	16 Apr 2024
<b>Sub Total</b>		<b>6,200</b>	
<b>Grand Total</b>		<b>6,200</b>	

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154900  
154800  
154700

553100

SUFFOLK WAY  
El Sub Sta  
Bus Station  
PCs  
Car Park  
Posts  
Epicurus House  
El Sub Sta  
El Sub Sta  
Bank  
Redmans Place

Posts  
Car Park  
Library  
BUCKHURST LANE  
Park Cottages  
BUCKHURST AVENUE  
AKEHURST LANE  
Webb's Court

12  
26  
27  
28  
44  
36  
28  
26  
16  
14  
13  
43  
41  
27  
15  
1

Leisure Centre  
Car Park  
Webb's Alley

553200  
553300

154900  
154800  
154700



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MasterMap

SEVENOAKS LIBRARY  
BUCKHURST LANE  
SEVENOAKS  
TN13 1LQ

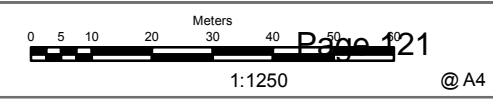
UPRN 12250100



PROPERTY AND  
INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT  
County Hall, Maidstone  
Kent ME14 1XQ  
Tel:08458 247247

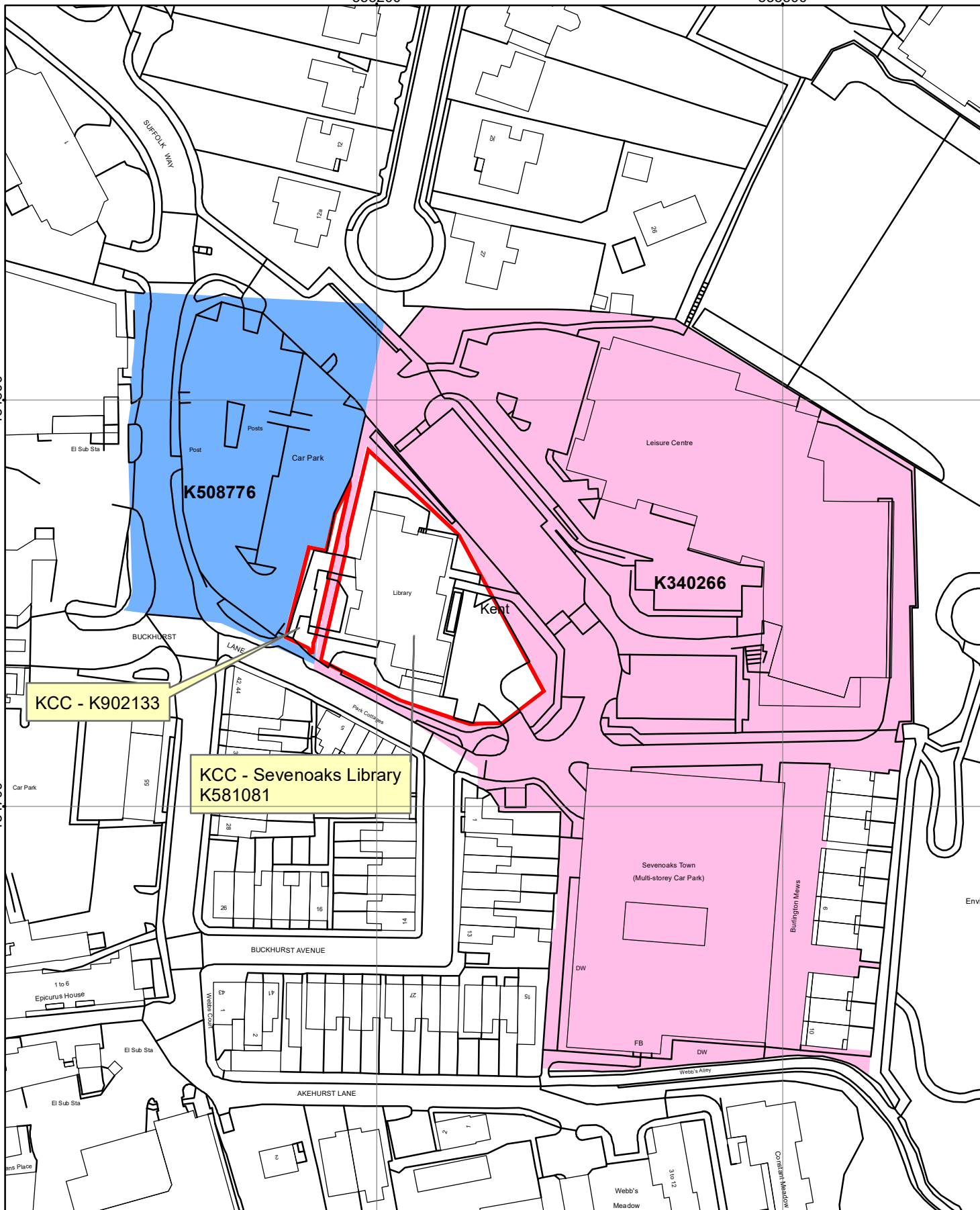
Drawn By  
KP

Date  
APR 2013



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KCC - K902133

KCC - Sevenoaks Library  
K581081

N



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MasterMap

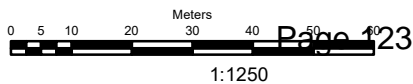
SEVENOAKS LIBRARY  
LEISURE CENTRE AND  
CAR PARKS  
SEVENOAKS  
KENT



PROPERTY &  
INFRASTRUCTURE SUPPORT  
COUNTY HALL,  
MAIDSTONE  
ME14 1XQ

Drawn By  
MY

Date  
JUN 2024



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TQ5354/6C

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## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

**EQIA Title**

Sevenoaks Town Centre Regeneration Pre Consultation and the next steps

**Responsible Officer**

Lisa Alexander - DCED INF

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

Joanne Taylor - DCED INF

### Type of Activity

**Service Change**

No

**Service Redesign**

No

**Project/Programme**

Project/Programme

**Commissioning/Procurement**

No

**Strategy/Policy**

No

**Details of other Service Activity**

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**

Strategic and Corporate Services

**Responsible Service**

Infrastructure

**Responsible Head of Service**

Joanne Taylor - DCED INF

**Responsible Director**

Rebecca Spore - DCED INF

### Aims and Objectives

Kent County Council (KCC) has been engaging with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) regarding the SDC's ambition to regenerate the area to the east of the town centre in Sevenoaks. The project can only continue in its current form in collaboration with KCC as the County Council is a key landowner and stakeholder.

The proposals would involve the relocation of KCC services, including the library function to an alternative new facility and location within a future scheme, which would deliver more efficient and cost-effective buildings for KCC's estate, supporting Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022-2026

SDC's objectives for the regeneration project is: -

- \* "To support businesses and education / learning skills, ensuring the town centre remains a hub for communities to use, gather, be creative and socialise in.
- \* To ensure buildings are fit for purpose and kinder to the environment, by improving energy efficiency.
- \* A new and improved library, art gallery, museum, adult services, learning disability groups and registrar would be located closer to the town centre, making the services easier to access, increasing foot fall to the services.
- \* Land released would be ensure the provision of mixed tenure homes, which would include affordable housing, key worker, elderly, which are vital given Green belt covers 93% of the District.

- \* The provision of a new hotel and the improvement of the existing services will provide enhanced employment opportunities, which will bring about economic growth to the Sevenoaks District.
- \* The existing provisions will remain open until the new provisions have been built, which will enable continuity of service, ensuring that there are no closures.
- \* The new facilities will provide improved facilities for both residents and visitors alike.”

A Pre consultation was undertaken at the end of April 2024 to seek the view of residents, businesses, and other stakeholders on the early ideas for delivering improvements to the area east of Sevenoaks High Street (around Buckhurst Land and Suffolk Way).

KCC supports in principle the regeneration of the Sevenoaks Town Centre and the potential relocation of KCC services into new fit for purpose, sustainable and environmentally friendly buildings (which will be at nil cost);

Subject to viability of the proposals being established a future key decision / EqIA and DPIA will need to be taken to support any future decision on the development taking place.

## 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?**

No

**Have you consulted with stakeholders?**

Yes

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

Focus consultations were held with:-

SDC Ward members (Online) 8th April 10 a.m.

Everyone Active (Leisure centre) staff 10th April 10 a.m.

KCC members briefing (Online) 11th April 3 p.m.

Sevenoaks Town Council 15th April 6 p.m.

Access Group 18th April

Public Realm Commission (online) 19th April at 2.30pm

Knole Estate - National Trust (online) 19th April at 1.00pm

Knole Estate Reps (online) 22nd April at 9.00am

Commercial Tenants (leisure centre) 22nd April 6.00 pm

Buckhurst Avenue Residents (leisure centre) 22nd April 7.30pm

Sevenoaks Mums/ Sevenoaks Women’s Forum (Online) 26th April 12.30

Access Group (online) 18th April 12.30 pm

Chamber of Commerce (leisure centre) 23rd April 10.30 am

Chamber of Commerce networking event) 1st May 12.00 noon

Three Pre Public Consultation events took place at the end of April (24th;27th and 29th) (two were held in person; one was online).

**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>
Staff/Volunteers
<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>
In accordance to the Equality Act 2010, which identifies the nine protected characteristics, the future positive impacts of the proposed Sevenoaks High Street Regeneration will be to ensure that there is equality amongst all characteristics, which will ensure that there is equal opportunities for all to have reasonable access to the service provisions, catering for different age groups, disabilities, gender, race etc
<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

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# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services

## DECISION NO:

24/00079

## For publication

### Key decision: YES

*Key decision criteria. The decision will be significant in terms of its effects on a significant proportion of the community living or working within two or more electoral divisions.*

## Title of Decision: Sevenoaks Land East of High Street - Pre-Consultation and the next steps

### Decision:

The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services to:

1. Note the feedback from the community consultation exercise conducted by Sevenoaks District Council;
2. Support the objectives and principles of the regeneration of the Sevenoaks Town centre, subject to KCC's red line requirements, which includes the potential relocation of County Council services to new build facilities within a future scheme; and
3. Agree for Kent County Council to work with Sevenoaks District Council to progress the scoping of proposals and to delegate authority to the Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding which will establish the principles of collaborative working between the two authorities. It should be noted that a further Key Decision will be taken in respect of the consideration of any final business case and the implementation of any proposals.

### Reason(s) for decision:

Kent County Council (KCC) has been engaging with Sevenoaks District Council (SDC) regarding SDC's ambition to regenerate the area to the east of the town centre in Sevenoaks. The project can only continue in its current form in collaboration with KCC, as the County Council is a key landowner and stakeholder.

The proposals involve the relocation of KCC services, including the library function, to an alternative new facility within a future scheme. This would potentially deliver more efficient and cost-effective buildings for KCC's estate, supporting Framing Kent's Future – Our Council Strategy 2022-2026. This new facility would mean that the KCC service are located in closer proximity to the existing High Street.

Approval is being sought to enter a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with SDC which will establish the principles of a collaboration to explore the viability of proposals in the regeneration scheme.

### Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:

SDC in collaboration with KCC undertook a number of Sevenoaks High Street Regeneration pre-consultation events, which asked the community what should be considered as part of the regeneration project, including the potential re location of KCC services).

Pre consultation public engagement report

Prior to the pre-consultation events, Members in Sevenoaks were consulted on the concept of the Regeneration of Sevenoaks High Street and KCC's potential involvement on the 11 April 2024. Members were supportive of this concept, however noted that the project was in its early stages, and further information would be required prior to KCC's full engagement as the project progresses.

The proposed decision will be considered by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee in September 2024.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Following the pre-consultation events, the next stage will be to commission a feasibility to deliver a mixed-use scheme in collaboration with SDC, which will provide options and outline any alternative approaches that have been considered to determine the viability of the project.

A further key decision supported by a full business case will be sought prior to KCC committing to the project.

The main alternative is to do nothing – resulting in no partnership working with SDC on the project and the existing KCC library and services remaining within the current 1987 built building.

**Any interest declared when the decision was taken and any dispensation granted by the Proper Officer:** None.

.....  
signed

.....  
date

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

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From: Roger Gough, Leader of the Council

Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services

Dylan Jeffrey, Cabinet Member for Communications and Democratic Services  
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive Officer

To: Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10 September 2024

Subject: Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department

Classification: Unrestricted

### **Summary:**

The Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department (CED) and Deputy Chief Executive's Department (DCED), shows performance against targets set for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).

22 of the 27 KPIs achieved target for the latest month and were RAG (Red/Amber/Green) rated Green, two were below target but did achieve the floor standard (Amber), and three did not achieve the floor standard (Red).

### **Recommendation:**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the performance position for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department.

## **1. Introduction**

1.1. Part of the role of Cabinet Committees is to review the performance of the functions of the Council that fall within the remit of the Cabinet Committee. To support this role performance dashboards are regularly reported to each Cabinet Committee throughout the year, and this is the first report for the 2024/25 financial year.

## **2. Performance Dashboard**

2.1. The current Performance Dashboard for CED and DCED provides results up to June 2024 and is attached in Appendix 1.

2.2. The Dashboard provides a progress report on performance against target for the 27 KPIs for 2024/25. The Dashboard also includes a range of activity indicators which help give context to the KPIs.

2.3. KPIs are presented with RAG alerts to show progress against targets. Details of how the alerts are generated are outlined in the Guidance Notes, included with the Dashboard in Appendix 1.

2.4. Of the 27 KPIs, the latest RAG status is as follows:

- Twenty-two are rated Green (same as the last report) – the target was achieved or exceeded.
- Two are rated Amber (one more than the last report) – performance achieved or exceeded the expected floor standard but did not meet the target for Green.
- Three are rated Red (one fewer than the last report) – performance did not meet the expected floor standard. These are:
  - CS07: Complaints responded to in timescale
  - GL02: Freedom of Information Act requests completed within 20 working days.
  - GL03: Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests (SARs) completed within statutory timescales.

### **3. Recommendation**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to NOTE the performance position for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department.

### **4. Contact details**

Report Author:

Matthew Wagner  
Chief Analyst (interim)  
Chief Executive's Department  
03000 416559  
[Matthew.Wagner@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Matthew.Wagner@kent.gov.uk)

Relevant Director:

David Whittle  
Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance  
03000 416833  
[david.whittle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:david.whittle@kent.gov.uk)



# **Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department**

## **Financial Year 2024/25**

### **Results up to June 2024**

Produced by Kent Analytics



## Guidance Notes

### Key Performance Indicators

All Key Performance Indicators are provided with RAG (Red/Amber/Green) ratings.

RAG ratings are based on Targets and Floor Standards brought before the Cabinet Committee in May 2023.

Where relevant, RAG ratings are given for both the latest month and year to date (YTD).

### RAG Ratings

<b>GREEN</b>	Target has been achieved
<b>AMBER</b>	Floor Standard* achieved but Target has not been met
<b>RED</b>	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 where appropriate, they are tracked within an expected range represented by Upper and Lower Thresholds. The Alert provided for Activity Indicators is whether results are within the expected range or not. Results can either be in expected range (**Yes**) or they could be **Above** or **Below**. Expected activity thresholds are based on previous years' trends.

When activity indicators do not have expected thresholds, they are shown in the report to provide context for the Key Performance Indicators. In such cases the activity indicators are simply shown with comparison to activity for the previous year.

## Key Performance Indicator Summary

<b>Finance</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
FN06: Percentage of sundry debt due to KCC under 6 months old	GREEN	N/A
FN07: Invoices received by Accounts Payable within 30 days of KCC received date	AMBER	AMBER
FN08: Invoices received on time by Accounts Payable processed within 30 days	GREEN	GREEN
FN11: Percentage of financial assessments completed within 15 days of referral	GREEN	RED
FN12: Percentage of working days aggregate bank balance is in credit	AMBER	AMBER
FN13: Percentage of working days average credit rating for internally managed cash portfolio is no lower than AA	GREEN	GREEN
FN14: Percentage of third-party insurance claims resolved within the designated timescales	GREEN	GREEN
<b>Governance, Law &amp; Democracy</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
GL01: Council and Committee papers published at least five days before meetings	GREEN	GREEN
GL02: Freedom of Information Act requests completed within 20 working days	RED	RED
GL03: Subject Access Requests (SARs) completed within statutory timescales	RED	RED

<b>Marketing and Resident Experience</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
CS01: Callers who rate the advisors in Contact Point as good	GREEN	GREEN
CS04a: Daytime calls to Contact Point answered	GREEN	AMBER
CS04b: Out of hours calls to Contact Point answered	GREEN	GREEN
CS06a: Daytime calls achieving 85% of quality scorecard	GREEN	GREEN
CS06b: Out of hours calls achieving 85% of quality scorecard	GREEN	GREEN
CS07: Complaints responded to in timescale	RED	RED

<b>Human Resource and Organisational Development</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
HR09: Training evaluated by participants as having delivered stated learning outcomes	GREEN	GREEN

<b>Health and Safety</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
HR25: Completed corporate themed Health and Safety audits sent within timescale	GREEN	GREEN

<b>Technology</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
ICT01: Calls to ICT Help Desk resolved at the first point of contact	GREEN	GREEN
ICT02: Positive feedback rating with the ICT help desk	GREEN	GREEN
ICT03: Working hours where Kent Public Sector Network is available to staff	GREEN	GREEN
ICT04: Working hours where ICT Services available to staff	GREEN	GREEN
ICT05: Working hours where email is available to staff	GREEN	GREEN

<b>Infrastructure</b>	<b>Latest RAG</b>	<b>YTD RAG</b>
PI01: Rent due to KCC outstanding over 60 days	GREEN	N/a
PI05: Percentage of scheduled Planned Preventative Maintenance completed by due date	GREEN	GREEN
PI06: Percentage of reactive help desk tasks completed by due date	GREEN	GREEN
PI07: Percentage of help desk calls answered within timescale	GREEN	GREEN

## Chief Executive's Department

Service Area	Director (interim)	Cabinet Member
Finance	John Betts	Peter Oakford

## Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	YTD	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
FN06	Percentage of sundry debt due to KCC under 6 months old	73%	79%	75%	77%	GREEN	n/a		70%	65%	73%
FN07	Invoices received by Accounts Payable within 30 days of KCC received date	83%	84%	86%	82%	AMBER	84%	AMBER	95%	85%	81%
FN08	Percentage of invoices received on time by Accounts Payable processed within 30 days	99%	98%	99%	98%	GREEN	99%	GREEN	98%	95%	98%
FN11	Percentage of financial assessments completed within 15 days of referral	89%	84%	69%	93%	GREEN	82%	RED	90%	85%	86%
FN12	Percentage of working days aggregate bank balance is in credit (Incl. £1m agreed overdraft)	100%	95%	100%	95%	AMBER	97%	AMBER	100%	90%	97%
FN13	Percentage of working days average credit rating for internally managed cash portfolio is no lower than AA	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	GREEN	100%	90%	100%
FN14	Percentage of third-party insurance claims resolved within the designated timescales	99%	98%	98%	98%	GREEN	98%	GREEN	95%	85%	99%

\*Annual performance of invoice payments can be found here: <https://www.kent.gov.uk/about-the-council/finance-and-budget/spending/annual-performance-of-payments>

FN07 – This KPI has reverted back to measuring payment made within 30 days instead of payment made within 15 days which was the measurement last year. A reminder will be sent to Budget Managers to utilise the Late Payment Dashboard, part of the Financial Healthcheck Suite. This will highlight those invoices being submitted late so that appropriate remedial action can be taken.

FN11 – In June, performance improved to be above target following expected lower performance in April and May when the annual reassessments of over 15,000 clients are undertaken.

FN12 – In June there was one incident of an overdrawn closing balance resulting from a precept due which was not received from Dover District Council (DDC). DDC were contacted in an effort to mitigate against going into overdraft but there was no response until after there was time for viable action. Whilst an external cause (not within our control), the need for timely communication has been reiterated (internal/external) – should any issues arise, that might delay/prevent monies due being delivered on the day. The precept due was delivered the following working day with overdraft charges incurred, which were recovered from DDC.

### Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Year to date	Previous YTD
FN06b	Value of debt due to KCC (£000s)	21,288	27,797	25,405	29,469	N/a	22,240
FN07b	Number of invoices received by KCC	8,892	9,321	8,460	8,284	<b>26,065</b>	21,162
FN11b	Number of financial assessments received	732	808	678	646	<b>2,132</b>	2,797
FN14b	Number of insurance claims resolved	160	205	280	216	<b>701</b>	832

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>
<b>Governance, Law &amp; Democracy</b>	<b>Ben Watts</b>	<b>Dylan Jeffrey</b>

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	YTD	Year RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
GL01	Council and Committee papers published at least five clear days before meetings	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	GREEN	100%	96%	100%
GL02	Freedom of Information (FOI) / Environmental Information Regulation (EIR) requests completed within 20 working days	74%	76%	78%	73%	RED	75%	RED	92%	90%	76%
GL03	Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests (SARs) completed within timescales	8%	54%	58%	47%	RED	53%	RED	90%	85%	43%

GL02 – The percentage of FOI / EIR requests continues to be below floor standard. With regards to performance in the first Quarter of 2024/25, no Directorate achieved target, with the best performing being Chief Executive Division with 85% completed in timescale. Growth, Environment and Transport had the highest number of requests (267 requests). The volume of requests has been above expectations this Quarter, with 2024 seeing some of the highest monthly totals since the Freedom of Information Act was introduced in 2005. It's possible that some requests are follow-ups to requests already made outside of the FOI framework which have not been responded to.

GL03 - Since April, 70% of these have come under the Children, Young People and Education Directorate. Reasons for delays in responding to requests include complexity of some requests, resourcing issues, and the significant amount of time it takes to appropriately redact records.

## Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	YTD	In expected range?	Expected Activity Upper   Lower		Previous Year YTD
GL01b	Committee meetings	20	5	14	8	27		N/a		27
GL02b	Freedom of Information requests responded to	191	226	214	218	658	<b>Above</b>	530	430	526
GL03b	Data Protection Act Subject Access requests responded to	37	63	36	59	158	<b>Above</b>	150	120	175



## Deputy Chief Executive's Department

Service Area	Head of Service	Cabinet Member
Marketing and Resident Experience	Christina Starte	Dylan Jeffrey

## Key Performance Indicators - Monthly

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	YTD	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
CS01	Percentage of callers who rate the advisors in Contact Point as good	98%	98%	98%	98%	GREEN	98%	GREEN	97%	90%	98%
CS04a	Percentage of daytime calls to Contact Point answered*	90%	89%	90%	90%	GREEN	89%	AMBER	90%	85%	91%
CS04b	Percentage of out of hours calls to Contact Point answered*	92%	94%	94%	97%	GREEN	95%	GREEN	95%	90%	92%
CS06a	Percentage of daytime calls achieving 85% of quality scorecard	74%	74%	74%	**	GREEN	74%	GREEN	70%	65%	74%
CS06b	Percentage of out of hours calls achieving 85% of quality scorecard	74%	76%	75%	**	GREEN	75%	GREEN	70%	65%	75%

\* Please note that these figures can vary to those reported for the Agilisys contract, as that contract allows for days of exceptionally high call volumes to be discounted from the KPI calculation.

\*\* Not available at time of reporting

CS04a – This narrowly missed target for year-to-date performance. In April, at least 4 days of the month were affected by KCC network issues which prevented advisors being able to log-on to operating systems. This resulted in some repeat calls especially for the lower priority services as customers are more likely to hang up and call back rather than wait for a longer time.

## Key Performance Indicator – Quarterly

Ref	Indicator description	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Qtr RAG	YTD	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
CS07	Percentage of complaints responded to in timescale	63%	75%	56%	66%	RED	66%	RED	85%	80%	63%

CS07 – Quarter 1 saw an 8% increase in the number of complaints received compared with the previous Quarter and a 9% increase on the same Quarter last year. A concerted effort is being made to clear the backlog of older cases, but this does have an impact on the closure of new cases in timescale and the subsequent impact on performance of the KPI was expected.

In terms of Directorate performance, most complaints were received by the Growth, Environment and Transport Directorate who responded to 85% within timescale (meeting target), Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department, together achieved 68%, Adult Social Care and Health 59%, and Children, Young People and Education 23% (the majority were related to SEN with only 4% of these being responded to within timescale).

Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Year to Date	In expected range?	Expected Range Upper   Lower		Prev. Yr YTD
CS08	Number of calls answered by Contact Point	34,570	34,157	33,681	32,271	33,718	<b>99,670</b>	Yes	118,000	96,000	107,304
CS12	Number of visits to the KCC website, kent.gov (000s)	515	602	580	596	646	<b>1,822</b>	Yes	2,150	1,750	1,954
CS13	Average speed of answer (ASA) by Contact Point - priority services (seconds)	36	49	49	40	59	<b>50</b>	Yes	120	30	43
CS14	Average speed of answer (ASA) by Contact Point - all services (seconds)	63	129	121	105	117	<b>114</b>	<b>Below</b>	300	180	105

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CS14 – Performance below the lower threshold for this indicator shows calls are being answered promptly.

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>
Human Resources and Organisational Development	Paul Royel	Dylan Jeffrey

### Key Performance Indicators – Monthly

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	YTD	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev Year
HR09	Training evaluated by participants as having delivered stated learning outcomes	99%	99%	99%	99%	GREEN	99%	GREEN	97%	95%	99%

### Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	In expected range?	Expected Range		Prev. Yr YTD
								Upper	Lower	
HR12	Number of current change activities being supported	83	82	58	61	71	Below	90	80	90
HR13	Total number of e-learning training programmes completed (YTD)	64,155	70,016	7,662	14,180	19,723	Above	18,750	15,000	15,727
HR16	Number of registered users of Kent Rewards	27,543	27,654	27,764	22,630	22,565	Below	28,000	24,000	26,683
HR21	Number of current people management cases being supported	138	140	148	150	145	Above	100	90	111
HR23	Percentage of staff who have completed all 3 mandatory learning events	89%	89%	89%	89%	89%	Yes	90%	80%	88%

HR12 – Change activity decreased in April due to a number of projects completing at financial year end, a cleansing exercise was also undertaken at this point to remove activities deemed as no longer required. Volumes have increased again across the quarter as requests for support to new projects have been received from the organisation.

HR 13 – E-learning completions remain higher than anticipated. This has been driven primarily by the significant uptake of ‘*The Role of the Evacuation Marshal*’ course within KCC, and a high number of completions for the mandatory ‘*Introduction to Information Governance*’ course. There has also been an increase in activity and completions by Commercial Services Group (CSG) employees since they launched their own mandatory training. The most completed are ‘*Financial Crime*’ and ‘*Environmental Awareness at CSG*’.

HR16 – The number of registered users for Kent Rewards has dropped due to a data cleansing exercise to remove accounts which are no longer eligible to have access to the site.

HR21 - Case activity is driven by requests from Managers and fluctuates from month to month. The high level indicates that managers are taking a robust approach and managing cases through the appropriate channels with HR support and advice.

Service Area	Interim Head of Service	Cabinet Member
Health and Safety	Maria Kelly	Dylan Jeffrey

**Key Performance Indicators – Quarterly**

Ref	Indicator description	Sep-23	Dec-23	Mar-24	Jun-24	Qtr RAG	YTD	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
HR25	Percentage of corporate themed Health and Safety audits sent in 7 days	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	GREEN	95%	85%	100%

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Director</b>	<b>Cabinet Member</b>
<b>Technology</b>	<b>Lisa Gannon</b>	<b>Peter Oakford</b>

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	Year to Date	Year RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
ICT01	Calls to ICT Help Desk resolved at the first point of contact	81%	81%	76%	<b>72%</b>	GREEN	<b>76%</b>	GREEN	70%	65%	78%
ICT02	Positive feedback rating with the ICT help desk	94%	95%	95%	<b>95%</b>	GREEN	<b>95%</b>	GREEN	95%	90%	95%
ICT03	Working hours where Kent Public Sector Network is available to staff	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	99.8%	99.0%	100%
ICT04	Working hours where ICT Services are available to staff	99.8%	100%	99.8%	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	<b>99.7%</b>	GREEN	99.0%	98.0%	99.9%
ICT05	Working hours where email is available to staff	100%	100%	100%	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	<b>100%</b>	GREEN	99.0%	98.0%	100%

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### Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Year to Date	Previous Year YTD
ICT01b	Calls to ICT Help Desk	7,072	8,802	8,329	<b>8,574</b>	<b>25,705</b>	23,863
ICT02b	Feedback responses provided for ICT Help Desk	1,410	1,790	1,862	<b>1,647</b>	<b>5,299</b>	1,243

Service Area	Director	Cabinet Member
Infrastructure	Rebecca Spore	Peter Oakford

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
PI01	Percentage of rent due to KCC outstanding over 60 days (including rent deferment invoices)	26.9%	23.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	GREEN	5%	10%	23%

### Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Year to Date	Previous Year YTD
PI01b	Total rent invoiced (£000s)	385	329	681	796	559	2,035	1,207
PI03c	Capital receipts banked (£000s)	600	800	324	979	1,274	2,577	4,257

Service Area	Director	Cabinet Member
Infrastructure	Rebecca Spore	Peter Oakford

### Key Performance Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Month RAG	YTD	YTD RAG	Target	Floor	Prev. Year
PI05	Percentage of scheduled Planned Preventative Maintenance completed by due date	99%	98%	99%	98%	GREEN	98%	GREEN	90%	80%	0%
PI06	Percentage of reactive help desk tasks completed by due date	97%	96%	96%	96%	GREEN	96%	GREEN	90%	80%	0%
PI07	Percentage of help desk calls answered within timescale	100%	100%	100%	100%	GREEN	100%	GREEN	90%	80%	0%

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### Activity Indicators

Ref	Indicator description	Feb-24	Mar-24	Apr-24	May-24	Jun-24	Year to Date	Previous Year YTD
PI05b	Number of Planned Preventative Maintenance tasks responded to	2,042	2,236	2,494	2,267	2,637	7,398	8,633
PI06b	Number of reactive tasks responded to	800	743	727	716	617	2,060	2,057
PI07b	Number of help desk calls responded to	380	300	256	271	245	772	1,084



**From:** Roger Gough, Leader of Kent County Council

Amanda Beer, Chief Executive Officer

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024

**Subject:** Afghan Resettlement (ARAP and ACRS) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) – proposed service delivery from February 2025

**Decision no:** 24/00071

**Key Decision:** Yes

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** Corporate Management Team, 4th June 2024.

**Future Pathway of report:** Cabinet Member Decision

**Electoral Division:** All Electoral Divisions

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**Summary:** This report concerns the proposals for delivering the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Leader of the Council on the proposed decision to:

1. **Approve** the acceptance of Home Office grant funding for the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and to determine the appropriate delivery model.
2. **Agree** to Kent County Council continuing to be the ‘Lead Recipient’ for the Home Office grant for all districts in Kent with the exception of Ashford, Canterbury and individuals resettled to the Ministry of Defence and Local Authority Housing Fund properties in Dover.
3. **Approve** that the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) be delivered based on the preferred option (recommissioning using a new commissioning delivery model).
4. **Delegate** authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into the

relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision.

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## 1. Introduction

1.1 Refugee resettlement plays a key role in the global response to humanitarian crises: it saves lives and offers stability to refugees most in need of protection. In response to crises around the world the UK has created various resettlement schemes and programmes to provide 'safe and legal routes' to the UK. There are a number of 'safe and legal' routes which allow people to travel to the UK either temporarily or with a route to settlement.

1.2 This report concerns the following refugee resettlement schemes being coordinated by Kent County Council across ten districts in Kent and the options for their delivery from 1st February 2025 are briefly set out below with full details found in Appendix B:

- Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) (2015 – 2021)
- United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) (2021- ).
- Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) (2021-
- Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) (2022-
- Other similar refugee resettlement schemes
- Community Sponsorship Scheme (2016- ).

<sup>1</sup> *Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data - GOV.UK* ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

1.3 Refugees arriving through these schemes have experienced prolonged conflict and instability. Some have lived in refugee camps and/or precarious living conditions for years prior to being resettled resulting in increased vulnerabilities. Others have undergone shorter but still very traumatic experiences. For most, there is no hope of ever returning home and for most moving to the UK will be for long term, permanent resettlement. All the schemes allow those eligible to bring their immediate family with them and also confer full rights to work, study, rent, claim benefits and other public funds.

All the above schemes operate on a self-financing basis using ring-fenced funding received from the Government which means that they do not rely on direct KCC financial support.

The proposed decision supports the key priority 'Infrastructure for communities' within the 'Framing Kent's Future (2022-26)', under which it states that we will 'continue to coordinate Government-sponsored refugee resettlement programmes including those for Syrian, Afghan and Ukrainian nationals and support them to settle into Kent's communities'.

## 2. Background

2.1 Following a meeting of Kent Leaders on 23 September 2015 and KCC on 22 October 2015 it was proposed that KCC would work with district housing leads to determine the best way to set up the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme in Kent. It was subsequently agreed that KCC should co-ordinate a

service in partnership with those districts that wished to take part. At the time, this involved all the districts in Kent with the exception of Ashford and Canterbury who manage their own schemes. Since then, KCC and the Kent housing authorities have been working in partnership to resettle refugees through a number of government schemes and programmes.

2.2 KCC's Refugee Resettlement Programme Team act as coordinator and liaison point with the Government resettlement teams, identify properties in partnership with the district housing teams, procure and manage the resettlement and integration casework support of three commissioned providers (Migrant Help, Clarion Housing and Rethink Mental Illness) and more recently provide specialist targeted support in areas such as housing, ESOL and complex cases.

2.3 In addition to the work involved in the resettlement of families into long-term accommodation, the KCC Resettlement team has also, up until end August 2023, been providing the wraparound support in one of the three Afghan bridging hotels in Kent (closed at the end of August 2023). This part of the work has been entirely provided by KCC staff, except for the first 6 months when assistance was received from Migrant Help.

2.4 In 2023 Dover District Council created an internal team, the Dover Asylum and Refugee Team (DART), to deliver the ARAP and ACRS to Afghan families in Dover matched to the Ministry of Defence (MOD) properties they are leasing and their Local Authority Housing Fund properties. KCC continued to coordinate the delivery of the resettlement schemes to all other families in Dover.

2.5 The current contract under which KCC commissions a large part of the day-to-day resettlement and integration casework support from our three area-based providers will come to an end on 31st January 2025 (following a final 12-month extension from February 2024). The current contract cannot be extended beyond this date and so the delivery model from 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025 needs to be determine.

2.6 Appendix B provides overview of the refugee resettlement schemes and shows the number of families (and individuals) settled across all districts / boroughs in Kent up to 30<sup>th</sup> July 2024.

2.7 The data for the families supported by the KCC team (in the 10 districts covered) is as follows:

Table 1: Data for families supported by KCC team in 10 districts across Kent (as at 30th July 2024)

Scheme	Open cases - number of individuals (with number of families in brackets)						Total Open Cases	Closed cases
	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5	UK born children		
<b>VPRS/UKRS</b>	0	0	14(3)	31(7)	53(12)	7	105(22)	235(48)
<b>ARAP/ACRS</b>	152(28)	56(11)	65(14)	1(1)	0	18	292(54)	13(2)
<b>TOTAL</b>	152(28)	56(11)	79(17)	32(8)	53(12)	25	397(76)	248(50)

### 3. Options considered

3.1 Following a review of the delivery current model, consultation with key stakeholders, and other refugee resettlement teams, consideration of relevant literature and an analysis of key risks, it was concluded that there were three options for the service delivery model that needs to be in place by 1<sup>st</sup> February 2025 at the latest.

3.2 The option of 'doing nothing' was considered early on, however it was quickly dismissed. When the current contracts end on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025, alternative provision for existing refugee families on the schemes will have to be sought until their support through the schemes comes to an end. If not, there is a risk that vulnerable families who are not yet integrated, independent, or self-sufficient falling through the net, becoming an added burden on local services.

In summary, the three options delivery model options are:

**Option 1:** Recommission using the existing commissioning model (multiple providers): Providers may bid for one or any combination of 4 Lots (geographical areas) but will only be awarded a maximum of two.

**Option 2:** Recommission using a new commissioning model (to make it more likely that the casework element of the service is delivered through one commissioned provider). This could be through removing the current restriction on the number of Lots (geographical areas) an organisation can bid for or simply requiring all potential providers to bid for the whole area.

**Option 3:** All service provision is moved in-house to an internal KCC team (insourcing)

The review of options highlights a number of issues the Council need to take into account. It highlighted both negatives and positives relating to all methods of delivering the schemes.

3.3 The preferred option is recommission using a new commissioning delivery model, as it provides the basis for protecting KCC core budget, given the uncertainty of demand and associated staff related costs in the event of having to exit the scheme because of a decision by government to close the scheme and the current ambiguity of the funding instructions about which clarification has been sought and we are still awaiting a response from the Home Office.

### 3.4 Assessment of the options

The appraisal of the options concluded that both options 2 and 3 scored very similarly and are reasonable options for the council to consider (although they both carry a level of risk).

Each delivery model option was assessed using the same set criteria. The criteria and weighting were developed in relation to the scheme criteria, review of the current delivery model, consultation on our delivery model with key stakeholders, review of other refugee resettlement delivery models and analysis

of key risks. The criteria used when appraising the delivery model options is shown in Appendix C.

Once the relative weightings were determined for each criterion, each one was then scored between 0 and 5, from lowest score to highest for each management option. A description of the scores can be seen in Appendix C.

Final evaluation results for each management option have been determined through a calculation of the relative importance weightings and the score given for each criterion. The maximum score each option can receive is 5.

Table 1: Evaluation Results

Rank	Option	Total Score
1	Option 2: Recommission under a new model to encourage single provider	3.86
2	Option 3: All elements delivered in-house	3.79
3	Option 1: Recommissioning under the same model	3.34

An average of the assessors scores were taken to create a final total score.

The two options with the top score were, recommissioning under a new model to encourage a single supplier and bringing all element of service delivery in-house.

#### 4. Key Issues for consideration and associated risks

4.1 The following risks are considered to be sufficiently serious, and they apply to both remaining delivery model options. The inherent risks of this contract could be reflected in bidders cost contingency.

##### 4.2 District / Borough Council Participation

Discussions with the ten district/borough councils in which the KCC scheme currently operates, has confirmed that all wish KCC to continue to provide the coordination and support for the schemes (on a case-by-case basis). Dover District Council (DDC) will continue to deliver the Afghan schemes to families in Dover matched to the Ministry of Defence properties they are leasing and their Local Authority Housing Fund properties. KCC will continue to coordinate the delivery of the resettlement schemes to all other families in Dover.

None of the districts are currently willing to make a firm commitment to the numbers they will aim to resettle in the next and coming years. Rather they wish to proceed on a case-by-case basis, as and when properties can be sourced and capacity of other local services considered. This uncertainty presents a major risk in terms of the funding that is likely to be available to provide the service (funding is on a per person basis and only received on arrival).

Any district/borough council's decision for KCC to coordinate the scheme in their area could change in line with the political environment and/or policy decisions. To mitigate these risks KCC's Refugee Resettlement Team has built strong partnerships with the district housing teams and regular discussions enable us to be alerted to any issues or potential changes in policy, revise our MOU with districts/borough councils to confirm their continued participations and other proactive measures.

#### 4.3 Housing Supply

There is a severe shortage of affordable housing suitable for the scheme which has (for the most part) to rely on private sector rentals. The larger than average size of the refugee families further compounds supply issues and creates concerns around the sustainability of housing costs, particularly as they are more likely to be affected by the benefit cap. Although incentives and top-ups can be given to landlords, it is important that, in the long run, tenancies are sustainable to families who nearly all rely on benefits even after securing initial employment.

Families are only resettled once a property is offered to the scheme. The severe shortage of affordable properties suitable for the scheme, limits local authorities' ability to make resettlement offers and has the potential to limit any new families arriving through the schemes and therefore creates uncertainty over the funding for a KCC refugee resettlement team.

The competing housing demand of multiple programmes (asylum, Homes for Ukraine, ARAP, ACRS, UKRS, Hong Kong BNO and UASC care leavers) alongside huge pressure around homelessness compound supply issues. The Home Office has accelerated the clearance of the asylum backlog, and the Kent districts are anticipating an increase in the number of asylum seekers who receive a positive decision in need of housing. The Home Office have also indicated an increase in the number of asylum dispersal accommodation units in the South-East.

The delivery of the services through either model will require us to work closely with district housing teams and consult them on the use of properties found to ensure that does not impact on other housing demands in their area. KCC's Refugee Resettlement Team has an internal Housing Coordinator and part of his role is to look at other available avenues for sourcing housing, for example through philanthropic routes.

#### 4.4 Policy

As a result of a recent General Election, we have a new ministerial team in place and we may see some change in policy. This could result in a shift in policy on refugee resettlement and/or changes to the current funding arrangements. It is expected that the resettlement of refugees through 'safe and legal routes' will still be a commitment of any future government.

UK resettlement policy could also develop once we know the outcome of the Home Office Safe and Legal Routes Cap consultation, where local authorities were asked to submit a figure for the maximum number of refugees they could

support for the 2025 calendar year. This included the UK Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS), and the Community Sponsorship Scheme. The consultation closed in January 2024 and further information was expected in the summer. The annual cap is supposed to come into force in January 2025 but this could change under a Labour government.

#### 4.5 Future demand for resettlement

Over the last 10 years, the number of refugees in need of resettlement has dramatically increased.

There is still a huge need for resettlement through ARAP, ACRS and UKRS and many thousand eligible individuals are waiting to be resettled to the UK. Most families resettling under the UKRS will only come to the UK once properties have been sourced. There has, however, been a recent change in policy for several thousand eligible ARAP and ACRS individuals waiting outside the UK (e.g. in third countries such as Pakistan and Iran) who are being moved to the UK as a matter of urgency due to an increased risk of these individuals being forcibly deported back to Afghanistan.

Resettlement continues to be a critical tool for refugees who face specific or urgent risks. Given the national expectation that all regions will contribute, it is anticipated that activity to support refugees (and asylum seekers) will be a significant long-term area of work and focus for the Council going forward. This will require ongoing resources, expertise and knowledge in these areas and a clear and joined up strategic approach across Kent County Council and the District Housing Authorities in Kent.

#### 4.6 Market Engagement

A Prior Information Notice (PIN) was published to gauge the level of interest in the provision of these services from potential suppliers and gather feedback from the market on the delivery of the schemes.

The notice led to 73 expressions of interest, ranging from national organisations with many years of experience in delivering the full package of care, to SMEs that can provide specific services such as housing support or translation services. The Commercial and Procurement division is providing technical advice and support on the appropriate procurement route. It may be necessary to seek approval to extend the existing contract, subject to agreement by relevant parties for a period up to 3 months because of the need to plan for appropriate mobilisations from current providers to the new commissioned service. A few larger organisations with expertise in the migration sector have indicated interest. However, if no suitable single supplier is successful (or chooses to bid), this would force KCC to either accept a multiple supplier model or mobilise an in-house delivery model.

A Strategic Commissioning Commercial Case will be considered by the Commissioning and Procurement Oversight Board (CPOB) at its meeting on 11 September 2024, providing the justification and rationale for the procurement approach proposed. The advice and views expressed by the CPOB will be taken into account before the Cabinet Member/Leader takes the Key Decision.

## 5. Financial Implications

5.1 The funding for both the UKRS and the two Afghan schemes is essentially the same, except for the fact that the UKRS funding is spread over five years whereas for the ARAP and ACRS schemes it is spread over 3 years. The table below shows the main funding received.

Table 2

Per person funding	UKRS (and legacy VPRS/VCRS cases)	ARAP	ACRS
Year 1	£8,520	£10,500	£10,500
Year 2	£5,000	£6,000	£6,000
Year 3	£3,700	£4,020	£4,020
Year 4	£2,300	N/A	N/A
Year 5	£1,000	N/A	N/A
<b>SUB TOTAL</b>	<b>£20,520</b>	<b>£20,520</b>	<b>£20,520</b>
ESOL (first year only)	£850	£850	£850
Education (first year only)	3-5 yrs: £2,250 5-18 yrs: £4,500	3-5 yrs: £2,250 5-18 yrs: £4,500	3-5 yrs: £2,250 5-18 yrs: £4,500
Healthcare (claimed by NHS)	£2,600 plus additional secondary HC costs if approved.	£2,600 plus additional secondary HC costs if approved	£2,600 plus additional secondary HC costs if approved

5.2 Due to the recent election, the funding instructions for 2024 – 2025 have not yet been issued. The Treasury have agreed a roll-over of the 2023/24 funding package under the Afghan Schemes for all arrivals up to 25 October 2024. Work on a funding package for the rest of this financial year continues and LAs will be updated in due course.

5.3 Financially, the programme aims to be cost neutral. All the schemes operate on a self-financing basis using ring-fenced funding received from Government which means that they do not rely on direct KCC financial support. There is no call on KCC or district core budgets and to date (since the beginning of the scheme in Kent in December 2015) spending on the scheme has not exceeded the available funds. It appears in the KCC Budget as a “net nil” budget.

5.4 The level of funding for the schemes has remained fairly consistent over the past few years. There is no indication at this time that the level of funding will change but it is a possibility. However, the level of overall funding for the programme is dependent on our ability to secure suitable properties and local authorities’ acceptance of new refugee families. Funding is paid on a per person basis, therefore the amount of funding available to the refugee resettlement programme is based on the number of people that arrive. Funding is only paid on arrival, and so if people do not arrive at the expected rates or properties are not available, the flow of funding is disrupted (or could stop completely).



- 5.5 Due to the uncertainty surrounding how many families will be resettled, it is very difficult to predict the future funding of the programme (if funding pauses or stops, our budget will gradually deplete).
- 5.6 The value of the grant funding for 2025 - 2026 (based on existing families and expected arrivals) is estimated to be in the region of £1.1 – £1.5 million, with the possibility of an increased value of about £0.26 million for every five new families resettled. The procurement cost will be funded out of the indicative budget.
- 5.7 An in-house model will increase staffing commitments with associated cost risks in relation to redundancy. Staffing levels will need to flex up and down in line with the service requirements. An in-house model would require for a reasonable percentage of funding to be set aside as contingency in the budget to ensure that in the event of the schemes closure and/or funding ceases, the risk of calling on KCC funding is minimised.
- 5.8 An exercise has been carried out to assess projected expenditure of all delivery model options being considered. It revealed that there would be no significant difference in the cost of delivery between the two remaining options. As outlined above, any expenditure should be entirely within the ring-fenced Government grant that is attached to each individual refugee for the period that they are supported under the schemes. Any delivery model would require close budget monitoring and effective control mechanisms.
- 5.9 In a recent communication with the Home Office's Resettlement Services Payment Team, they indicated that the schemes *'funding does not cover redundancy costs within the outcomes as outlined within the Funding Instructions'*. However, we believe these costs should fall under 'eligible expenditure' as outlined in the sections of the Home Office Funding Instructions shown below:

*"Eligible Expenditure" means all costs, expenses, liabilities and obligations that are related to, incurred by or arise out of the delivery, activities and operations of the Purpose by the Recipient during the funding period 01 April 2023 to 31 March 2024 and which comply in all respects with the eligibility rules set out in this Instruction as determined by the Authority at its sole discretion.*"(From the UKRS Funding Instruction 2023.24.

We have escalated our request for clarity on this matter and requested a formal written statement to confirm the Home Office's stance on this. We are waiting for a response. This was an issue that the Corporate Management Team advised should be escalated as it is material to the decision about the option to take forward.

- 5.10 It has been identified that TUPE is likely to apply to either of the options being considered. Legal advice from Invicta law has confirmed that TUPE will apply in the following circumstances:
- Changes to commissioned provider following any recommissioning of the service (this would largely be dealt with between providers and would not financially impact on KCC)

- Bringing the service in-house (TUPE would apply to KCC and is likely to have financial implications)

We have been advised that TUPE would apply at the end of a contract even if we were to make some changes to the delivery model. This is because, however the service is delivered, the Government Funding Instructions would have to be adhered to and essentially much of the support provided would have to remain the same.

If future delivery is to bring all elements of the service in-house we would have to be prepared to transfer approximately 21.52 staff to KCC. KCC currently has an in-house Refugee Resettlement Team of 9 staff working directly on the schemes. Based on our proposed in-house staffing model a restructure after the TUPE process would be necessary.

As part of our budget for planning for 2024 – 2025 we have put aside adequate contingency amount to cover any TUPE liabilities related to an in-house model of delivery.

## **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 Those arriving on the schemes are granted long-term immigration status upon arrival and have permission to work and entitlement to mainstream statutory services and support. The funding for the schemes is in respect of Local Authority's cost in fulfilling its statutory duties. Funding provided must not be used for any purpose other than achieving delivery of the schemes outcomes as detailed in the Funding Instructions.
- 6.2 The Council owes a number of existing legal duties to arriving adults and children. These duties exist pursuant to a number of pieces of legislation that apply to Children and Adults.
- 6.3 If the service is recommissioned, the procurement process will adhere to The Public Contract Regulations (PCR) 2015 and Kent County Councils own Procurement Policy 'Spending the Council's Money'.
- 6.4 Legal advice on The Transfer of Undertakings Protection of Employment (TUPE) has been sought.

## **7. Equalities implications**

- 7.1 The basis of the schemes (bringing vulnerable refugees to resettle in the UK), settling them in specific locations that, as far as possible, reflect their needs and, further, the way the scheme operates in Kent to assess and meet individual needs (many of which are based on the protected characteristics) means that the equality needs of individual are met in as thorough way as possible. The service delivery model will take account of these needs, experience to date managing the scheme and consultation with refugees and partners.
- 7.2 The equalities impact assessment (shown in Appendix D) indicates there will be potential impacts but that these are minimal, and sufficiently off-set by

mitigation. The EQIA shall be kept under constant review and updated in relation to the delivery model being implemented.

## 8. Data Protection Implications

8.1 DPIAs will be completed alongside a successful recommissioning process or on implementation of an in-house model.

## 9. Governance

9.1 The Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance is accountable for the effective management of the Refugee Resettlement schemes and exercises delegated responsibilities given by the Chief Executive. The Director also reports to the Corporate Management for assurance purposes.

9.2 In terms of the Member accountability, the Refugee Resettlement schemes sit in the Portfolio of the Leader as the relevant Cabinet Member responsible for this function.

## 10. Conclusions

10.1 The review of the delivery model options highlights a number of key issues and risks that the Council need to take into account in the decision-making process. It also highlights both negatives and positives from all methods to deliver the service.

10.2 The proposed decision to go forward with the preferred option (recommissioning using a new commissioning delivery model) is informed by the relevant key factors highlighted in this report which are:

- Instability of the schemes funding streams and the inability to predict the number of families the team will be able to resettle going forward (although our current budget is stable over the next two years, with the addition of a healthy roll-forward from 2023/24)
- Increased staffing commitments with associated cost risks related to the in-house delivery model
- TUPE implications for any potential provider connected with recommissioning under a new model and cost of staff restructure related to in-house option.
- The new funding instructions for 2024 – 2025 have not yet been issued due to the election and subsequent change in government.
- The change in government could result in a shift in policy on refugee resettlement and/or changes to the funding arrangements.

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### Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to **CONSIDER** and **ENDORSE** or make **RECOMMENDATIONS** to the Leader of the Council on the proposed decision to:

1. **Approve** the acceptance of Home Office grant funding for the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and to determine the appropriate delivery model.
2. **Agree** to Kent County Council continuing to be the 'Lead Recipient' for the Home Office grant for all districts in Kent with the exception of Ashford, Canterbury and individuals resettled to the Ministry of Defence and Local Authority Housing Fund properties in Dover.
3. **Approve** that the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) be delivered based on the preferred option (recommissioning using a new commissioning delivery model).
4. **Delegate** authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision.

## 11. Background Documents

- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/afghan-schemes-funding-instructions-2023-to-2024>
- <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/uk-resettlement-programmes-funding-instruction-2023-to-2024>

## 12. Appendices

- 12.1 Appendix A – Proposed Record of Decision (PROD)
- 12.2 Appendix B – Overview of Refugee Resettlement Schemes and Number of families (and individuals) settled across all districts / boroughs in Kent.
- 12.3 Appendix C - Assessment Criteria and Scoring
- 12.4 Appendix D – Draft Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA)

## 13. Contact details

Report Author: Sian da Silva	Director: David Whittle
Job title: Refugee Resettlement Programme Lead (VPRS/UKRS/ARAP/ACRS)	Job title: Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance
Email address: <a href="mailto:sian.dasilva@kent.gov.uk">sian.dasilva@kent.gov.uk</a>	Email address: <a href="mailto:david.whittle@kent.gov.uk">david.whittle@kent.gov.uk</a>

# KENT COUNTY COUNCIL – PROPOSED RECORD OF DECISION

## DECISION TO BE TAKEN BY:

Roger Gough

The Leader of Kent County Council

## DECISION NO:

24/00071

**For publication** *[Do not include information which is exempt from publication under schedule 12a of the Local Government Act 1972]*

**Key decision: YES**

## Subject Matter / Title of Decision

Afghan Resettlement (ARAP and ACRS) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) – proposed service delivery from February 2025

## Decision:

As the Leader of the Council, I propose to:

1. **Approve** the acceptance of Home Office grant funding for the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and to determine the appropriate delivery model.
2. **Agree** to Kent County Council continuing to be the 'Lead Recipient' for the Home Office grant for all districts in Kent with the exception of Ashford, Canterbury and individuals resettled to the Ministry of Defence and Local Authority Housing Fund properties in Dover.
3. **Approve** that the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) be delivered based on the preferred option (recommissioning using a new commissioning delivery model).
4. **Delegate** authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision.

## Reason(s) for decision:

The current contract under which Kent County Council commissions a large part of the day-to-day resettlement and integration casework support for the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP), the Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) will come to an end on 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025.

There are two options for delivering the scheme from 1<sup>st</sup> February:

- (a) All service provision is moved in-house and delivered by an internal KCC team.
- (b) Recommissioning integration and casework support elements using a new commissioning

model to make it more likely that the service is delivered by one commissioned provider

A new commissioning model is the preferred option to be progressed.

The decision affects all Electoral Divisions.

The decision involves potential expenditure of over £1m.

**Cabinet Committee recommendations and other consultation:**

The proposed decision will be considered by the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on the 10<sup>th</sup> September 2024.

The Corporate Management Team were consulted on the 4<sup>th</sup> June 2024.

Consultation has also taken place with groups of the current cohort of refugees KCC is supporting, with the district housing authorities, with several voluntary groups, with current providers and other refugee resettlement teams.

Consultation with potential suppliers has also taken place via a series of market engagement events.

**Any alternatives considered and rejected:**

Other options considered but discarded:

- 1) Do Nothing. The current contracts will end on the 31<sup>st</sup> January 2025 and alternative provision for the existing refugee families will have to be sought until their time on the schemes comes to an end. If not, there is a risk of particularly vulnerable families who are not yet integrated, independent or self-sufficient falling through the net, becoming an added burden to local services.

Resettlement through 'safe and legal' routes continues to be a critical tool for refugees who face specific or urgent risks. Given the national expectation that all regions will contribute, it is anticipated that activity to support refugees will be a significant long-term area of work and focus for the Kent County Council and the District/Borough Councils going forward.

- 2) Recommission using the existing multiple provider commissioning model. The review of our current service delivery highlighted the disadvantages of using multiple commissioned providers to deliver the programme.

Each delivery model option was assessed using the same set criteria. The criteria and weighting were developed in relation to the scheme criteria, review of the current delivery model, consultation on our delivery model with key stakeholders, review of other refugee resettlement delivery models and analysis of key risks. This delivery model option scored the least against the assessment criteria and so was discounted.

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

.....  
signed

.....  
date

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## Appendix B – Overview of Refugee Resettlement Schemes & Data for Resettled Families Across Districts in Kent (as at 30th July 2024)

- **Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) (2015 – 2021).** In early 2021 the number of individuals resettled under the VPRS nationally exceeded 20,000, the original target for 2020. Although the VPRS officially ended in 2021, it merged seamlessly into the UKRS, an almost identical scheme to the VPRS but which resettles refugees from anywhere in the world. Legacy cases still being supported by the programme.
- **United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) (2021- ).** This scheme has global reach and has resettled over 2508 individuals<sup>1</sup> to the UK primarily from Syria, Iraq, Somalia, Sudan and Yemen. This scheme replaced the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme and was intended for use by any refugee group identified by UNHCR requiring resettlement and fulfilling the criteria of the scheme.
- **Afghan Relocation and Assistance Policy (ARAP) (2021- ).** This Scheme offers relocation and assistance to Afghan citizens who worked for or with the UK Government in Afghanistan in exposed or meaningful roles (such as interpreters and embassy staff). The Scheme launched in April 2021 and remains open. 15,592 individuals<sup>1</sup> have been relocated to the UK under the scheme (up to 23rd May 2024)
- **Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS) (2022- ).** The UK formally opened this scheme in January 2022 following the rapid withdrawal of troops from Afghanistan and the subsequent evacuation of ‘vulnerable’ individuals. The scheme has resettled 10,573 individuals<sup>1</sup> to the UK so far (up to 23rd May 2024).
- **Other similar refugee resettlement schemes** as may be introduced by government.
- **Community Sponsorship Scheme (2016- )** KCC’s Refugee Resettlement Team give approval, advice, and guidance only.

<sup>1</sup> *Afghan Resettlement Programme: operational data - GOV.UK* ([www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk))

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF FAMILIES RESETTLED UNDER VPRS AND UKRS				NUMBER OF FAMILIES RESETTLED UNDER ARAP AND ACRS			
	Families resettled	Individuals resettled	Families still open	Individuals still open	Families resettled	Individuals resettled	Families still open	Individuals still open
Dartford	3	12	0	0	4	14	4	14
Dover (KCC supported)	11	58	7	34	3	20	3	20
Folkestone & Hythe	7	31	0	0	16	85	14	73
Gravesham	2	11	2	11	4	29	4	28
Maidstone	2	11	1	4	8	44	8	44
Sevenoaks	8	35	3	15	8	37	8	37
Swale	14	75	3	13	2	19	2	19
Thanet	2	8	0	0	6	29	6	29
Tonbridge & Malling	10	45	5	23	1	7	1	7
Tunbridge Wells	11	54	1	5	4	21	4	21
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>70</b>	<b>340</b>	<b>22</b>	<b>105</b>	<b>56</b>	<b>305</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>292</b>

## Appendix C – Assessment Criteria and Scoring

### Criteria

Criteria	Description	Weighting
Cost	<p>The service needs to operate within the funding envelope.</p> <p>The service needs to provide value for money, maximising the impact of each pound spent to meet required outcomes for service users.</p>	20%
Delivery of schemes' outcomes within the requirements set by the Funding Instructions	The service needs to perform efficiently and meet the outcomes and requirements of the Funding Instructions	25%
Capacity and flexibility of service delivery	<p>The service requires experienced and skilled staff with the right knowledge to prepare, manage and deliver the requirements and achieve the outcomes set out by the Home Office.</p> <p>The service requires the ability to change according to demands of the schemes, government policy and react effectively to emerging issues.</p> <p>The service needs to be capable of operating effectively with variety partners and key services.</p>	20%
Strategic control of service	The ability for KCC to control the management and delivery of resettlement services in Kent.	17.5%
Risk	The extent to which the KCC is exposed to the risks of operating of the service delivery model.	17.5%

### Scoring

Score	Description
0	The model does not meet the criteria to any degree
1	The model does not meet the criteria in a number of key areas and has a significant number of disadvantages.
2	The model does not meet the criteria to in a number of areas
3	The model meets the criteria satisfactorily and has some disadvantages
4	The model meets the criteria to a significant degree, with the Home Office and council's requirements
5	The model meets the criteria fully, in line with the Home Office and council's requirements

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## EQIA Submission – ID Number

### Section A

**EQIA Title**

Refugee Resettlement Programme

**Responsible Officer**

Sian Da Silva - CED SPRCA

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

Michael Thomas-Sam - CED SPRCA

### Type of Activity

**Service Change**

No

**Service Redesign**

Service Redesign

**Project/Programme**

No

**Commissioning/Procurement**

Commissioning/Procurement

**Strategy/Policy**

No

**Details of other Service Activity**

No

### Accountability and Responsibility

**Directorate**

Strategic and Corporate Services

**Responsible Service**

Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance

**Responsible Head of Service**

Michael Thomas-Sam - CED SPRCA

**Responsible Director**

David Whittle - CED SPRCA

### Aims and Objectives

This EQIA (Equality Impact Assessment) is the assessment of the statutory duties Equality, Diversity and protected characteristics in relation to the way KCC is proposing to provide, either via an in-house team or through commissioning an external provider, elements of the support to refugees settling in Kent. It is a live document and will be updated as a decision is made in relation to finalising which specific service delivery model is agreed upon.

Housing authorities (the district/borough/city councils in Kent) are responsible for decisions on the number of refugee families to be resettled in their area and for the housing to be used. With regard to the resettlement support, it was agreed that KCC should co-ordinate the service in partnership with those districts/borough councils that wished to take part. Ten districts have opted to use the KCC scheme. Ashford Borough Council and Canterbury City Council decided to provide the support directly themselves and from February 2025, Dover will also support any new families resettled in their area. KCC will continue to support those existing families in Dover it already works with until such a time as they leave the scheme.

The number of families resettling in Kent depends on acceptance by each district housing authority, the flow of referrals from the Home Office Resettlement Team and the availability of suitable accommodation in the county.

Individuals resettled under the scheme are given three to five years Refugee status or Indefinite Leave to Remain depending on the scheme they are supported under, and as such can work, rent, claim benefits and other public funds from day one. The Home Office has specified in the Funding Instructions what support needs to be in place for the families resettled under the schemes they support, currently the– United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS), formerly the Vulnerable Persons Resettlement Scheme (VPRS) and the two pathways for Afghan citizens, the Afghan Relocation and Assistance Programme (ARAP) and Afghan Citizens Resettlement Scheme (ACRS).

The support provided is expected to be intensive in the initial weeks following arrival and then to decrease gradually as the family integrates into their local community and settles into their new home. Accommodation is normally provided in the private rented sector. The families can claim Housing Benefit/Universal Credit for housing costs and benefits for daily living costs, depending on their circumstances. If they can take up employment these benefits will reduce over time, depending on levels of earnings.

The proposed direct support service will either be provided through a new commissioning model to make it more likely that the service is delivered by one commissioned provider (currently three providers deliver the service across Kent), or through the implementation of an internal KCC team. The support consists of immediate assistance to families upon their arrival in the UK with settling into accommodation and assistance to access immediate services and support deemed necessary. The service will then continue to provide casework support to families for a three-to five-year period from their arrival in the UK, (dependant on relevant scheme terms). This would include the development and implementation of an Integration Support Plan (ISP) for each family, enabling them to access all the services and support they require (either from mainstream services or bespoke provision under the scheme). The individual nature of the integration plan takes into consideration each individuals circumstances and particular needs, therefore protected characteristics and equality are at the core of the teams’ function and method of working.

Whichever delivery model is finally agreed upon, KCC will retain the coordination and management of the scheme and district housing authorities will remain responsible for decisions on the number of refugee families to be resettled and for the housing to be used. The KCC Refugee Resettlement Team will be responsible for monitoring and delivering the service provided either by use of an internal direct support team or through use of the newly commissioned provider, measuring delivery against the scheme funding instructions and ISP for each person and tailoring support in accordance with progression and outcomes towards integration into mainstream services within the UK.

The basis of the scheme (bringing vulnerable refugees to resettle in the UK), settling them in specific locations that, as far as possible, reflect their needs and, further, the way the scheme operates in Kent to assess and meet individual needs (many of which are based on the protected characteristics) means that the equality needs of individual are met in as thorough way as possible. The service delivery model will take account of these needs, experience to date managing the scheme and consultation with refugees and partners.

## **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?**

Internal review of the current provision took place in 2023. Evidence was sought of the experience and outcomes of the current support through consultation with individual clients and family groups supported under the schemes, district housing authorities, current commissioned providers, voluntary organisations who had direct contact with the scheme and clients we support, other organisations who were involved with our clients such as Health, Adult Education, Education etc. as well as looking at best practice from other refugee resettlement teams and their models in use via LAs across the UK.

**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**

Awareness of the protected characteristics of our clients, understanding their background, culture, ethnicity and personal experience are the core blocks on which our support is delivered. The basis of the schemes (bringing vulnerable refugees to resettle in the UK), settling them in specific locations that, as far as possible, reflect their needs and, further, the way the scheme operates in Kent to assess and meet individual needs (many of which are based on the protected characteristics) means that the equality needs of individual are met in as thorough way as possible.

Sex/Marriage – In particular for female clients – care is taken to seek the needs and input of female clients and to address inequalities where these are found either as a result of previous gender inequality or cultural norms. These are tackled in a culturally sensitive way but allow choice through education on the law and rights in the UK.

Culture and Faith – clients’ culture and faith is taken into consideration when placing them in accommodation which has facilities suitable for their needs where at all possible and support provided is specifically designed to ensure these needs are understood through training and cultural and religious awareness.

Disability/Age – before arrival, individual care needs are investigated and addressed to ensure needs are met and barriers are addressed where at all possible

Children and Caring– Where barriers exist for example access to services such as education, English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL), employment and training as well as integration to the local community, both support models provide specific support to ensure caring responsibilities do not negatively impact those to whom this applies through create use of funding and resources and enabling access to services where at all possible.

**Negative impacts and Mitigating Actions**

19.Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Age

<b>Are there negative impacts for age?</b>
Yes
<b>Details of negative impacts for Age</b>
Older refugees often find it more difficult to learn English, hindering their integration into their new communities.
<b>Mitigating Actions for Age</b>
Consideration will be taken during the creation of Integration Support Plans to consider current literacy and education levels in relation to age and the ability to learn an additional language. Where necessary, inventive and alternative support will be introduced to ensure the ability of clients of all ages to participate in education in English which will ensure better integration to the UK.
<b>Responsible Officer for Mitigating Actions – Age</b>
Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry
<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>
Availability of accessible housing.  The lack of available accessible private rental or social housing is extremely limited meaning choice of accommodation and location is less for those with a disability.
<b>Mitigating actions for Disability</b>
Where possible, Kent County Council utilises available funding and with support from local housing authorities utilises this budget to fund adaptations where necessary to ensure properties meet the needs of the individuals being placed. Properties that are not suitable for those with disabilities and are not adaptable will be ruled out before families are placed.
<b>Responsible Officer for Disability</b>
Sian da Silva, Colin Green, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry
<b>21. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
<b>Are there negative impacts for Sex</b>
Yes
<b>Details of negative impacts for Sex</b>
Gender roles vary between cultures. There is a risk that some female refugees may be less able to engage with the integration support offered due to their culturally defined gender role.  Some refugees may arrive from countries where gender discrimination and abuse is condoned or tolerated by authorities and society. Whilst the UK may have laws to prevent gender discrimination and abuse, it still exists and refugees arriving through the schemes may be particularly vulnerable to this due to their previous experiences. This could manifest in the following ways: 1. Gender discrimination and abuse within a refugee family on the schemes. 2. Gender discrimination and abuse by individual refugees toward members of the local community. 3. Gender discrimination and abuse by individual refugees toward staff working on the schemes. 4. Gender discrimination and abuse by members of the local community and/or general public towards refugee families.
<b>Mitigating actions for Sex</b>
Integration Support Plans will be created for all clients taking into consideration their individual needs. Female refugees who may be experiencing barriers due to their gender will be supported to engage with services that are available to them, especially those that are culturally sensitive to nurturing female independence.  The programme will deliver a range of workshops and translated materials to all refugee families on the schemes covering their rights and responsibilities in the UK, including the consequences for gender



discrimination and abuse.

If, despite these efforts, refugee families are subject to, or subject others to, gender discrimination and abuse this will be reported through the appropriate avenues.

**Responsible Officer for Sex**

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

**22. Negative Impacts and Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

**Are there negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Gender identity/transgender**

Individuals and families on the schemes may arrive from countries where transgender discrimination and abuse is condoned or tolerated by authorities and society. Whilst the UK may have laws to prevent transgender discrimination and abuse, it still exists and refugees on the scheme may be particularly vulnerable to this due to their previous experiences.

This could manifest in the following ways:

1. Transgender discrimination and abuse within a refugee family on the schemes.
2. Transgender discrimination and abuse by individuals on the schemes toward members of the local community.
3. Transgender discrimination and abuse by individuals on the schemes toward staff.
4. Transgender discrimination and abuse by members of the local community and/or general public toward individuals on the schemes.

**Mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Education will be available to all clients in relation to legalities relating to gender identity and transgender discrimination and expectations from clients in relation to this will be provided.

A confidential and supportive relationship between support worker and client will be fostered so as to ensure any clients who wish to divulge issues related to gender identity or sexuality are able to do so.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Gender identity/transgender**

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

**23. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Race**

**Are there negative impacts for Race**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Race**

Immigration policy in the UK is a divisive topic, which can bring discrimination and racist abuse. Being a predominately white European area of Kent, settlement for those from different cultural and racial backgrounds can be more complex due to differences in services and cultural norms. Racist abuse and the targeting of clients due to their race does occur.

Different ethnicities within the cohorts we support are also at risk of marginalisation, either through lack of sufficient relevant interpretation for their specific dialects but also due to the inequality experienced between certain minorities from their country of origin. E.g. Hazara clients who are a minority group from Afghanistan and culturally in the country of origin are seen as 'lower-class' and often experience high levels of racism from others within our client group.

**Mitigating actions for Race**

Taking race inequality into consideration when placing families in Kent ensures where possible access to relevant cultural services and aims to avoid isolation from supportive communities and other support networks.

Tackling education on racial abuse and engaging with relevant partners such as Police and Prevent ensure where possible mitigations are in place to ensure the safety of clients we support who may be subject to racial targeting.

A variety of translation services will be used by wither model of the resettlement team to ensure relevant dialect translators are available to support as many clients from as wide a background as possible.

Particular consideration will be taken to ensure issues of racial targeting due to different ethnicities within our cohort are tackled directly. Education of the law within the UK, the risk of prosecution and withdrawal of support will also be explained to families to ensure they understand why previous norms are not acceptable in the UK.

Where acts of racism against the general community are identified perpetrated by our client cohort, these will also be tackled through an explanation of the issue and its unacceptability within the UK.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Race**

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

**24. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Religion and belief**

**Are there negative impacts for Religion and belief**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Religion and belief**

Being a predominately white European area of Kent, settlement for those from different religious backgrounds can be more complex due to differences in services and cultural norms. Lack of mosque facilities, unavailability of Halal food stores can be a barrier for some families and can lead to feelings of isolation. Tackling education on misinformation in relation to other faiths and engaging with relevant partners such as Schools, Police and Prevent ensures where possible, mitigations are in place to ensure the safety of clients we support who may be subject to targeting from extremists.

**Mitigating actions for Religion and belief**

Where possible, housing is sought where the maximum number of religious facilities are available, and consideration of these religious needs takes place when orientating clients to the local area and its available facilities.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Religion and Belief**

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

**25. Negative impacts and Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

**Are there negative impacts for Sexual Orientation**

Yes

**Negative impacts for Sexual Orientation**

Refugees may arrive from countries where sexual orientation discrimination and abuse is condoned or tolerated by authorities and society. Whilst the UK may have laws to prevent sexual orientation discrimination and abuse, it still exists and refugees may be particularly vulnerable to this due to their previous experiences.

**Mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

Education will be available to all clients in relation to LGBTQ+ issues, legalities relating to gender identity and sexuality and expectations from clients in relation to this will be provided.

A confidential and supportive relationship between support worker and client will be fostered so as to ensure any clients who wish to divulge issues related to gender identity or sexuality are able to do so.

**Responsible Officer for mitigating actions for Sexual Orientation**

Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry
<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>
Due to the widespread nature of our accommodation, lack of wider social circle and extended family means those with caring responsibilities can become isolated.
<b>Mitigating actions for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Where possible, funding is used to alleviate the burden of caring responsibilities, particularly for women and to factor in support where at all possible to ensure fair access to services is still possible for those with caring responsibilities.
<b>Responsible Officer for Carer's responsibilities</b>
Sian da Silva, Lisa Howell, Katherine Barry

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**From:** Roger Gough, Leader of the Council  
Amanda Beer, Chief Executive

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee, 10 September 2024

**Subject:** Annual Equality & Diversity Report 2023-24

**Classification:** Unrestricted

**Past Pathway of report:** Corporate Management Team

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

**Summary:**

This report sets out progress against Kent County Council's six Equality Objectives, as set out within Framing Kent's Future, which is a statutory requirement under the Equality Act 2010.

**Recommendation:**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to approve the Annual Equality & Diversity Report for 2023-24, attached as Appendix A.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 introduced the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED), which came into force in April 2011. It requires public bodies to have due regard to the need to:
- a. Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Equality Act;
  - b. Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not;
  - c. Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not (the protected characteristics are age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion or belief, marriage and civil partnership, sex and sexual orientation).
- 1.2 In addition, the Equality Act regulations require that public authorities publish:
- a. One or more 'equality objectives', at least every four years.
  - b. Annual 'equality information' to demonstrate their compliance with the general duty.
- 1.3 The 'Annual Equality & Diversity' report appended to this paper discharges the council's statutory duty to produce and publish annual 'equality information'.

## 2. Equality Objectives

2.1 The 2023-24 Annual Equality & Diversity report marks the second year of monitoring our progress against our current Corporate Equality Objectives (2022-26), as set out within Framing Kent's Future.

2.2 There are six Equality Objectives, four of which are primarily outward facing and two of which are inward looking, concerning our workforce. These are:

- Strengthen our equality data collection and analysis across our services to better understand people's needs and the cumulative impact of the council's actions on people with protected characteristics.
- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chains, including our trading companies.
- Ensure council information and services are accessible for everyone including those who are digitally excluded.
- Work with our strategic partnerships to understand and support the diverse needs of our communities.
- Continue to be an inclusive employer which provides fair, open and equitable access to career progression and a trusted environment in which staff feel confident to call out discriminatory behaviour.
- Attract and retain a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation which reflects the communities that KCC serves.

2.3 Our equality objectives are broad and cross-cutting, enabling a unified approach to delivery and reporting across the council. The same approach has been taken in the compilation of the 2023-24 report as the previous year. Data has been obtained from key teams across the council in line with the measurement mechanisms set out within the objectives' framework<sup>1</sup>, and supplemented with information received via a call-out to directorates for service examples that have contributed to our objectives in the period. Directorates were asked to respond to each of the Equality Objectives where possible for their services, which has enabled the development of a cross-directorate picture of our performance.

## 3. Annual Review

3.1 As the second year reporting against our 2022-2026 Equality Objectives, this report has enabled us to build upon and measure against the baseline that was established in the 2022-23 report. We have therefore been able to develop a useful temperature check of our performance across objectives and highlight areas of success with a number of case studies from our services. This included examples of detailed equality analysis and routine collection of protected characteristic data; the delivery of equality outcomes via key

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<sup>1</sup> The framework was developed by Strategy, Policy, Relationships & Corporate Assurance (SPRCA) and informed by engagement with the Corporate Equality Group (CEG) and individuals and teams across the council in order to sense-check proposed measurement mechanisms. This is a live internal working document that will continue to be refreshed over the lifetime of the objectives.

contracts; extensive and detailed examples of how barriers to access experienced by diverse groups have been addressed; a continued focus on mitigating digital exclusion within service delivery, and utilisation of our strategic partnerships to support our wider equality objectives and ambitions. Within the Human Resources and Organisational Development (HR/OD) service, a range of measures were implemented in support of our workforce objectives and in response to the findings of the annual People Strategy progress report. This included investment in developing inclusive leadership and management, work to ensure new recruits are receiving the support they need when joining KCC and continued activity to attract young people to the organisation. The key observations from this year's report are summarised below.

- 3.2 Information and analysis in support of the Equality Objective related to **equality data collection and analysis** (section 3) has demonstrated a continued high level of engagement with this activity, however has indicated that there is still room for improvement. Whilst information from directorates indicates that services have been proactively collecting equality data, there is more work to be done in this area in order to build fuller pictures of service users' or communities' needs to inform effective service delivery. Additionally, whilst increasing numbers of Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are being completed, this report has highlighted that further work is required to improve officer compliance with the full EqIA App process. Previously, the annual reports have focused activity toward improving the proportion of Key Decisions which are supported by an EqIA; the success of this has been evident in 2023-24, with an improvement to 93% compliance with this, from 66% in 2022-23. It is hoped that this year's report will be an equally effective driver to improve other aspects of EqIA policy performance, supported by a range of activity to improve staff awareness of their accountabilities in the EqIA process in the coming year. This activity will be informed by engagement with the Corporate Management Team (CMT) on the priority areas for improvement identified in the compliance review.
- 3.4 The council's strongest area of performance continued to be seen in section 5, which concerns the Equality Objective related to the **accessibility of council information and services and digital exclusion**. Once again, more positive examples of how services and information had been made accessible were supplied by our directorates than it was possible to include within the report. In support of continuous improvement, our priority will be highlighting and fostering this success between services, and working to identify how we could be more aspirational in the delivery of this Equality Objective.
- 3.5 Compared with the previous year, the Equality Objective relating to **strategic partnerships** (section 6) saw the greatest level of improvement in 2023-24. Directorates provided extensive examples of how partnership working has supported our ambitions across the other objectives. In addition, the introduction of an online questionnaire aimed at KCC officers participating in local strategic partnerships has provided an improved understanding of how our strategic partnerships are contributing to equality outcomes more broadly. There is the potential to drill-down further into the data obtained via this questionnaire to identify untapped opportunities to achieve equality outcomes or promote equality data sharing and learning. There are also significant

opportunities for improvement with regard to the **commissioning, procurement and trading companies** Equality Objective (section 4), with planned activity in the coming year in support of achieving equality outcomes within commissioning and procurement activity, and the positive upward trajectory set during the period by the Commercial Services Group (CSG).

- 3.6 The **workforce objectives** discussed in section 7 and 8 demonstrate an overall positive picture in terms of KCC's inclusivity and the diversity of its workforce, which has remained largely consistent compared with the previous year. Whilst incremental positive changes have begun to be seen, the council acknowledges that due to the nature of culture change, the impact of workforce activity is likely to be seen in the longer term and will need to continue to be monitored. Any further consideration of progress against the measurement mechanisms captured within these objectives will be taken forward by Personnel Committee.

#### **4. Looking Ahead**

- 4.1 Looking ahead, we will continue to work with the Corporate Equality Group (CEG) and our services to further develop our ambitions and deliver on our priorities for the future, as well as exploring new data sources in more detail and establishing further measurement mechanisms to enhance our understanding of our performance. This will encapsulate a range of activity over the course of 2024-25 and into the future, however, as touched on in the previous section, some of the key activities will include:

- Engagement with CMT regarding the findings of the EqIA Policy review to highlight priority areas for improvement and inform action to be taken forward.
- Presentation of the report findings to CEG in order to formulate and take forward any actions in conjunction with our service divisions as appropriate. This will include consideration of how we could be more aspirational in the delivery of the Equality Objective relating to the accessibility of our information and services and promote best practice.
- Delivery of planned activity within the commissioning and procurement Equality Objective to establish additional metrics and support the development of staff understanding of equality considerations within commissioning and procurement activity.
- Utilisation of the rich new data source represented by the information gathered from the new Strategic Partnership Register form, and consideration of any untapped opportunities for further equality outcomes.

#### **5. Financial Implications**

- 5.1 There are no financial implications.

#### **6. Legal implications**

- 6.1 Under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) (Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010), the Council is required to publish 'equality information', detailing how it has met its general duties, and performance against its 'equality objectives' on



an annual basis. This Annual Equality & Diversity report discharges these duties for 2023-24.

## 7. Equalities implications

- 7.1 The Annual Equality & Diversity report considers progress against KCC's Equality Objectives, which were designed to support our delivery of the PSED. As such, alongside the fulfilment of our statutory duties under the Equality Act 2010, this report will enable the identification of the council's priorities for improving its performance with the PSED over the coming years. As the report relates to performance monitoring of the previous year's work there is no requirement to undertake an EqIA.

## 8. Conclusions

- 8.1 As the second year that KCC has reported against the 2022-2026 Equality Objectives, the annual report has evidenced how the council has progressed against the baseline data established in the previous year. This has been enabled by the strategic and cross-cutting nature of the objectives, and the breadth of quantitative measurement mechanisms that have been utilised. Anecdotal information received from our services has also supported this, and in combination highlighted our strengths and priority areas for improvement across the six objectives. As the reporting process has been brought forward this year, it will enable us to more proactively begin to act on our priorities, working in collaboration with the Corporate Equality Group and our service divisions.

## 9. Recommendation:

- 9.1 The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to approve the Annual Equality and Diversity Report for 2023-24, attached as Appendix A.

## 10. Contact details

### Report Authors:

Laura McPherson  
Policy Officer - Equality  
03000 415726  
[laura.mcpherson@kent.gov.uk](mailto:laura.mcpherson@kent.gov.uk)

Karla Phillips  
Corporate Lead - Business Planning &  
Corporate Policy  
03000 410315  
[karla.phillips@kent.gov.uk](mailto:karla.phillips@kent.gov.uk)

### Relevant Director:

David Whittle  
Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships  
& Corporate Assurance  
03000 416883  
[david.whittle@kent.gov.uk](mailto:david.whittle@kent.gov.uk)

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# Kent County Council

## Annual Equality and Diversity Report for April 2023 to March 2024

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## Useful information

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Email: [alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk](mailto:alternativeformats@kent.gov.uk)

Phone with Text relay: 18001 03000 414141

Or write to: Kent County Council, Room 2.70, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent, ME14 1XQ

# 1. Executive Summary

- 1.1 This report provides the detail of how the council has complied with the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024. In addition to discharging the council's duties under the Equality Act 2010, this report is intended to highlight areas of success and support the identification of priority areas for improvement, including where specific action or additional measurement mechanisms are required. The findings of this report are a vital tool for KCC in ensuring the continuous improvement of our equalities performance.
- 1.2 In line with KCC's 2022-2026 Equality Objectives, as published in [Framing Kent's Future](#), this report considers the council's performance with equalities across equality data collection and analysis; procurement and commissioning; accessibility of information and services; strategic partnership working and the inclusivity and diversity of the workforce. In the assessment of our performance across the Equality Objectives, both the trends emerging from quantitative data obtained from specific services, and anecdotal information on equalities activities from directorates have been considered.
- 1.3 A summary of the headline issues emerging across the six Equality Objectives is detailed below.

**Strengthen our equality data collection and analysis across our services to better understand people's needs and the cumulative impact of the council's actions on people with protected characteristics.**

- Whilst 91% of the EqlAs published during 2023-24 utilised data on the protected groups impacted, 72% utilised national data/evidence. For both data types, this is a substantial increase on the previous year. Closer analysis has shown that the comparatively lower use of national data/evidence largely reflects the activity type being assessed. This will continue to be monitored, with action taken to promote the value of national/evidence in EqlAs as required.
- Across 2023-24 EqlAs, the greatest number of potential negative impacts (and mitigating actions) were identified for disability, age, race and carers responsibilities, whilst the fewest were identified for marriage/civil partnership, sexual orientation and religion. This is largely consistent with the previous year (with the addition of race and religion). As such, awareness-raising of potential impacts to protected characteristic groups less frequently identified within EqlAs will be a potential focus for the coming year.
- There has been a significant improvement in the proportion of Key Decisions that have included an EqlA as an attachment in 2023-24, to 93%, from 66% in the previous year. This success will need to be sustained into the future. Despite this, many of the EqlAs attached to 2023-24 Key Decisions had not been taken through the full EqlA App process and were therefore not compliant with KCC's policy (51%). Work will be undertaken in

	<p>the coming year to disseminate these results and remind officers of the processes that they are expected to follow.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Wider review of compliance with the EqIA Policy has identified that staff awareness of the policy requirements will need to be improved in 2024-25. The majority of Responsible Officers and Heads of Service involved in EqIAs in the period had not completed the required e-learning module and the action plan process had not been followed for any of the EqIAs published in 2023-24.</li> <li>• The report demonstrates that engagement with data collection and analysis opportunities across the council's services remains high, with particular emphasis on assessing data to identify areas of underrepresentation amongst service users. Compared to the previous year, the breadth of equality data analysis examples was more limited; improving how we evidence progress under this objective will therefore be a focus for the future.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chains, including our trading companies.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quantitative analysis of our performance under this objective during 2023-24 was limited by the extent of measurement mechanisms currently in place, however we have been able to identify that 100% commissioning and procurement Key Decisions in the period were supported by an EqIA, which is greater than the average across Key Decisions, and an improvement on the previous year.</li> <li>• Whilst the report has highlighted a range of examples of where the council promoted equality, diversity and inclusion via its supply chains in 2023-24, these were less varied than in the previous year's report.</li> <li>• In the coming year, progress with this objective will need to be supported by activity to develop how equality is considered within commissioning and procurement processes, and to extend our measurement mechanisms to bolster our understanding of performance in this area.</li> <li>• There has been significant improvement in the Commercial Services Group (CSG)'s equality profile when compared to the previous year, in addition to an extensive range of activity delivered by CSG in support of equality, diversity and inclusion.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Ensure council information and services are accessible for everyone including those who are digitally excluded.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The council continues to see its greatest area of success within this objective, with extensive and detailed examples available of how council information and services were made accessible during 2023-24. Highlights from the period include the consideration of physical accessibility in service planning; a range of activity to mitigate invisible barriers across Resettlement Schemes and award-winning work within the Kent Downs team. Looking ahead, our priority will be to work</li> </ul>

	<p>with services to share best practice and understand how we could build on this success and become more aspirational within this objective.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Of the complaints received in the period, there were eleven categorised as Equality and Regulatory which were upheld, with lessons learned recorded and action taken. It was not possible to identify any compliments received that related to the council providing support to meet individuals' needs during 2023-24, however this will continue to be monitored looking ahead.</li> <li>• This year has seen a focus on supporting the digital accessibility needs of our staff.</li> <li>• In comparison to the previous year, the number of requests fulfilled by the Alternative Formats team has fallen. The broad range of examples of where information has been made more accessible in the period suggest that this may be a result of officers utilising more informal channels to facilitate service users' communication needs. 2023-24 also saw some shifts in the top language translation requests fulfilled by the team.</li> <li>• Digital exclusion continues to be well embedded within equality analysis for 2023-24, with an extensive range of examples of how this has been mitigated and physical options retained in the period.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Work with our strategic partnerships to understand and support the diverse needs of our communities</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• This objective has seen the greatest level of improvement on the previous year, with an extensive range of case studies highlighting the work undertaken within KCC's Strategic Partnerships and more informal partnership working that has supported our ambitions under our other equality objectives.</li> <li>• In addition, 2023-24 has seen the introduction of a Strategic Partnership Register survey, which has enabled the collection of key equality data related to KCC's Strategic Partnerships. The responses received to the survey suggest that 73% of our Strategic Partnerships have an equalities focus or have made some kind of equality considerations, and that 47% have conducted a partnership EqIA. In addition to indicating the potential equality impacts our Strategic Partnerships are having, looking ahead, this will also enable us to identify untapped opportunities and promote best practice.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Continue to be an inclusive employer which provides fair, open and equitable access to career progression and a trusted environment in</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Positive responses to questions around 'Inclusion and Fair Treatment' remained high at 82.1% in the 2023 Staff Survey. However, disabled staff continued to answer less positively, and there was also a small decline in the positive responses about whether employees felt that positive action would be taken in response to individual needs and personal circumstances.</li> </ul>

which staff feel confident to call out discriminatory behaviour.

- Analysis of the 2023-24 TCP ratings demonstrated minimal change from the previous year. Areas of disparity still exist for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, disabled staff, and older and younger staff (aged over 65, and 25 and under). With the introduction of the new pay structure in April 2025, the equity of application will be monitored and findings reported in next year's report.
- The number of workplace adjustments and Inclusion Passports in place has risen significantly. This is demonstrative of their successful promotion in previous years, which will continue in order to ensure our staff are accessing the support they need at work.
- The equality profile of new starts to the apprenticeship levy scheme in 2023-24 paints a positive picture, with only small levels of underrepresentation amongst disabled staff, transgender staff, LGBTQ+ staff and male staff when compared to our overall workforce profile. The Staff Survey saw slight increases in the proportion of employees who felt they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities to support their role. Despite this, disabled staff have continued to respond less positively to questions relating to Learning and Development, whilst staff aged 35 and under continued to respond more positively.
- Staff Survey 2023 responses regarding bullying/harassment showed consistent trends on the previous year. Whilst staff reported that they were highly likely to report an incident, there was some disparity for some of the protected groups. Disabled staff and LGBTQ+ staff also continued to report in the Staff Survey that they experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work at higher levels.

Attract and retain a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation which reflects the communities that KCC serves.

- In 2023-24, KCC retained its workforce diversity, which remains broadly reflective of the Kent county profile, with modest increases in the proportion of disabled, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQ+ staff within the workforce. Work will continue to support staff attraction and retention in order to further narrow remaining areas of disparity. There have also been slight improvements to the diversity of KC's leadership group in the period.
- KCC's 12-month rolling turnover has fallen to 11.9%, with decreases also seen across the protected characteristic groups. This has fallen most significantly for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, from 22.1% in 2022-23, to 16.7% in 2023-24.
- KCC job applicant demographics for 2023-24 remained largely consistent with the previous year, however there was an increase in the proportion of applicants who were Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic and applicants with a faith/religion. Furthermore, across a number of protected characteristic



groups, KCC has attracted a more diverse pool of candidates compared to our workforce profile. In support of continuous improvement, activity to attract disabled individuals and people aged 16-25 to apply to work for KCC will continue.

- Extensive activity has been undertaken in support of staff attraction and retention, and the resulting culture change can take time to be realised and reflected in our workforce data. As such, the impact of these measures will continue to be reviewed over the coming years.

*Figure 1: 2023-24 Annual Equality & Diversity Report Executive Summary*

- 1.4 In addition to celebrating areas of best practice, the 2023-24 report has provided a temperature check of our progress two years into our current set of Equality Objectives. This has supported the identification of priority objectives for improvement and where there is scope to be more aspirational in our ambitions for delivery. Additionally, the findings of this year's report can be used to inform the development of our approach to data collection and analysis in support of our progress monitoring and identification of key areas for improvement.
- 1.5 As such, looking ahead, work will be undertaken at various levels across the organisation to share learning, further develop our aspirations and action the recommendations for continuous improvement as detailed within this report. This will involve engagement with our services, Corporate Equality Group (CEG) and Corporate Management Team (CMT) to shape activity over the remainder of 2024-25.

## 2. Introduction

### The Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)

2.1 As a public authority, Kent County Council (KCC) must comply with the **Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED)** under the Equality Act 2010. The PSED includes both general duties, and specific duties. In the exercise of its functions, the **general duty** requires KCC to have paid due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited in the Act,
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic<sup>1</sup>, and those who do not,
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic, and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.

2.2 The **specific duties** under the PSED require that the council publishes annual Gender Pay Gap information, annual **'equality information'** to demonstrate their compliance with the general duty and one or more **'equality objectives'** in support of the achievement of the general duty, at least every four years.

2.3 This **Annual Equality & Diversity Report** acts as the **'equality information'** to demonstrate the detail of how the council has complied with this equality legislation between 1 April 2023 and 31 March 2024, including progress and activities that contributed to **KCC's 2022-2026 Equality Objectives**.

### KCC's Equality Objectives (2022-2026)

2.4 With the publication of **Framing Kent's Future**, KCC included its Equality Objectives within its Strategic Statement for the first time. This decision was made in order to demonstrate the council's commitment to delivering on these objectives and to highlight the centrality of equalities to the council's wider goals and ambitions for 2022-26.

2.5 For 2022-2026, KCC has six **Equality Objectives**, four of which are outward-looking and concern our residents and service users, and two of which are inward-looking, concerning our workforce:

- Strengthen our equality data collection and analysis across our services to better understand people's needs and the cumulative impact of the council's actions on people with protected characteristics.

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<sup>1</sup> The protected characteristics are Age, Disability, Gender reassignment, Marriage/civil partnership, Pregnancy/maternity, Race, Religion/belief, Sex, and Sexual orientation. KCC have also made a commitment to consider the impact on people with Carers responsibilities as part of their equality analysis, although this is not a characteristic which is protected under the Equality Act 2010.

- Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chains, including our trading companies.
- Ensure council information and services are accessible for everyone including those who are digitally excluded.
- Work with our strategic partnerships to understand and support the diverse needs of our communities.
- Continue to be an inclusive employer which provides fair, open and equitable access to career progression and a trusted environment in which staff feel confident to call out discriminatory behaviour.
- Attract and retain a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation which reflects the communities that KCC serves.

2.6 These objectives are broad, strategic and embrace a range of activity across the council's directorates and services, marking a shift in approach on the previous set of **Equality Objectives** for 2016-20, which were largely service specific. This new approach enables a unified, council-wide approach to achieving our objectives, as each objective largely translates to service delivery across directorates.

2.7 For 2023-24 the report will take you through each of the **Equality Objectives** methodically, starting with the outward facing objectives, and finishing with the workforce objectives. To inform this year's report, our Directorates, Adult Social Care & Health (ASCH), Children, Young People & Education (CYPE) and Growth, Environment & Transport (GET) were asked to respond to each of the Equality Objectives, where possible for their services. This has enabled the development of a cross-directorate picture of performance for each of the Equality Objectives. In addition, some specific Corporate services (within the Chief Executive's Department (CED) and Deputy Chief Executive's Department (DCED)) were asked to provide information to further support this cross-directorate picture of our performance.

2.8 As the first year that KCC reported against the new Equality Objectives, the 2022-23 report established a baseline against which future activity could be measured; to support our understanding of the council's progress, comparative quantitative data has been provided within this report wherever possible for each objective. This report will thereby also support our understanding of where additional measurement mechanisms are required and help to identify what our areas of focus should be for the 2024-25 year and into the future of these objectives. To enable the council to more proactively act on the findings of this report, the reporting process has been brought forward this year.

### 3. Strengthen our equality data collection and analysis across our services to better understand people's needs and the cumulative impact of the council's actions on people with protected characteristics.

- 3.1 In our approach to this Equality Objective, we have considered information available on the current status of equality data collection across services; key EqlA App Dashboard data from 2023-24; compliance with the EqlA policy; the types of data that have been used by services to inform service delivery and equality analysis, and the additional learning opportunities that have been made available to support staff understanding of the needs of people with protected characteristics. This has been supplemented with a review of the equality profile of Let's Talk Kent registrations and participants in the 2023 Annual Budget Consultation to understand how far these were representative of our county profile.

#### Strengthening our equality data collection

##### KCC Equality Data Collection

- 3.2 Wherever possible, our services collect equality information about our service users as a standard practice, to support our understanding of which groups are using our services and inform improvements<sup>2</sup>. Examples from 2023-24 include:
- Our **library service** collects this data from all service users, including those engaging with Home Library and Mobile Library services, as well as collating learning from any complaints related to equality or diversity.
  - The **18+ Leavers Service** holds an annual survey to collect feedback on care leavers' experience of the service; in 2023-24, this saw a record number of participants with 677 responses.
  - The **Household Waste Recycling Centres'** Winter 2023-24 customer satisfaction survey saw just over 5,000 responses, with 33 comments received relating to equality; 21 were regarding age (elderly) and 12 regarding disability. Whilst the majority of these were positive and related to helpful site staff, negative comments were reviewed and fed back to operational teams to inform service delivery.
  - As standard, the **Reception and Safe Care Service (RSCS)** uses equality data gained from initial assessments with newly arrived Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) to support operational decisions, such as matching placements.
  - In the period, the **Positive Wellbeing service** has updated its collection of equality data to include sexual orientation and disability. This information has been used by the team to identify underrepresented groups more

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<sup>2</sup> Whilst services may ask service users to provide their equality information, this is always voluntary as individuals can choose not to declare.

effectively and direct support and communications to areas with a higher level of need or underrepresentation.

### About You

- 3.3 Following the review to KCC's 'About You' questions in the previous reporting period, the updated questions have since been approved and published for use during 2023-24. This has enabled services across our directorates to ensure that when they are collecting protected characteristic information from our service users, this is being done consistently across the organisation, in line with current standards, and reflects the terminology used within the latest Census. Looking ahead, the 'About You' questions will continue to be updated in accordance with need or further changes to national standards for equality data collection.

### Strengthening our equality data analysis

#### Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) & the EqIA App Dashboard

- 3.4 At KCC, Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs) are the method by which the council's officers complete equality analysis of the potential impacts of an activity on people with protected characteristics. The council has a centralised process of doing this, via the EqIA App; data inputted into EqIAs in the EqIA App then automatically flows into the EqIA App Dashboard in Power BI<sup>3</sup>, which offers a rich source of data on how equalities analysis is being undertaken across the council. The Dashboard shows that during 2023-24, 194 EqIAs were published via the EqIA App; the directorate breakdown of these is summarised in the chart below.

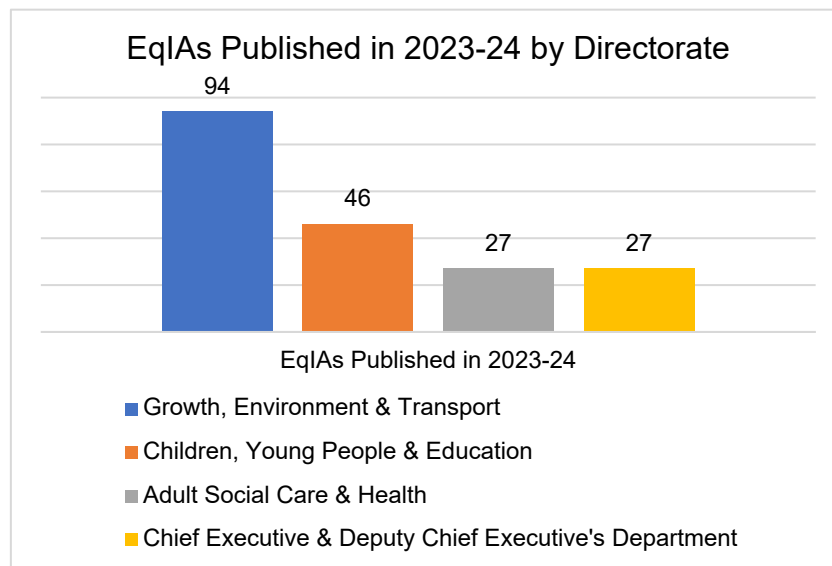


Figure 2: EqIAs Published in 2023-24 by Directorate

<sup>3</sup> Power BI is a data visualisation platform available within the Microsoft suite that enables the creation of data dashboards to report and visualise data in a range of styles and formats, including graphs and charts.

3.5 This is a significant increase on the 139 EqlAs published in the previous reporting period, with the number of EqlAs published steadily rising over each quarter of the 2023-24 year. Evidently, officer engagement with the EqlA App process has remained high amongst new and existing staff, with the App seeing a significant number of new users each quarter. The most common activity types for which EqlAs have been completed have remained consistent with the previous two years, with projects or programmes, strategies or policies, and commissioning or procurement dominating.

3.6 Quarterly analysis of the EqlA App Dashboard has continued to be prepared for the Corporate Equality Group (CEG) to enable discussion and identify areas requiring further investigation or action. A number of key trends were presented in last year's report and have continued to be monitored during 2023-24 to understand if further action is required. Our findings are as follows:

- Trends associated with the type of data evidenced in support of EqlAs has remained relatively consistent. **Across the 194 EqlAs published in 2023-24, 91% had data related to the protected groups impacted, for 85% it was possible to get this data in a timely and cost-effective way, and for 72% there was national evidence or data that could be used.** This shows a substantial increase in the use of data related to the protected groups impacted and the use of national evidence or data, compared to the previous year.<sup>4</sup> Whilst national evidence and data is still comparatively underutilised, a closer review has suggested that this may in large part be a reflection of the number of EqlAs relating to internal process changes, staff restructuring, and school expansion projects, which have instead been informed by a substantial amount of service specific data. This will continue to be monitored, with actions taken where needed to promote the value of using national evidence and research as a resource to inform how wider groups can be impacted by change.
- **The greatest number of potential negative impacts (and mitigating actions) were identified for disability, age, race and carers responsibilities, whilst the fewest were identified for marriage/civil partnership, sexual orientation and religion.** This is largely consistent with the previous year, with the addition of race and religion. This does also seem to be reflected in activity undertaken in the period to ensure that council information and services are accessible to everyone (see section 5 of this report), with an emphasis around addressing barriers to access for the protected characteristics of age, disability and race.

### Equality Policy

3.7 Following the introduction of the updated **EqlA Policy** in April 2023, a review has been undertaken to assess the impact that this has had, and the extent to which officers are complying with the council's expectations as set out within the policy. This review focused on compliance with the policy's following key provisions:

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<sup>4</sup> Across the 139 EqlAs published in 2022-23, 83% had data related to the protected groups impacted, for 83% it was possible to get this data in a timely and cost-effective way, and for 59% there was national evidence or data that could be used.

- That all Key Decisions must be supported by an EqlA.
- That all officers responsible for creating or approving EqlAs must first complete the Introduction to EqlAs e-learning module on Delta.
- Where an EqlA has identified significant mitigating actions, that an action plan is developed, approved by the Head of Service and sent to the central mailbox.

The table below sets out the level of compliance for the following during 2023-24:

<b>Policy Requirement:</b>	<b>Policy Review Results:</b>
% of 2023-24 Key Decisions that were supported by an EqlA.	93%
% of 2023-24 EqlAs that were developed by a Responsible Officer who had completed the Introduction to EqlAs e-learning module on Delta.	43%
% of 2023-24 EqlAs that were approved by a Head of Service who had completed the Introduction to EqlAs e-learning module on Delta.	17%

*Figure 3: EqlA Policy Review Results*

- 3.8 This demonstrates a varied picture of compliance across the key requirements of the policy. Whilst the proportion of Key Decisions supported by an EqlA has reached its highest level since records began, and significantly increased to 93% from 66% in the previous reporting period, a deeper dive into this demonstrates that the EqlAs attached have not always been taken through the entire EqlA App process and formally approved prior to publication. Despite this, compared to the previous year, the overall proportion of Key Decisions with a ‘fully compliant’ EqlA has increased from 35% to 45%. To work to improve this in the coming year, these results will be disseminated via the Corporate Equality Group and directorate channels, with specialised messaging produced to remind staff of the correct processes, and the importance of following this.
- 3.9 Review of the proportion of 2023-24 EqlAs that have been created and approved by a Responsible Officer and Head of Service who have completed the Introduction to EqlAs e-learning module on Delta suggests that there is significant room for improvement. Despite this, comparison with the previous year shows a somewhat improving picture. The proportion of EqlAs developed by a Responsible Officer who had completed the module has increased from 31% to 43% for Responsible Officers and remained at 15% for Heads of Service.<sup>5</sup> Interestingly, data shows that relatively high numbers of staff (presumably new starters) are completing this module each month, but that they are not necessarily those staff undertaking EqlAs. Overall, this demonstrates a requirement to increase staff awareness of this policy requirement with focused communications, which could potentially coincide

<sup>5</sup> This equates to 78 (out of 130) Responsible Officers and 58 (out of 68) Heads of Service involved in an EqlA published during 2023-24 who had not completed the e-learning module.



with a refresh of the existing e-learning module. Additionally, improving engagement and guidance for Heads of Service will be a particular focus for the future.

- 3.10 Since publication of the updated policy in April 2023, one action plan has been sent to the central mailbox. We would not expect an action plan to be completed for 100% of EqlAs in a given year, as not all EqlAs will have significant mitigating actions, with some identifying no mitigating actions. However, we would have expected more than one action plan to have been completed and sent to the central mailbox. This therefore potentially indicates a communication issue on this area of the policy; we will look to address this in the coming year, with a more detailed review of how many instances an action plan should have been completed accordingly.
- 3.11 Looking ahead, the detail of these results, including a directorate level breakdown will be taken to CMT to agree the appropriate course of action. As there is significant variance in performance across the key themes when comparing our directorates, targeted engagement would be developed to ensure actions have the greatest impact.
- 3.12 2023-24 also saw the publication of KCC's Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy. In addition to addressing the wider risks of use of and interaction with AI, this policy makes a number of provisions to ensure the potential equality impacts are understood and addressed where officers are utilising this technology. This policy has been essential in the risk management of the council's CoPilot for M365 trial which began in February 2024; the findings and relevant measures will be reported in the following year's report.

### Census Data

- 3.13 Census equality information is an important data source for KCC as it is often the starting point for officers when completing EqlAs, and particularly useful for services that are unable to collect equality information on their service users. In the period, **Positive Wellbeing** have used 2021 Census data to facilitate a mapping task of service 'need' across the county, considering protected characteristics that have been associated with a greater risk of social isolation and loneliness in the [2023 loneliness report](#). The outcomes of this mapping exercise will play a crucial role in shaping their delivery plan and guide the strategic placement of future hubs and support services to ensure equitable access to services and address the unique needs of various communities. Census data is also utilised by the **Safer Speeds & Enforcement** service to understand demographic groups and shape campaigns. This has included a focus on younger drivers, consideration of how to make campaign information accessible to individuals with refugee status adjusting to travelling around Kent and/or with English as an Additional Language, and to older drivers who are less likely to access digital information, via the Mature Drivers programme.



### Service User Equality Data

- 3.14 Where available, services have also collected and utilised service user equality data to understand how well they have adapted to need and to inform future strategy and approaches to service delivery. An analysis of the demographics of **Kent & Medway Business Advisory Board** membership was undertaken to support understanding of its equality profile and will be used to support the future round of board recruitment to promote balanced representation amongst members. The **Create South East** programme regularly reports data on its performance against the scheme's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) KPIs and equality profile analysis of those accessing funding through the scheme to their EDI working group. On a six-monthly basis, **Live Well Kent and Medway** reviews demographic data to understand if any protected characteristic groups are underrepresented and review whether targeted groups (such as those aged 18-25) are accessing services.
- 3.15 In addition to embracing new data collection opportunities, our services also strive to improve how data is presented, using available technologies to support strengthened analysis. The **ASCH Operations team** uses the Demographics and Protected Characteristics Power BI report to present equality information about the people supported by ASCH alongside Census data, to enable direct comparisons to be made and evaluate levels of underrepresentation. This is also a useful tool to support the service's Equality Impact Assessments (EqIAs). In the period, **CYPE's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) task and finish group** also began work to develop a Power BI inclusion app, which will assist in the consideration of demographics and workforce data within services/districts and support identification of lines of enquiry for Child Outcome Analysis (COA) audit reviews<sup>6</sup> and inform the development of the COA Next Steps Diversity and Inclusion Action Plan.
- 3.16 Our services are also increasingly considering data regarding the diversity of their workforce in recognition of how this contributes to the inclusivity of service delivery, with attempts made to attract diverse applicants to positions. Integrated Children's Services in particular have begun to consider how reflective their workforce is of the protected characteristics of the young people they support.

### Use of a range of data, from a variety of sources

- 3.17 It is good practice for equality analysis to be supported with evidence/data from a variety of sources where possible, relevant and proportionate, with national evidence being particularly useful where there might be gaps in Census or service user equality data. In a number of cases, equality analysis in the period has involved the use of national evidence or data from a variety of sources; this has included the following.

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<sup>6</sup> Child Outcome Analysis (COA) audit reviews consider how teams are considering the identity and culture of children, families and the demographics of their district.

- 3.18 In support of transformation and development of **Sexual Health** services, a range of activity has been undertaken by the service, which has involved collecting and utilising an array of data sources. This has included use of Census data, service mapping in conjunction with the Public Health Observatory to ensure locations address local need and are accessible, and the development of a Sexual Health Needs Assessment. The Needs Assessment involved a particular focus on those living in areas of high deprivation, Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities, young people, sex workers, Black and Minority Ethnic groups, migrant populations, and men who have sex with men. The service also commissioned research surveys with protected characteristic groups, including LGBTQ+ and minority ethnic communities to understand their awareness of and access to sexual health services. This information has been used to ensure that our services are meeting the needs of all residents in Kent, and that protected characteristic groups with additional vulnerabilities are targeted as necessary. Integrated sexual health services in East Kent have also worked with 'Walking Together' HIV patient groups to inform potential service improvements, with a view to reducing the HIV Did Not Attend rates for individuals who are less likely to access services and support.
- 3.19 All **Domestic Homicide Reviews (DHRs)**<sup>7</sup> require specific consideration of the impact of individuals' protected characteristics and the use of a wide range of relevant data, including research or specialist input, subject to the case specifics. For DHRs undertaken in the period, this has included gathering additional information relating to sex, religion and race, with two cases requiring special consideration of the Eastern European background of the victims. Analysis undertaken as part of DHRs supports the development of recommendations for service delivery, for example for materials on domestic abuse to be made available in different languages, and for commissioning frameworks to require that service providers ensure their services are accessible to minority groups, including individuals from Eastern Europe.
- 3.20 Across our directorates, services have engaged with stakeholders to better understand service users' needs and the potential impacts on diverse groups. The **I-Thrive and Participation** team ran focus groups with young people with protected characteristics as part of the 'Have Your Say' opportunities for the Integrated Care Board's new mental health system. The Participation Team have worked alongside the Independent Reviewing Officer (IRO) service and Kent Analytics to develop the SNAP survey approach for consulting with children. This has been developed to enable translation to a range of languages, with feedback received from UASC children being used to inform the development of the new Reception and Safe Care centres. The Stakeholder Engagement Team within the **Public Health** Business Delivery Unit engaged with community events for Black History month in order to gain better understanding of the needs of diverse communities, celebrate diversity, and improve awareness of available services. A fare survey was conducted by **Public Transport** in May 2023, with responses used to inform the decision

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<sup>7</sup> Kent DHRs are undertaken by the Kent Community Safety Partnership, which is managed and coordinated by KCC Community Safety staff.

around introducing a cashless Fastrack bus service. The findings suggested that this proposal would disproportionately impact on certain protected characteristic groups who predominantly use cash to purchase bus tickets.

#### Case Study: Consultation / Let's Talk Kent

- 3.21 To support work towards this Equality Objective, an annual analysis of the equality data for Let's Talk Kent<sup>8</sup> registrations and participants in the Annual Budget Consultation has been introduced.<sup>9</sup> This analysis may help to determine which groups are currently participating in KCC consultation opportunities, identify any areas of under or over representation, highlight potential barriers to participation and identify if there are any persistent trends to be addressed. Services are responsible for conducting an equality analysis of the demographics that respond to their consultations and considering the extent to which this is representative and reflects their expectations, or if any particular groups need to be targeted.

#### 2023-24 Let's Talk Kent Registrations

- 3.22 Looking at the equality profile of registrations with Let's Talk Kent during 2023-24, whilst the numbers of both men and women registering continued to increase, men remained slightly underrepresented when compared with the county profile. Under 34s continued to be underrepresented compared with the county profile, however, the age group that is most overrepresented is now those aged 55-64.<sup>10</sup> Overall, this has shown a very consistent picture compared to the previous year, with a significantly larger increase in the number of registrations from female users than male users. Once again, this may be the result of the scale and subject of consultations in the period, for example with the Shaping the Family Hubs and Start for Life Offer consultation in 2023-24, which saw considerably more responses from females (598) than males (97).

#### 2023 Annual Budget Consultation

- 3.23 When comparing the demographics of those who responded to the **2023 Annual Budget Consultation** with the previous year, there is a consistent picture, with the greatest level of change in the proportion of responses from males, and from carers.<sup>11</sup> This means that existing areas of disproportionality have continued, with those aged under 34 underrepresented, and those aged 50-74 the most overrepresented age group, although this may be arising from the fact that this consultation is largely aimed at Kent householders who pay council tax. People from ethnic minority groups also continue to be

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<sup>8</sup> [Let's Talk Kent](#) is KCC's online public consultation portal which allows members of the public to have their say on KCC projects and proposals.

<sup>9</sup> Due to the nature of consultation, depending on the specific project concerned, it is to be expected that some protected characteristic groups will be overrepresented on some consultations. The Annual Budget Consultation has been selected for analysis as it represents a regular and unspecific consultation where we would hope to see participant demographics which are broadly reflective of our county profile.

<sup>10</sup> Those registering must be aged 14 or over, so to a certain extent it is expected that those aged under 34 would be underrepresented amongst registrations when compared to the county profile.

<sup>11</sup> The proportion of responses from males fell from 49% in 2022 to 44% in 2023, whilst the proportion of responses from carers increased from 18% in 2022 to 22% in 2023.

underrepresented compared to our county profile, despite targeted communications taking place in attempts to improve this number; this will be a continued focus looking ahead. Finally, individuals with a religion or belief have also continued to be underrepresented amongst responses to the Annual Budget Consultation, with a number of specific faiths also underrepresented.<sup>12</sup>

## Better understanding people's needs

### Equality Learning & Development Opportunities

- 3.24 In addition to utilising various equality data sources, engagement opportunities and conducting equality analysis to better understand the needs of people in Kent, a number of services have provided training and learning opportunities for their teams in order to better support and develop this understanding.
- 3.25 The **Kent Academy** continues to provide a range of resources and training for the ASCH and CYPE workforce across topics that can support officers' understanding of the communities and individuals they serve, and how to best meet their needs. This includes resources around cultural competence, supporting LGBTQ+ individuals, neurodiversity and sensory needs. A dedicated training resource has also been made available for practitioners supporting Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC), covering 'Age Assessments for UASC' and 'LGBTQ awareness for RSCS'. Following the success of the UASC Networking Event held in March 2023, which was mentioned in the previous year's report, a Kent UASC Networking Forum has been established on Microsoft Teams to enable further learning opportunities between involved organisations, with a UASC Conference successfully delivered in 2024, and attended by 50 people from organisations working with UASC in Kent.
- 3.26 Practice Development and Newly Qualified Social Worker (NQSW) Supervisors have undertaken extensive activity during 2023-24 to support staff understanding of equality, diversity and inclusion, and positively impact how our services are delivered to meet the needs of diverse groups. Practice Postcard sessions held in the period covered a range of topics, including Carers and Young Carers (these were co-produced and co-delivered with Carers); Neurodiversity; taking a Trauma Informed Approach and Mental Health Awareness. Bespoke sessions were run with Adult Social Care Teams to raise awareness around Learning Disability and workshops on Neurodiversity awareness and Anti-Racist Practice were delivered to Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (ASYE) cohorts.
- 3.27 During 2023-24, **CYPE's Safeguarding, Professional Standards & Quality Assurance (SPSQA)** has continued to support staff understanding of the needs of specific protected characteristic groups. As a legacy of work reported in the previous period on promoting Father Inclusive Practice, this has remained a key focus, to raise the visibility of fathers and improve their

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<sup>12</sup> This includes people who are Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Sikh.

engagement in Universal, Early Help and Children's Social Work services. Alongside Kent Safeguarding Multi-Agency Partnership (KCSMP), a Father Inclusive Practice Guide was launched via a Communities of Practice in November, with tools and resources also shared to Kent Academy.

- 3.28 KCC has been a **White Ribbon** accredited organisation since 2021 and over this period has developed and implemented a three-year action plan to raise awareness and hold conversations in support of ending male Violence Against Women and Girls. Key activity in the period has included attendance at community events; proactive internal and external communications; linking in with related projects including Victim Blaming Language training and Public Health's SPACE Matters; and sharing resources within the organisation and at KCC buildings. As part of the programme, work has also been undertaken to build stronger links with providers to encourage learning directed towards boys, which has included linking in and sharing resources with Kent Police Schools Officers.

### Conclusions & Next Steps

- 3.29 Overall, analysis for this Equality Objective suggests that generally, there continues to be a good level of engagement with equality data collection and analysis - services have been proactively collecting this data wherever possible, and increasingly using this to understand areas of underrepresentation. A number of services have been able to evidence how equality data from a range of sources has been used to shape service delivery and demonstrate how they have used learning opportunities to improve staff understanding of service users' diverse needs. EqlA App data has also continued to grow, with an increasing number of EqlAs being developed by both new and existing staff. Whilst the council's efforts in the past two years to improve the proportion of our Key Decisions that have an EqlA attached have been very successful, a closer review has uncovered some further areas for improvement in terms of adherence to the full EqlA App process, and other requirements set out within our EqlA Policy. Additionally, there are still opportunities to improve use of national research, and to promote understanding of the specific needs and barriers experienced by some of the protected characteristic groups.
- 3.30 Looking ahead, these areas for improvement will be supported by a range of measures in the coming years to further raise the profile of the Equality Policy function, to include a refresh to the e-learning module and guidance for Heads of Service, and more robust communications and KNet presence. It is hoped that this activity will provide the basis for the council to begin to build on its understanding of the potential cumulative impact of its actions on people with protected characteristics. However, our immediate focus will be to improve compliance with the EqlA App process, in order to establish a more accurate and complete picture of council-wide equality impacts, which will be a necessary precursor to consideration/assessment of our cumulative impact.

## 4. Promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chains, including our trading companies.

- 4.1 The introduction of this Equality Objective has provided the council with new opportunities to understand how existing commissioning and procurement processes have worked to promote equality, diversity and inclusion across services, and determine how this can be further improved and supported. To assess our performance for 2023-24, high-level data relating to KCC's commissioning and procurement Key Decisions has been reviewed. This has been supported with examples of how our contracts, commissioned providers and processes have supported equality outcomes in the period. Looking ahead, it is anticipated that work undertaken by the Commercial Standards and Improvement team will support the development of a more detailed understanding of our performance in this area.

### Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion in Key Contracts

- 4.2 During 2023-24, there were 31 Key Decisions that related to commissioning and procurement. An EqlA was attached to 100% of these, which is higher than the overall figure of 93% across all Key Decisions, and a substantial improvement on the previous year.<sup>13</sup> However, only 35% of these Key Decisions were supported by a fully compliant EqlA that had been progressed through the entire EqlA App process. This is lower than the overall level of compliance across all Key Decisions and identifies a potential requirement for engagement with officers responsible for commissioning and procurement projects regarding the council's policy and expectations for EqlAs.
- 4.3 For 11 of the 31 Key Decisions related to commissioning and procurement in the period, an additional Selection Questionnaire (SQ) stage was completed; this would have included specific questions on equalities considerations. Furthermore, all projects resulting in a contract would have seen the awarded supplier/s being bound by KCC's standard terms and conditions, which require adherence to equalities legislation. Looking at the seven reviews of KCC's key contracts conducted by the Contract Management Review Group (CMRG) in 2023-24, there were substantive references to social value in two of the presentations, minimal references in three of the presentations, and no reference to social value or equalities considerations in the remaining two presentations. This is consistent with data from the previous year.
- 4.4 In September 2023, new roles were established within the Commercial Standards and Improvement Team. Looking ahead, activity undertaken by the team will be important in supporting continuous improvement with this Equality Objective, with the development of KCC's first Social Value Policy a key priority for the coming year. There is also an intention to work collaboratively to support the introduction of additional measures to monitor our equality performance within commissioning and procurement where

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<sup>13</sup> Only 75% of the 2022-23 Key Decisions relating to commissioning and procurement had an EqlA attached, although this was still higher than the overall figure for all Key Decisions.



possible. The team will also be important in supporting the development of our officers' skills and knowledge of how equality outcomes and social value can be built into and delivered via commissioning and procurement activity/contracts, through a review of existing templates, policy and guidance. Whilst this will provide the foundations for improved knowledge and practice, it will be directorates' responsibility to ensure that policies and guidance are followed.

### Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Through Our Supply Chains

- 4.5 In support of the above snapshot of equality considerations in key contracts during 2023-24, the following sections provide examples of how our services have been able to support equality, diversity and inclusion outcomes via our supply chains.
- 4.6 Across a range of KCC's commissioned services, attempts have been made to reach or target individuals from protected characteristic groups. To promote engagement from underrepresented ethnic minority groups with the **NHS Health Check programme**<sup>14</sup>, the outreach team attended local events for Hong Kong communities within Kent and held the first health check event at a Nepalese community centre. To address barriers to access for individuals who are still of working age, multiple workplace events were held, with a particular focus on industries where shift work is common, including police stations and hospitals. Outreach work was also undertaken at Margate football club, the Farmer's expo and Ashford cattle market to encourage men, who have higher risk factors and are less likely to engage, to take advantage of the service. In March 2024 the NHS Health Check team were awarded a Health Watch award for the second year running in the category "Excellence in inclusivity and equal access to services".
- 4.7 During 2023-24, Kent condom programme KPIs relating to supporting vulnerable groups have been strengthened. Additionally, across **Sexual health services** there has been targeted activity to support those who are at the greatest risk of adverse health outcomes, including individuals who are LGBTQ+ and/or from ethnic minority groups. This has involved outreach work to support asylum seekers in Kent, and a pilot within the Online STI Testing service to test women who are at a higher risk of Trichomonas Vaginalis (TV), which has since been rolled-out as a business-as-usual activity. A pilot was also conducted to engage with sex workers to communicate information on sexual health services and promote access. Review of clinic data has shown that this has not yielded the anticipated results; as such methodologies to promote access for this group will be a continued focus.
- 4.8 In the period, the **Heritage** team commissioned AOC Archaeology to carry out community archaeology work at Chilmington, Ashford. This project was designed to promote accessibility to young people via an education stream,

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<sup>14</sup> The NHS Health Check programme is provided by Kent Community NHS Foundation Trust (KCHFT) in partnership with KCC and works to target 40-74 year-olds without a pre-defined existing health condition.

and to include events for older people to improve their opportunities to participate.

- 4.9 Within the **Adult Social Care Operations** team, materials, events and training have been shared and promoted with the local care market to support improved equality and diversity outcomes, particularly in recruitment. This has included workshops at the annual conference focused on improving the inclusivity of care services for LGBTQ+ people and developing a population-centric workforce for neurodivergent people. An NHS 'de-bias recruitment and selection toolkit' was also adapted for the care sector and circulated.
- 4.10 Opportunities to promote and achieve social value have been considered in several contracts that were live during 2023-24. FCC Environment's<sup>15</sup> Education and Communication Officer has delivered school tours throughout the period, educating children and young people about the importance of reuse and recycling. As part of the award of the Kent Thameside Electric Fastrack Operations Contract in 2023, Go-Ahead has committed to provide community skill development activities to upskill local residents along the bus route. Looking ahead, the provider will work with local job centres to identify local barriers to employment in order to develop engagement strategies for disadvantaged members of the community. The success of these activities will be monitored via quantitative and qualitative KPI trackers for Social Value, and annual social value reports will assess the value of the initiatives.

#### **Case Study: Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Services (KIDAS)**

- 4.11 Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Services' commissioning decisions in the period have been informed by detailed equality analysis undertaken as part of the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment. This provided evidence to suggest that younger survivors (aged 16-19); older survivors (aged over 55); Asian/Asian British and Black/Black British survivors (within community-based support), and male survivors (excluding male-specific services) may be underrepresented amongst existing service users. As a result, a male-specific domestic abuse refuge was commissioned, and commenced delivery in December 2023. Furthermore, survivors fed into the procurement process for the 'Sanctuary Access For Eligible Residents Scheme', devising a question to assess bidders' suitability. Across all domestic abuse commissioned services, demographic data from providers is reviewed every three months to identify if there are protected characteristic groups or geographical areas that are underrepresented and inform action to be taken to improve reach accordingly.

#### **Promoting Equality, Diversity and Inclusion via KCC's Trading Companies**

- 4.12 **Commercial Services Group (CSG)** is the umbrella for all of the trading companies owned by the local authority, spanning education services, legal services, IT solutions, recruitment and HR services and energy and carbon services. During 2023-24, CSG has worked to develop equality, diversity and inclusion as a key strategic theme. This has been supported by the

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<sup>15</sup> This organisation runs fourteen of KCC's Household Waste Recycling Centres (HWRCs).



introduction of the new role of Group Chief People, Culture and Communications Officer on the CSG Executive Board, to prioritise the development of a people-focused organisation. The first CSG People Strategy was launched following staff engagement and sets out the organisation's line of sight. This sets out the aspirations, key actions, evaluation and outcomes involved in delivery over the next three years, with Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging (DEIB) underpinning all areas. Delivery of these ambitions will be supported by two new recruits to the People, Culture and Communications team. In the period, CSG have also produced a Race Equality Action Plan, which has received Executive sign-off, and developed a draft DEIB Policy. Looking ahead, CSG intends to support this with a strategy and approach for delivery.

- 4.13 In the previous year's report, CSG's 2022-23 workforce equality data was provided in order to establish the baseline and identify areas for improvement into the future. This identified an aspiration to extend equality data reporting to include wider protected characteristics, and to improve declaration rates. Data for 2023-24 has evidenced that this has been achieved, with declaration rates increasing significantly across all business areas, and the addition of workforce data related to sex, religion/faith and neurodiversity. The table below provides a summary of how CSG's workforce equality profile has changed from the previous year. Whilst the representation of LGBTQ+ staff and disabled staff has increased, it has fallen for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff compared to the previous year.

Category	Workforce Profile as of March 2023	Workforce Profile as of March 2024	Variance
Total number of staff	1,698	1,680	N/A
% who are female	Data not yet collected	59.6%	N/A
% who are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic	7.2%	5.6%	-1.6%
% who have declared a disability	3.0%	3.5%	+0.5%
% who are LGBTQ+ (16+)	1.6%	12.2%	+10.6%
% who have declared a religion/faith	Data not yet collected	29.3%	N/A
% who are neurodiverse	Data not yet collected	3.0%	N/A

Figure 44: 2023-24 Commercial Services Group Workforce Profile Comparison

### Conclusion & Next Steps

- 4.14 Data related to commissioning and procurement Key Decisions in the period demonstrates that equality analysis has been undertaken by officers, with 100% Key Decisions having an EqlA attached. However, this has also shown that there is further work to ensure that these EqlAs are always taken through the full EqlA App process. CSG's progress with their People Strategy, Race

Equality Action Plan and Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging Policy is a positive indicator of how EDI is promoted through the council's trading companies and establishes a positive trajectory for the future.

- 4.15 Whilst there are a range of examples of how the council has been able to promote equality, diversity and inclusion through our supply chains, it is evident that these are less varied than in the previous year's report. Indeed, there are fewer examples of where equality has been built into tender documentation, specifications or contract KPIs, indicating that a more proactive effort needs to be made to drive improvement in this area in the coming years. This will be supported by planned activity in collaboration with the Commercial Standards and Improvement team to improve existing guidance and documents and bolster measurement mechanisms to obtain a more detailed/quantitative understanding of our performance in this area.

## 5. Ensure council information and services are accessible for everyone including those who are digitally excluded.

- 5.1 As part of our approach to this Equality Objective, we have considered a number of more familiar aspects of accessibility – physical accessibility, digital accessibility and language translation – in addition to our aspirations to implement more wide-ranging understandings of accessibility that consider the full extent of often intangible barriers to access experienced by many protected characteristic groups. In addition, we have utilised EqIA App Dashboard data to develop an understanding of how well digital exclusion has been considered within proposals for new services or changes to existing services.

### Council information is accessible for everyone

#### Language & Alternative Formats

- 5.2 KCC's **Alternative Formats team** facilitates a wide range of translation and alternative format requests from the council's services. In 2023-24, 34 language translation requests were made, 26 (76%) of which were completed. Where requests are not fulfilled, this could be attributed to the cost implication of language translations, which cannot always be met by services. It is interesting to note that both the overall number of requests, and the proportion of requests that were fulfilled has fallen when compared with 2022-23<sup>16</sup>; it is possible that this could be associated with the increasing availability of online language translation tools in the period. The top five languages for which the most translations were completed were Punjabi, Polish, Czech, Russian and Nepali; whilst this demonstrates a shift from the previous year, this is broadly reflected of languages commonly spoken within Kent districts as per the Census 2021.<sup>17</sup> During the period, the team fulfilled 10 Large Print requests, 5 braille requests, 4 Easy Read requests, 2 plain text conversion requests, 1 audio request, and 1 British Sign Language (BSL) request. Compared to the previous year, this is a reduction in the total number of accessibility requests fulfilled by 26%, although the most frequent formats have remained consistent. In addition to processing these requests, services across the council have also worked to improve the accessibility of their information to people with additional needs:
- 5.3 As KCC's main online platform for information, advice and guidance on accessing care and support, the accessibility of the [Kent Connect to Support website](#) is an important part of ensuring equal access to these services. In support of this, the website has been updated with new webpages that have been designed to make content easy to read and improve accessibility, which can also be automatically translated into a wide range of languages. The **Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS)** have

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<sup>16</sup> In 2022-23, 39 (91%) of the 43 language requests received by the team were fulfilled.

<sup>17</sup> Other language translations included Bengali, Bulgarian, Dari, Hebrew, Lithuanian, Romanian, Slovakian, Spanish, Ukrainian and Urdu.

ensured that all communications and campaign materials are available in physical and digital formats, and in translations catering for the top 10 languages spoken across the county, as identified within the Census 2021. KIDAS providers also operate a D/deaf and hard of hearing working group which has enabled marketing materials and referral pathways to be made available in BSL. To support customers to understand and access the services that are most relevant to them and that will best meet their individual needs, **Kent Libraries** have developed and continued to update library information sheets. These have been improved following feedback from a Hearing Impaired reading group, with the inclusion of symbols to support text and the use of plainer English, to make it easier for people with disabilities or varying English literacy levels to understand the information. In 2023-24, the **Kent Community Warden Service** began work with the Gurdwara in North Kent to translate the service leaflet and other community safety publications into other languages, as a number of residents in the area who do not have English as a first language have been the target of scams. It is hoped these leaflets will be available later in 2024 for distribution.

5.4 At KCC's Family Hubs, leaflets and posters displayed in buildings are available in a variety of languages. Following the closure of Children's Centres, a large print resource has been developed setting out the range of **Start for Life** services available, and has been translated into four languages to enable the Family Hubs workforce to help diverse groups access these. Additionally, a series of perinatal mental health awareness films have been presented with BSL and foreign language translations. **Adolescent services** ensure that foreign language interpreters or Language Line telephone interpreters are available where required for families who do not have English as a first language, to facilitate home visits and meetings and translate documents such as assessments and Court reports. This has been complemented by the production of 'read easy' versions of all Youth Justice template letters and materials, which have been developed in collaboration with a speech and language therapist.

5.5 The **Reception and Safe Care Service (RSCS)** has continued to support the communication and other needs of Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) in its care in 2023-24, ensuring that materials, guidance and support provided is accessible to those with varying levels of English and that whilst in Kent's care, children are supported to celebrate the religious and cultural events that are important to them. The service provides interpreters in person and over the phone and has produced translated booklets and video guides to help children to understand what it means to be a child in care in Kent.

#### Digital Accessibility

5.6 As highlighted in last year's report, during 2023-24, the **Digital Accessibility Team** have introduced a number of changes as part of their Digital Accessibility Strategy to improve staff engagement and understanding to support improved digital accessibility across the council's digital content and websites. The audit template has been simplified, and the audit process amended to enable meetings to be conducted to discuss documentation and

results. In addition to offering training courses, the team has also attended team meetings and hosted presentations across the council's services, engaging with over 800 officers through these sessions.<sup>18</sup>

- 5.7 Over the course of 2023-24, there has been a focus on supporting staff's digital accessibility requirements. As part of this, digital accessibility has been integrated into the Display Screen Equipment (DSE) workstation assessment process, to ensure that our staff receive the appropriate software and hardware to support their needs. The Digital Accessibility team have also actively collaborated in the roll-out of new laptops to ensure colleagues' needs are best met within this process. To complement this, information about digital accessibility software and hardware has been updated on KNet to ensure this is easy to find.
- 5.8 Digital Accessibility considerations have also been embraced across our services in the period. In Spring 2023, the new **Fastrack** website was launched. To improve accessibility, the website had been designed in line with the latest (WCAG) success criteria, can be used with screen reading software and enables users to change both font sizes and contrasts. To ensure the digital accessibility of our [Active Kent & Medway website](#) and [Everyday Active website](#) all images include Alt Text descriptions and captions are included in all films, with transcripts available on request.

#### [Representing the communities we serve](#)

- 5.9 Part of the council's duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED) include the need to consider how it can promote equality of opportunity and foster good relations between protected characteristic groups; in part, this can be delivered through inclusive council campaigns and communications that promote a positive narrative around equality. In 2023-24, this has included:
- **Active Kent & Medway** have continued their 'tackling inequalities' series to promote a positive narrative around supporting specific groups to become more active. Films produced in the period included TKO [Folkestone Boxing Club](#) supporting people living with Parkinson's to become more active; inclusive sessions held by the [Woodland Warriors Wheelchair Rugby League project](#); the delivery of accessible dance sessions by [Moving Memory Dance](#); [Shishu Kishor Club's project](#) to deliver community swimming sessions for Muslim families, which included training participants to become lifeguards to help sustain sessions longer term, and [inclusive para badminton sessions](#) for all ages and abilities, held by Kings Canterbury.<sup>19</sup> The service has also produced School Games

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<sup>18</sup> The team has held training courses covering 'Accessible Social Media', 'Creating Accessible Documents' and 'Accessibility in Microsoft 365'.

<sup>19</sup> In addition to project films, films were also produced with participants to share their experience. These are available here: [Barry & Chris's story](#) (TKO Folkestone Boxing Club) [Rabia's Story](#) (Shishu Kishor Club swimming lessons) [Tora and Arlene's Story](#) (Kings Canterbury para badminton).

films to demonstrate how the programme has evolved to engage those most affected by inequalities.<sup>20</sup>

- The **Kent Downs** website and **Create South East** landing page and case studies have seen an update to ensure that these are inclusive and represent the communities we serve and showcase how the council has met the needs of diverse groups.
- Looking ahead, work is in progress between the **Kent Educational Psychology Service (KEPS)** and **Education** to review the narrative around young people with Special Educational Needs or Disabilities (SEND) to ensure the inclusivity of the service to this group.

## Council services are accessible for everyone

### Complaints & Customer Satisfaction

- 5.10 Whilst not reflective of every possible instance where KCC services or information may have been found to be inaccessible, data on equality related complaints received in 2023-24 offers a useful temperature check for understanding how accessible the council's services and information are. Of the 5,537 complaints received in the period, 199 were categorised as Equality and Regulatory, of which 48 were about equalities issues. Only 11 of these were upheld, with lessons learned recorded and action taken. This included the provision of further training/guidance for staff, the distribution of formal apologies and implementation of changes to prevent a future reoccurrence. As a result of one of these complaints, Library staff were reminded to check areas for any obstacles such as chairs that could limit access to individuals with mobility issues. A review of data on compliments received during 2023-24 has not uncovered any specific references to how the council has supported individuals' needs arising from disability.

### Physical Accessibility Projects & Improvements

- 5.11 During 2023-24, KCC's **Property team** have continued to engage AccessAble to undertake accessibility audits at our corporate landlord freehold sites and KCC maintained schools, with the development of detailed [Access Guides](#) describing the accessibility of KCC sites. This work has also supported the identification and delivery of accessibility improvements, such as installation of ramping, accessible toilets and door adaptations. The **Country Parks** service, in partnership with Kent Downs National Landscape have engaged with AccessAble to produce similar accessibility reports providing an overview of facilities across our core country parks, with a specific accessibility leaflet produced for Shorne Woods Country Park which highlights tramper-friendly routes. Additionally, 24 School Accessibility Initiative projects<sup>21</sup> were

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<sup>20</sup> These films are available here: [Personal Development through Leadership and Volunteering](#); [Transitioning to Secondary School PE and Sport](#); [Positive Experiences for Children and Young People](#); [Active 60](#).

<sup>21</sup> The School Accessibility Initiative (SAI) delivers projects to make adaptations for children with accessibility needs or requirements. During 2023-24, SAI projects were delivered at the following sites: Bridge and Patribourne Church of England Primary School, Chartham Primary School, Cheriton Primary School, Ditton Infants School, Eythorne Elvington Primary School, Ifield Primary

completed across the education estate, and work began to develop a new Accessibility Policy for schools, in collaboration with Education. In this period, additional funding was secured within the Capital Maintenance budgets, of which £500k has been ringfenced to support accessibility improvements across KCC's building portfolio; looking ahead to the coming year, a programme for delivery will be prepared.

- 5.12 Physical accessibility is an important part of inclusive service delivery, and is a key consideration when events are planned, or changes made to our services or physical infrastructure. To ensure the physical accessibility of **Kent School Games**, within the registration process, detailed information on participant disabilities is collected and used in the selection and preparation of venues, for example, in ensuring hoists are available where required, or in the provision of a calm and quiet environment. Similarly, all **Active Kent and Medway** events run during 2023-24 were held at accessible venues, with participants asked about any additional support requirements prior to the event taking place. The **i-THRIVE and Participation** service has worked to ensure that events and workshops are accessible to all, with a Hearing Loop and PA system available at all times, and the provision of fidget toys, coloured paper and safe spaces to create an inclusive environment for young people attending. The service also commissioned accessible mobile toilets for the Big Mental Health Conversation, to enable young people with disabilities to participate. Following the closure of Folkestone **Library**, the Books Beyond Words book group (a reading group for people with learning disabilities) was relocated to the single storey Wood Avenue Library after it was found that the original alternative venue was not suitable for the group members' needs.
- 5.13 An extensive refurbishment of the **Coroners Service** area of Oakwood House in the period included the provision of an accessibility lift between the ground and mezzanine floor, with controls at wheelchair user height. The Coroners Service has also worked to ensure reasonable adjustments are available for Jurors, family and Next of Kin attending their sites, capturing individuals' needs via communications and the updated Juror's form. During 2023-24, the service supported a family with mobility and digital skills needs to remotely attend an inquest with the Coroners Service in Essex. The Integrated **Sexual Health** provisions for Thanet have been concentrated in the newly established Flete clinic on the QEQM Hospital grounds; this site was selected with accessibility considerations in mind and fitted with a lift to enable wheelchair access to the upper floor; examination couches were also purchased to accommodate the needs of diverse patients. Looking ahead, there is an ongoing project to review the physical premises in Swale and assess its suitability.

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School, Marsh Academy, New Ash Green Primary School, Oakley School, Oakley School, Petham Primary School, Riverview Infants School, Riverview Infants School, Senacre Wood Primary School, Slade Primary School, St Gregory's Catholic School, St Margarets at Cliffe Primary School, St Pauls Church of England Voluntary Controlled Primary School, Staplehurst Primary School, The Churchill School, Tymberwood Academy, Ufton Lane/Meadowfield 6th Form School.



## Inclusive Services & Addressing Invisible Barriers

- 5.14 Within the **East Kent and West Kent Adult Drug and Alcohol Service**, work was undertaken to develop a specific women's pathway in recognition of the different needs and experiences of this group. Additionally, a Nepalese speaking group has been established within the **East Kent Drug and Alcohol Service**, allowing service provision to recognise Nepalese social and cultural contexts and enabling service users to recover in their own language.
- 5.15 **North West Kent Countryside Partnership (NWKCP)** has delivered [Forest School](#) to Special Educational Needs (SEN) schools and wellbeing groups, tailoring these to the needs of participants. To support access to wellbeing groups, introductory videos have been produced so that people can feel informed and reassured about attending a new group in unfamiliar surroundings.
- 5.16 During 2023-24, The Education People (**TEP**)'s **Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Team** (EDIT) were contacted by the Violence Reduction Unit to hold a conference with young people from schools in Kent. As a result, recommendations were made for more training for teachers on anti-racism, including lesson plans for primary school children on the topic. The EDIT team subsequently produced a training pack called 'Educating Racism', covering topics such as unconscious bias, stereotyping and anti-racism. This was trialled at schools, with 40 schools attending the launch and 100% of evaluation responses rating the package good or above. Schools have since contacted the team for further information and support on the topic. The **i-Thrive and Participation team** worked with the Parent Carer Voice Group in the period to develop and publish a [resource](#) to support autistic young people with their periods.
- 5.17 Reasonable adjustments were made available to all clients attending KCC's **diversionary schemes**<sup>22</sup> in order to remove or reduce potential barriers to access. This includes the facilitation of requests related to closed captions or BSL interpreters, mobility, neurodivergence, breastfeeding and premises for prayer. Clients were also able to bring their own interpreter, attend with their carer or access an online course with a BSL trainer. The re-commissioning of the booking system also included an accessibility review to consider the needs of individuals who require additional support in order to attend and complete their course.

### **Case Study: Live Well Kent and Medway**

- 5.18 Within Live Well Kent and Medway<sup>23</sup>, the Rethink Sahayk telephone helpline has provided culturally sensitive support for individuals from the Asian community who are affected by mental health issues or domestic abuse, enabling callers to interact and receive support in Gujarati, Punjabi, Hindu, and Urdu, as well as English. Work has been undertaken by the service and

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<sup>22</sup> Diversionary schemes are police-led programmes that divert people caught committing minor offences away from the criminal justice system to other measures.

<sup>23</sup> Live Well Kent & Medway is a network of voluntary organisations and charities that help people aged 17+ with mental health issues, which is delivered on the behalf of Kent County Council and the NHS, by Porchlight and Shaw Trust.



the provider, South Kent Mind to engage with local Nepalese communities, to promote awareness of available services and influence the narrative around mental health, which has historically been subject to cultural stigma and impacted on uptake of support within this group.<sup>24</sup> Live Well Kent and Medway have also continued to work with Charlton Athletic Community Trust (CACT), to engage with harder to reach groups of young people through its outreach work, with the aim of becoming more responsive to the needs of the community and reduce criminal activity and anti-social behaviour.

### **Case Study: Resettlement Schemes**

5.19 Across the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS), United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and the Vulnerable Persons Relocation Scheme (VPRS), KCC works to ensure that the equality needs of individuals are met as far as possible. During 2023-24, this has included:

- The recruitment of a dedicated ESOL Coordinator to improve support to individuals experiencing barriers (due to childcare, disabilities or mental health) to accessing English language lessons. Healthcare information relating to chicken pox, measles and hepatitis has also been provided in alternative languages, with translated literature on maternity care provided to pregnant clients.
- The establishment of a pathway to mental health support which tackles cultural stigmas around mental health and engages experts with migration experience and cultural and religious understanding.
- Women's groups have been held in Afghan hotel accommodation for conversation classes, mental health support in other languages and cooking, walking and sewing groups.
- Information sessions have been held on adjusting to life in the UK, highlighting the rights of women and the differences in UK law around gender equality as well as tackling issues relating to domestic violence sensitively with expert professionals.
- Individuals involved in legal processes or complaints procedures within the NHS have been supported to ensure they are not adversely affected by their unfamiliarity with UK systems and processes. Support and advocacy has also been provided with regard to engaging with statutory services, accessing adult social care or gaining support for disability or additional needs.
- Tutors have been engaged where children have been impacted by significant time out of school or cannot access education, to ensure that they are able to develop English language proficiency and other basic skills such as maths and science so that they are not marginalised from their peers.
- Liaising with Kent Fire and Rescue and local Community Policing teams to deliver safety advice which takes into consideration the fears and specific needs of the cohort, including language barriers, fear of authority, and experience of traumatic events.

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<sup>24</sup> Live Well Kent and Medway Link Workers attended a Gurkha families health day at the community centre based at Shorncliffe barracks, and South Kent Mind has been present at the Royal Gurkha Rifles Unit Health Fair 2024.

### **Homes for Ukraine**

- 5.20 Within the Homes for Ukraine scheme, across service delivery, translated materials have been provided to ensure information on available services and support is easily accessible; this is also supported by two Ukrainian staff members in the service. This has included signposting to access to education and further education, with support workers able to assist with applications. Additionally, where social care support is required, relevant referrals are made, with support from the team to provide translators and a familiar face. The service has also been supported by Adult Education, to ensure courses can be accessed by all, with the provision of additional online ESOL and English language courses for those unable to attend during working hours. The service has worked to support guests' access to employment, working with Kent Teach for individuals who hold teaching qualifications and with a number of guests finding employment with district council teams. Families are supported to engage with a range of support services and integrate into local communities, with specific support hubs held within local areas to enable guests to socialise and share advice.

### **Case Study: Community Transport Grant Scheme**

- 5.21 In the context of a reduced local supported bus budget and service, our Public Transport service has worked to mitigate the potential impacts on people with protected characteristics via the promotion of the Community Transport Grant scheme. To maximise the potential benefit to local communities, funding was awarded for specific user groups and activities, as well as for scheduled bus services. This included provision for medical appointments for older and disabled persons in North West Kent; social activities and shopping trips for disabled and older people; days out for carers, and transport to warm places, food banks and dementia awareness groups. Awards were also made for transport that catered to clients who are neurodiverse or have sensory impairments to attend various sports and theatre activities and forest school, and to enable access to community events such as fetes, concerts and food festivals for older people who are unable to access transport without assistance.

### **Case Study: Kent Downs**

- 5.22 Kent Downs' Putting Down Routes project seeks to encourage new audiences from under-represented communities to visit the North Downs Way National Trail and enhance parts of the trail so that they are more accessible to a wider range of people. In support of this project, the service has worked with Black Girls Hike<sup>25</sup> and Wild with Wheels<sup>26</sup> to promote and deliver walks. For those unable to physically access the Kent Downs, the team financed a digital film of the Darent Valley River and trialled a virtual reality experience following the River Darent from source to sea, enabling access to the feeling of being outdoors in Kent's natural environment. They have also worked to ensure the

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<sup>25</sup> Black Girls Hike is a charity which works to provide a safe space for Black women to explore the outdoors, and reconnect with nature, hosting group hikes, outdoor activity days, and training events.

<sup>26</sup> Wild with Wheels is a charity which offers free, safe and accessible routes for guided, interactive nature walks and experiences for people with disabilities and impairments.

GeoDiversity project<sup>27</sup> is accessible to a wide range of groups, developing supporting educational toolkits with partners, organising nature engagement activities with the Beacon School for children with Special Educational Needs (SEN), and working with Touchbase Care<sup>28</sup> to promote understanding of the project with a creative session working with clay. In recognition of its achievements with the 'Up the Kent Downs' Muslim Hikers Coastal Trek campaign in the previous period, the service was awarded 2023 the Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Campaign award at the 2023 Travel Marketing Awards.<sup>29</sup>

**5.23 Libraries, Registrations & Archives (LRA)** have continued to proactively work to ensure that their services are as inclusive and accessible to as many people as possible; during 2023-24, this included:

- [Virtual library tours](#) were mapped out online for a third of Kent's libraries. This resource will support individuals with a range of needs to understand how they can access our sites, including those with physical disabilities, people who are neurodivergent and parents with newborns or pushchairs.
- Work to provide 'Dementia Friendly' and 'Autism Friendly' library sites, by building staff awareness, delivering adjustments within buildings, providing social stories and virtual tours on the library website and making pledges to improve services for these groups.<sup>30</sup>
- Continued to celebrate inclusive calendar events throughout the year. This included working with a customer to create a bookmark to raise the profile of black women in football for Black History Month, and the Books Beyond Words (BBW) Book Group at Deal read 'A Refugee's Story' and recorded the session, which was posted on social media as part of Refugee Week. This helped to promote a positive narrative and challenge underrepresentation and negative stereotypes that are often experienced by these two community groups.
- Specific groups and sessions have continued to be held across library sites to support and bring together individuals with diverse needs; for example, Ashford Library held their first in-person visually impaired reading group session since Covid, and Thanet Libraries hosted groups of Adults with Learning Disabilities.
- Canterbury Library launched their Ukrainian book collection and have also run a regular 'Tea and Talk' Chinese/English talk time, allowing people to practice their English.

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<sup>27</sup> The GeoDiversity project was launched in July 2023, and will help more people to discover their local incredible geodiversity and explore personal stories and connections with the landscape; this will include events, activities and learning opportunities, and explore how the Kent Downs have influenced stories of immigration and settlement that in the area.

<sup>28</sup> Touchbase Care is a community group located in Folkestone's Creative Quarter, which takes an innovative and holistic approach to supporting adults and young people with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, neurodiversity and sensory impairment.

<sup>29</sup> The Travel Marketing Awards, organised by the Chartered Institute of Marketing's Travel Group (CIM TG), is the most prestigious event in the travel and tourism marketing calendar and one of the industry's most sought-after accolades.

<sup>30</sup> Libraries in the following districts have been accredited as Working to Become Dementia Friendly – Ashford, Canterbury, Dartford, Folkestone & Hythe, Gravesham, Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Swale, Tonbridge, Thanet & Dover and Tunbridge Wells.

- BSL services were used to fulfil a marriage ceremony for a housebound couple, and to support a Notice of Marriage appointment for a couple in the Tunbridge Wells Register office.

## Consultation

- 5.24 When considering the accessibility of KCC consultations, two key aspects have been considered – 1) how accessible participation was, and 2) how communications and advertising about the consultation were used to maximise engagement from those who might be affected, including underrepresented groups. Of the 35 consultations held during 2023-24, 28 were advertised both digitally and physically. Whilst the remaining 7 were advertised solely via digital methods, these were primarily aimed at stakeholder organisations. To promote both the accessibility of participation and the inclusivity of engagement and advertising for consultations, there are a range of standard measures in place.<sup>31</sup>
- 5.25 A range of action was taken to support the accessibility of engagement with 2023-24 consultations. Community Wardens provided support to older service users to enable them to take part in the ‘Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS) Review’ consultation, with a proforma developed to capture feedback from dementia cafes, youth groups and warm hubs. Four online parental meetings took place during the ‘Locality Model for Special Educational Needs Inclusion’ consultation, to explain proposals, answer questions and encourage parents to participate. To strengthen the accessibility of the annual budget consultation, a BSL translation was provided for the Cabinet Members’ introduction video, along with Easy Read and Large Print versions of all documentation and the introduction of a Budget Quiz to provide a new way for people to engage with and understand the proposals. As part of the ‘Adult Social Care Charging Policy – Higher Level Disability Benefits’ consultation, accessibility was enhanced through activities such as providing the option for individuals to telephone for support and staff completing an online form on their behalf.
- 5.26 Across consultations held during 2023-24, various attempts have been made to target impacted individuals and reach minority groups within Kent communities. For both the ‘Adult Social Care Charging Policy’ and ‘Future of Blackburn Lodge Care Home’ consultations, letters were posted to individuals that would be directly impacted by proposals, with Easy Read versions provided as required. As part of the ‘Family Hubs’ consultation, promotional postcards were translated into Punjabi, Polish and Slovak, to ensure that individuals that do not have English as a first language were aware of the opportunity to engage. Trusted agents have also been used to reach people

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<sup>31</sup> To support the accessibility of participation, word versions, hard copies, translations and alternative formats of documents and questionnaires can be made available. In order to promote inclusion and engagement in consultations, consulting services are required to identify their key stakeholders and consider their potential needs to engage. Services will also typically email their stakeholder list to invite their participation and promotion of the consultation within their networks. This typically includes relevant Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) organisations that represent or work with specific protected characteristic groups that the service wishes to engage.

who might not normally engage with KCC, with health visitors and community-based midwifery services promoting the 'Best Start for Life Strategies' consultation to mothers and fathers directly, and communications sent via Kent Parents And Carers Together (PACT) regarding the 'Early Years Provision Review for Specialist Nurseries'. Community Wardens were provided with postcards and briefings in order to promote the 2024-25 Budget Consultation to the people they support, who are often vulnerable and have a number of protected characteristics.

- 5.27 Reactive communications were also issued for consultations where underrepresentation was identified in responses. Paid-for Facebook advertising was introduced to engage more fathers and male carers in the 'Family Hubs' consultation and to increase the response to the annual budget consultation from Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals. Similarly, Facebook advertising was used to extend the reach of the 'Best Start for Life Strategies' consultation in areas with larger Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic populations, with representation of these groups in the promotional material issued. In an attempt to engage with younger people who are traditionally less likely to respond to consultations, 'Kent's Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plan' consultation included the option to respond with comments via a map with drop pins.

## Digital Exclusion

### Consideration and mitigation of Digital Exclusion

- 5.28 Review of the equality analysis for digital projects or services via the EqIA App remains our primary mechanism to monitor the consideration of digital exclusion in the delivery of KCC information and services.<sup>32</sup> Of the 193 EqIAs that were published in 2023-24, 25 concerned digital projects, or services that would be delivered, at least in part, digitally. For 13 of these, physical options were available, or potential methodologies to mitigate digital exclusion were identified. For 11 of these, digital exclusion would not have been an applicable concern, and there was only one project where digital exclusion could have been considered but was not.
- 5.29 Information on activity undertaken by services during 2023-24 in support of this Equality Objective has continued to demonstrate that consideration and mitigation of the impact of digital exclusion has been integrated into day-to-day service delivery, with a wealth of supporting examples received from our services. This has included the maintenance of physical options for accessing services and provision of a physical presence and communication methods in our local communities, as well as support to service users to help them to understand how technology can help them, and initiatives to promote digital inclusion. Some examples include:
- To support participation from individuals who may be digitally excluded, the **Heritage team** undertakes a number of outreach activities, such as

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<sup>32</sup> Whilst there is a potential knowledge gap for services that are not new and have existed for some time, this review offers a useful starting point.

providing print-outs of database information to those without online access, and regular visits to local metal-detecting clubs to help pair less digitally able people with individuals who can support them.

- Whilst similar services in other areas of the country have moved to online-only models of delivery, KCC's condom programme has maintained physical collection sites to ensure that all people that need access to free condoms (aged 24 and under) can continue to do so if they do not have access to a smart device. Following a review, the psychosexual service has also continued to offer face-to-face appointments where patients expressed a need or preference for this method of consultation.
- **Kent Integrated Domestic Abuse Service (KIDAS)** providers have worked with charities to provide laptops, mobile phones and data bundles to individuals who have fled domestic abuse, to enable them to seek employment, attend therapeutic programmes and support their children to access education or other services.
- The **Kent Community Warden Service (KCWS)** has continued to act as a physical presence within Kent communities, to support digitally excluded individuals to access KCC services and information they would otherwise be unaware of, including key messages from other council services, such as live consultations, flood and extreme weather information and public health alerts.
- During 2023-24, **Public Health's Stakeholder Engagement team** held a Digital Roadshow to bring information and guidance on new digital developments in social care to individuals that prefer to access this in person. Over 20 locations and local community groups were visited to demonstrate the functionality and range of online tools and resources available, with signposting to digital inclusion support available from Digital Kent.

5.30 **ASCH's Operations** team has worked to engage and inform individuals who may not have the digital knowledge to understand how digital tools and technology could support them. Technology Facilitators within the Technology Enhanced Lives Service (TELS) work closely with individuals to develop their understanding of how technology can help them, with one-to-one support provided where required. Similarly, a trial of technology hospital facilitators was supported with NHS England funding; this put in place a dedicated resource to help people to be discharged from hospital with technology and support for those who were digitally excluded or with limited digital skills. The Digital Roadmap was also co-developed with individuals who receive care and support: this sets out the service's key digital priorities for 2024-25 and includes ambitions around digital inclusion.

#### Digital Inclusion Initiatives

5.31 **Digital Kent** have continued to deliver projects and schemes to support residents to become more digitally included, working in partnership with NHS Kent and Medway, NHS Health Education England, UK Power Networks and SGN to tackle inequalities and digital exclusion. During 2023-24, the service has continued to develop the following key activities:



- Digital Champions Network – over 700 champions, speaking more than 40 different languages have been recruited into the network, which provides training opportunities and digital upskilling within Kent communities.
- Digital Support & Skills – providing Digital Hubs and support sessions in community settings to individuals who are digitally excluded, helping them to apply for or find information for public services online.
- Hardware Access – providing 2-in-1 laptops to residents that are digitally excluded.
- Connectivity Access – providing connectivity solutions for a time-limited period (usually 12 months) to those that cannot afford to stay online through their cellular data or broadband.

5.32 **Growth & Communities’ Innovation and Business Intelligence (IBI) Communications Team** has developed the [Teacher in your Pocket](#) resource<sup>33</sup> with content related to the dangers of counterfeit and unsafe goods, to be shared with digitally excluded individuals by their family, friends, carers, community or other voluntary organisations. This was supported by a promotional campaign, with the videos being viewed over 50,000 times. Following this success, the platform will be expanded to capture further topics, including tackling loneliness and social isolation in the coming year. **North West Kent Countryside Partnership** have continued to deliver their digital inclusion partnership project, providing tablets to enable Age UK service users to access footage of wildlife from the cameras set up in the Age UK garden.

### Conclusion & Next Steps

5.33 Overall, data presented within this section demonstrates that the council has continued to excel with regards to the accessibility of its information and services. Provision of accessible information is becoming the status quo, in terms of the production of ‘easy read’ documents, simplified information and readily available translations in high demand languages. In addition to utilising the services offered by our Alternative Formats team, officers across services are using their own skills and more informal channels to ensure that the information they produce can be accessed by wide groups, and where there is an emerging need, further action has been taken to address this. During 2023-24, we have also seen increasing engagement with the digital accessibility agenda, including access to accessibility software and hardware for our staff. Physical accessibility has also continued to be prioritised, with action taken to improve our sites and address issues or complaints where these occur, and a potentially exciting upcoming programme of works within the Property team. Equally, the extent of examples of mitigation and consideration of digital exclusion and maintenance of physical options can offer a high level of confidence that this need is well considered as a business as usual concern.

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<sup>33</sup> This includes three accessible and easy to understand explainer videos to address the dangers of counterfeit and unsafe goods and how to report them, in the context of the cost of living which makes all individuals more vulnerable to making economic choices that might put them at greater risk, such as unsafe electrical products.

5.34 Evidently, there are particular services that have really excelled in their contribution to this objective during the period; as such there is potentially an exercise to promote this across other services in the coming year, to share learning, practices and approaches to support improvement. Additionally, as our greatest area of success, there is an opportunity to work with services to understand how we could attempt to be more aspirational in this area. This could include consideration of how well the full range of protected characteristics are considered within work to improve the accessibility of our information and services, as needs associated with disability, age and English as an Additional Language have dominated in the period.



## 6. Work with our strategic partnerships to understand and support the diverse needs of our communities.

- 6.1 This Equality Objective was developed as a legacy of KCC's effective and collaborative partnership working during the pandemic, in order to maintain and improve upon the opportunities that our strategic partnerships provide for achieving equality outcomes. As part of our approach to this objective, we have developed a mechanism to capture the full picture of the council's strategic partnerships, and thereby develop an understanding of how these have supported positive equality outcomes. Being the first year that this in place, this data has been used to establish a benchmark for future reporting and has been supported by more detailed information on how a number of our strategic partnerships and more informal partnership working arrangements have had a positive equalities impact in the period.

### Work with Strategic Partnerships

#### KCC's Strategic Partnerships

- 6.2 During 2023-24, work was begun to develop a mechanism to capture key strategic partnership information, with the view to develop a Strategic Partnership Register which would be updated on an annual basis. This information was collected via an MS Form, which also included two equality-related questions to inform the council's progress with this Equality Objective. Data collected for 2023-24 showed that KCC is currently a member of at least 55 strategic partnerships. Of these, 73% (40) either had an equalities focus, or had made some kind of equality considerations. Only 47% (26) of these had conducted a partnership EqIA. As the first year in which this data has been collected, this is a positive indicator of the extent to which our strategic partnerships are supporting our equality ambitions, as well as offering the opportunity to extend this further. Indeed, there is a potential piece of work to drill down into this further, to consider the specific equality impact our strategic partnerships are already having, and to engage with relevant KCC officers to review partnership EqIAs, promote good practice or unlock other opportunities. This will be a focus for the 2024-25 year. Looking ahead, there is also the intention to widen the questions asked in relation to equalities to further enrich our understanding of the equalities impact KCC has in collaboration with its strategic partnerships, and to continue to promote this activity via staff communications, to increase the number of strategic partnerships captured in this exercise. The following sections provide further details of the equalities work undertaken by just a few of the council's strategic partnerships in the period.

#### Integrated Care System (ICS) Partnership

- 6.3 Following approval of the Kent and Medway Integrated Care Strategy, partners have worked to develop a Shared Delivery Plan, mapping individual strategies and projects that will contribute to the delivery of the strategy's

shared objectives. This is supported by a set of indicators to enable oversight of progress and deep dives into any areas of concern.

- 6.4 The Integrated Care System (ICS), working with the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership, has committed to integrate and improve support for people and employers so that more people with health conditions and disabilities can start, stay and succeed in work. To support this, work began to develop an Integrated Work and Health Strategy, setting out the actions all partners will take to ensure that people can receive holistic support to overcome barriers to work. These could include work and health coaching, access to physical and mental health services, skills development and community support for issues like social isolation. This will also include support for employers to recruit, retain and support people with health conditions and disabilities at work. Looking ahead, the strategy will be shaped by engagement activity, to include people who are not working or may have to stop working due to a health condition or disability.
- 6.5 The Kent and Medway Children and Young People Programme Board<sup>34</sup> have refreshed their Children and Young People Framework, which forms the blueprint for aligning the efforts of different sectors and agencies to meet the needs of Children and Young People across the region. It embraces efforts to close gaps in educational outcomes, provide robust health and social care, improve safety and wellbeing, and prepare young people for a successful transition into adulthood and employment. This has been developed with engagement with children, young people and their parents or carers, with the strategy team attending the Kent Youth Council in January 2024 and running two sessions with a group of children aged 11-17. As part of these sessions, children and young people were asked to design their own Vision Statement and a tagline, which would form the basis of the Strategic Framework.
- 6.6 The Inequalities, Prevention and Population Health subcommittees of the ICS drive the system's work to understand, address and prevent health inequalities and target health, care and support to those at particular risk of developing health conditions. In the period, they worked to identify their priorities for delivery, with the Inequalities subcommittee committing to develop a programme for groups of people who are at greater risk of being socially excluded and having very poor health outcomes, including Gypsy, Roma and Traveller communities. The Prevention subcommittee has approved an action plan for mental health; to support this, an analysis of the equality profile of people with serious mental illness is currently underway. This includes consideration of age and ethnicity and will help to improve understanding and support people to access their physical health check.
- Kent Community Safety Partnership (KCSP)**
- 6.7 During 2023-24, the Kent Community Safety Partnership utilised Crime Reduction Grant (CRG) funding from the Police and Crime Commissioner to deliver training sessions for multi-agency partners on the topic of victim

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<sup>34</sup> The Board brings together Children's Leads from Kent County Council, Medway Council and NHS Kent and Medway ICB

blaming language. This training aimed to reduce deliberate and unconscious use of language that can have a negative impact on victims engaging with support services and the criminal justice system, particularly toward victims of domestic abuse and other forms of Violence Against Women and Girls. Further CRG funding was used by the partnership to support the development of new policies and training around the identification of, and response to, staff and service users presenting with abusive behaviours in order to support the prevention and reduction of incidences of domestic abuse.

### **Kent and Medway Executive Group**

- 6.8 Since 2012 partners have come together to work in collaboration to tackle domestic abuse through the **Kent and Medway Executive Group**.<sup>35</sup> Partners from across the group contributed their data to inform the development of the Domestic Abuse Needs Assessment, which has been used alongside feedback from in-depth interviews with survivors to inform the multi-agency Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy, which has subsequently been through formal public consultation and launched during 2023-24.

### **Youth Justice Partnership**

- 6.9 KCC's Youth Justice service contribute a quarterly report on the equality data of individuals within the system, and the service's workforce, to the Youth Justice Partnership Board.<sup>36</sup> This data collection and sharing across the partnership has subsequently led to proposals to tackle disproportionality within the system, with the prioritisation of avoidance of entry into the youth justice system for over-represented groups. During 2023-24, this has involved the development of a specific policy for managing children in care who are at risk of entering the youth justice system; looking ahead, the service will be exploring with partners how this could be replicated for other over-represented groups, including Black boys and Gypsy, Roma and Traveller children.

### **Kent Housing Group**

- 6.10 During 2023-24, discussions on digital inclusion were held within Kent Housing Group's (KHG) Equality, Diversity and Inclusion sub-group, which led to the development of the Digital Inclusion Project. This focuses on the current and future needs of Kent's most digitally disengaged residents, designing innovative solutions based on people's varying needs to close the digital gap.

### **Partnership Working**

- 6.11 During 2023-24, **Active Kent and Medway** has worked with the Port of London Authority to award £150,000 through their Active Thames programme to 23 Kent projects which aim to encourage physical activity on the tidal Thames and inland waterways. This included [Age UK Kent Rivers](#), which received funding to set-up two walking groups along the Thames Path; one group will specifically support adults with learning disabilities and their support

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<sup>35</sup> This includes KCC, Medway Council, ICB, Probation, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue and Kent's Districts and Borough councils.

<sup>36</sup> This is a multi-agency, county-wide board with membership from key partners including KCC, Kent Police, Health, Education and the National Probation Service.

workers, with the other group open to all, and supported by staff so that older and vulnerable people feel safe and confident to attend.

- 6.12 KCC's **Heritage team** has worked with Highways England and the Museum of London Archaeology to support the 'Underserved Communities' project, with the aim of developing a report to assess findings and make recommendations on the engagement of individuals who are often underserved by archaeology projects. To support this, the service worked with Link19<sup>37</sup> to understand how engagement with people with Special Educational Needs could be improved.
- 6.13 **Environment and Circular Economy** has worked in partnership with charitable organisations across a number of recycling and reuse projects to promote social value and support vulnerable people in Kent's communities whilst diverting items otherwise destined for disposal. This has included a furniture reuse project at Maidstone (Tovil) Household Waste Recycling Centre, run in partnership with Making A Difference to Maidstone (MADM) charity<sup>38</sup> and bicycle reuse projects with FCC Environment and Cycle Circle<sup>39</sup>, and in collaboration with Swale Borough Council<sup>40</sup>. In partnership with KCC's ASCH directorate, NRS Healthcare and the NHS, the service has enabled the reuse of old and unwanted medical equipment from four HWRCs across Kent.<sup>41</sup> Since launch in June 2023, over 1,000 items were collected, cleaned and reused by NRS Healthcare in the local community. Looking ahead, there is the intention to extend the scheme to other HWRC sites, and widen the scope to include electrical community care aids.
- 6.14 In **Libraries, Registration and Archives**, The Books Beyond Words Book Group at Ashford Library invited police officers to discuss their role and how they can help support people with learning disabilities. Group members shared their experiences of disability hate crime, which were subsequently followed up by the police, who have helped support a member to resolve an issue. Thanet Libraries held workshops and coffee mornings in partnership with local Mencap groups, and Sensory Storytime was held at Cheriton

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<sup>37</sup> Link19 is a Care and Education organisation in Gravesham for special educational needs (SEN) students which aims to deliver a range of educational, employability and life skills development for learners aged 19-25 years old

<sup>38</sup> MADM is a charitable organisation that supports individuals and families who find themselves in crisis through homelessness, domestic abuse, addiction, financial need, unemployment, relationship breakdown and more. This project saw furniture items delivered to the HWRC's dedicated 'reuse container' sold on in MADM's shops to raise money in support of outreach work or gifted to local residents in crisis. A pilot of this project was also run at Allington HWRC, with preparations underway to open a 'Reuse Shop' at the site in 2024-25.

<sup>39</sup> Bicycle reuse events were hosted at Ashford HWRC to encourage customers to bring in unwanted or broken bikes for repair or reuse for parts. Donations were collected by Cycle Circle, repaired and sold for affordable prices, with the proceeds used to fund their repair shop and the roll-out of the 'Cycle Community' programme, which delivers maintenance and repair workshops and bicycle training for all ages.

<sup>40</sup> As part of the 'Swale Cycle-re-Cycle programme', a bike collection container was provided at Sheerness HWRC. These bikes were then refurbished by inmates at HM Prison Swaleside and made available to charities and the local community at low cost.

<sup>41</sup> Items such as walking aids, grab rails, handles, furniture raisers, bath lifts and wheelchairs can be taken to Allington, Dover, Swanley and Tunbridge Wells HWRCs for reuse.

Library as part of a visit from the Bridge Resource Centre for adults with learning disabilities.

### Conclusion & Next Steps

- 6.15 The baseline data from 2023-24 for the extent to which strategic partnerships across the council support equality outcomes and analysis offers a positive starting point for future improvement. In addition to promoting this information collection exercise and gaining more extensive and detailed information in coming years, there is also the potential to identify new opportunities for joint equality work, and to share partnership learning more widely across KCC's services. To support continuous improvement in this area, this will be a key activity for exploration in 2024-25. Furthermore, anecdotal examples and case studies of where our formal and informal partnership working has supported equality outcomes has evidenced that these are having a real impact and supporting the delivery of KCC's wider Equality Objectives. There are multiple examples where work in partnership has supported our ambitions in terms of collecting and analysing equality data; developing a better understanding of the needs of diverse groups; removing barriers to access for protected characteristic groups services, and mitigating the impacts of digital exclusion.

## 7. Continue to be an inclusive employer which provides fair, open and equitable access to career progression and a trusted environment in which staff feel confident to call out discriminatory behaviour.

7.1 This is the first of the two equality objectives that focus on activity and progress across equality, diversity and inclusion for the council's workforce. As part of our approach to this Equality Objective, we have begun with an analysis of metrics and activity that contribute to a picture of the council's inclusivity as a whole. This is then supported by findings related to our learning and development offer as an indication of the inclusivity of career progression opportunities. Finally, we have explored data around incidents, discriminatory behaviour and sickness absence to determine our progress in maintaining a trusted working environment for our staff.

### An inclusive employer

#### People Strategy 2022-27

7.2 The People Strategy 2022-2027 sets out KCC's strategic statement of intent and aspiration for KCC as an employer, and fundamentally underpins all KCC activity to ensure we continue to be an inclusive and diverse employer. Progress is actively monitored across the four overarching themes via the 13 KPIs set out within the strategy, with the detail available within the **annual People Strategy 2022-27 progress report**. The 2023-24 report highlighted the following achievements for the past financial year: development of the new grading structure; refreshed employee Health & Wellbeing Strategy; targeted leadership team intervention; investment in developing leadership and management; work to promote an inclusive workplace culture; development of KCC career pathways for people aged 16-25, and improvements to recruitment branding.

7.3 KCC takes a multifaceted approach to assessing how inclusive it is. As such, one indicator must not be looked at in isolation but rather read as part of the greater whole to understand the Council's journey against its inclusivity indicator. The following sections look at component elements that contribute to the narrative of how inclusive the Council is.

### Total Contribution Pay (TCP)

7.4 Analysis of TCP ratings received by staff and their distribution across the protected characteristic groups can provide useful insights that contribute to the overall picture of how inclusive KCC is as an employer. An analysis of TCP<sup>42</sup> ratings for 2023-24 demonstrates that there has been minimal change to existing areas of disparity for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, disabled staff and older and younger staff (aged over 65, and 25 and under). This was also somewhat reflected in the Staff Survey 2023 results, with White

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<sup>42</sup> Total Contribution Pay (TCP) is the Council's current performance management and pay scheme

British staff answering questions regarding pay and benefits more positively than Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff.

- 7.5 Throughout 2023-24 and into 2024-25, work has been undertaken to develop the new pay structure and approach to performance management, for delivery from April 2025. It is intended that this will address a number of challenges that are causing pressures on the current pay and grading structure, aid recruitment and retention, and continue to give us a robust equal pay position. The new performance management approach will place greater emphasis on recognition on excellent performance through cash and non-cash awards. The equity of application will be monitored, and findings included in the 2024-25 report.

### Gender Pay Gap

- 7.6 The median pay gap for KCC has increased from the figure last year which stood at 12.6%. This can be explained by the very small movement of 1% of males from the lower middle quartile to the upper middle quartile. KCC's mean pay gap has reduced to 10.9% from 11.4% previously. This is because there was a lower % of males in the upper pay quartile, and an increase of females in the upper middle quartile. KCC compares favourably to the overall pay gap figure for employers based in Kent and the Southeast.<sup>43</sup> KCC does not operate a traditional bonus scheme, however managers can recognise individual performance using cash awards. During 2023-24, this constituted 7.1% of male employees and 3.3% of female employees. Compared to the previous year, the median figure has increased significantly with females receiving cash awards twice as big as males (as explained in our data above). The mean bonus (cash award) pay gap figure has decreased from 21.4% to 10.7%. The full report is available [here](#).
- 7.7 During 2023-24, KCC has also continued to work to develop mechanisms to enable pay gap analysis to be undertaken across the other protected characteristic groups.

### 2023 Staff Survey

- 7.8 KCC's staff, via its staff survey in 2023, indicated that some highly positive responses to questions associated with inclusion. Positive responses to questions under the theme of '**Inclusion and Fair Treatment**' remained high at 82.1%, as did responses to 'my manager', at 73.4%. In comparison to the previous year, these haven't moved much. Despite this, disabled staff continued to answer less positively across survey themes when compared with non-disabled staff. In addition, there was a slight decline in positive responses around whether employees felt that positive action would be taken in response to individual needs and personal circumstances. Whilst staff were less positive regarding whether KCC respects individual difference, responses were more positive around staff feeling valued for the work they do. Overall,

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<sup>43</sup> For employers in the Southeast, the median pay gap is 18.3% and the mean pay gap is 15.7%. For employers based in Kent, the median pay gap is 16.6% and the mean pay gap is 15.8% (ONS provisional data, 2023).



this suggests that the council's priorities in this area must continue, which includes a focus on disability inclusion and ensuring staff feel that their individual needs will be met.

### Workplace Adjustments

- 7.9 In 2023-24, the number of **workplace adjustments** reported has continued to rise, reaching 3,714 adjustments, across 1,430 members of staff, equating to approximately 11.4% of the workforce<sup>44</sup>. This is a significant increase of 1,000 adjustments on the previous year, and demonstrative of the success in promoting both the availability of workplace adjustments, and the importance of recording these, and is a positive indicator for our workplace inclusivity as a whole as we create an environment where staff feel comfortable discussing support needed to deliver their best at work. The number of **Inclusion Passports** in place has also significantly increased by 67 (84.8%) compared to the previous year, with a further 61 Inclusion Passports pending at the close of 2023-24. Whilst this suggests that their use is becoming well embedded within the organisation, of the 1,430 employees with adjustments, only 14% have an Inclusion Passport in place; as such, work will continue to promote their use in the coming year.
- 7.10 Work has also been undertaken to ensure that new recruits are receiving the support they need when joining the organisation, with a review of signposting for workplace adjustments and timelines for implementing these. To support this, guidance for recruiting managers has been updated to emphasise workplace adjustments, including system prompts during onboarding and to signpost successful candidates to Access to Work.

### Building Inclusive Cultures

- 7.11 Following last year's pilot of the Building Inclusive Cultures reverse mentoring programme, an evaluation was undertaken with the resulting recommendations taken forward. This included workshops held with middle managers and directorates to explore issues, challenges and opportunities within services. Targeted work has been delivered focusing on specific priority projects including Cultural Growth within Adult Social Care and Health (ASCH). Looking ahead, work will be undertaken to consider how this programme can be integrated into leadership development opportunities.

### Communications and Engagement

- 7.12 During 2023-24, Equality, Diversity and Inclusion-focused communications and engagement activity continued, marking celebratory moments and events throughout the year, including Inclusion week, Windrush day, Black History Month and Race Equality week, Pride Month, World Mental Health Day and Mental Health Awareness Week, International Day of People with Disabilities and Menopause awareness. External speakers were also brought in to lead staff events on Trans Awareness and Visible Difference. In June 2023, Staff Ethnic Diversity Forum worked with North Kent Caribbean Network and

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<sup>44</sup> As of December 2023.



Cohesion Plus community groups to deliver an event marking the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Windrush at Sessions House, which involved an art exhibition and discussion with elders from the Windrush generation. This was attended by the Chairman of KCC, KCC directors, Kent Police and representatives from the staff group and KCC's services. The Kent Windrush 75 flag was raised at the event, which had been designed to specifically mark Kent Windrush communities.

### Staff Groups

- 7.13 As of March 2024, KCC has six staff groups, these are: Level Playing Field (disabled staff and carers of disabled people), Staff Ethnic Diversity Forum, Rainbow (LGBTQ+ staff), Aspire (staff aged 30 and under), Mental Health Support Network and Single Parent Staff Group (SPSG). During the period, coaching was offered to staff groups to support professional growth and development; looking ahead, this approach will continue to be trialled. Our staff groups contribute to all three aspects of this Equality Objective, in providing a safe space for their members to discuss any issues; in providing support and development opportunities to their members, providing feedback on equality issues and ensuring that the employee voice is heard.
- 7.14 Open door sessions with CMT were introduced in 2022 to supplement existing escalation routes for issues identified by staff groups and have continued during 2023-24, with sessions held with Level Playing Field, Rainbow and SPSSG. These resulted in follow up actions being taken forward, which include raising awareness of how the employment offer can be used by managers to support minority groups.

### Workforce Action Plans

- 7.15 The Disability Action Plan has been refreshed this year as a result of a number of Safe Space workshops held between November and April between Level Playing Field and KCC's Corporate Management Team (CMT) to better understand the experience of staff and inform what changes were needed. It captures areas of activity that are likely to have the greatest impact on workplace disability inclusion. The activity aims to increase declaration and representation rates of disabled staff to better reflect the communities we serve, to develop a culture where disabled staff feel confident and reach their full potential, and to involve and engage with disabled staff in decision making.
- 7.16 Key 2023-2024 activity delivered against KCC's **Race Action Plan** included deep dives into recruitment and turnover data relative to Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic applicants and staff; activity to ensure inclusive recruitment practice, the 'My Name Is' initiative, and the delivery of a race-focused equality objective as part of staff's performance management action plans. In support of CMT's Race Action plan, Adult Social Care (ASC) have continued to take part in a **Social Care Workforce Race Equality Standard (SCWRES)**. To support the delivery of the [SCWRES action plan](#), workforce equality data was reviewed within an equalities focused Directorate Management Team (DMT) session in September 2023; managers were asked

to co-develop equality plans within their teams and work was undertaken with staff groups to inform the future development of the SCWRES.

## Fair, open, and equitable access to career progression

### KCC's Learning & Development Opportunities

- 7.17 KCC's principal accredited staff training opportunities are available through use of the apprenticeship levy, which saw 174 new starts during 2023-24. Looking at the equality profile of new apprenticeship starts during the period, the proportion of disabled staff, female staff and staff with a faith/religion increased, whilst the proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff reduced. When reviewed against our workforce profile, disabled staff, transgender staff<sup>45</sup>, LGBTQ+ staff and male staff are underrepresented. Despite this, the level of underrepresentation remains small, overall painting a positive picture of the inclusivity and accessibility of apprenticeships to staff from different protected characteristic groups.
- 7.18 Responses to the 2023 Staff Survey showed a slight increase in the proportion of employees who felt they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities to support their role, with just under half responding positively about opportunities to develop their career in KCC.<sup>46</sup> However, when looking at the responses to questions relating to **'Learning and Development'** more broadly, there continues to be a difference in experience for disabled staff, who answered questions under this theme less positively, and for staff aged 35 and under, who answered more positively than staff aged over 35.<sup>47</sup> This is in line with the apprenticeship levy new start demographics, and suggests that further action may be required in order to ensure an equitable experience for disabled staff and older staff in terms of the learning and development opportunities available.
- 7.19 During 2023-24, a review and evaluation of Skills for Growth<sup>48</sup> was undertaken, to ensure that staff development opportunities are updated in response to staff feedback, and that opportunities remain accessible for all staff. As a result, work has been undertaken with trainers and facilitators to ensure that the community aspect to the learning feels inclusive and supportive to all, with additional materials currently being tested by learners to ensure that these meet the needs of neurodiverse colleagues. In the period, staff also continued to make use of the Development Request process to access professional development that directly supports their role, with 304 staff benefitting from this. In addition, **e-Learning modules relating to**

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<sup>45</sup> For the second year in a row, 0% of apprenticeship starts were transgender, however this can be explained by their relatively small make-up within the overall workforce.

<sup>46</sup> 75.4% staff answered that they felt they were able to access the right learning and development opportunities to support their role in the 2023 Staff Survey.

<sup>47</sup> 67% staff aged 35 and under answered positively, compared to 61% of staff aged over 35. 55% staff with a disability or health condition answered positively, compared to 64% staff without a disability or health condition.

<sup>48</sup> Our Skills for Growth Programme is aimed at all colleagues who are KR3 to KR8 and has been designed to help define clear personal development plans to enable more productive career development conversations with line managers.

**equality and diversity** continued to be made available on KCC's online training platform, Delta. These aim to provide all staff with the tools and knowledge to work in accordance with the council's values and adapt their practice to principles of inclusivity, both when interacting with colleagues and members of the public.

## A trusted working environment in which staff feel confident to call out discriminatory behaviour

### Discriminatory behaviour & Incidents

- 7.20 **Staff Survey 2023** results showed that, should an incident occur at work, staff are highly likely to report this. The results also showed that disabled staff were slightly less likely to report an incident than non-disabled staff, and that Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff were less likely to report than white British staff. Whilst the difference is minimal, this is consistent with the previous year's results. Disabled staff, staff who have carer responsibilities and LGBTQ+ staff reported that they had experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work in the 12 months prior at higher levels than other groups of staff.<sup>49</sup> This is a continuing trend for disabled staff and LGBTQ+ staff. Across all protected characteristic groups, the main source of harassment received was reported to be from a client, a client's relative, or member of the public; as such, there will be a continued focus on addressing bullying and harassment at work, particularly from people external to the organisation.
- 7.21 In 2023-24, there was an overall increase in the number of cases recorded on the **ER Case Management system**. Analysis shows a slight increase in the number of resolution cases which represents 10% of all case activity. Resolution cases concerning bullying and harassment are at a similar level to the last two years and represent less than 3% of the total of all cases. Case levels indicate Managers are taking a proactive approach in managing these cases formally where the informal stages have been exhausted.<sup>50</sup>
- 7.22 KCC's CMT has continued to reinforce the council's zero-tolerance policy toward any form of unacceptable behaviour, bullying or discrimination in the workplace. In addition, three all-manager briefings were held, organisation-wide, to explore issues and required actions relating to Bullying, Harassment and Abuse. To support this, management guidance was shared, including links to key KCC documents policies, and the Health and Safety Incident and Accident reporting form.

### Trusted working environment

- 7.23 The Staff Survey also includes questions which can contribute to our understanding of the KCC working environment more generally. In 2023,

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<sup>49</sup> Whilst 15% staff who responded to the 2023 Staff Survey reported having experienced harassment, bullying or abuse at work within the 12 months prior, this represented 27% responses from disabled staff, 22% responses from staff with carer responsibilities and 21% LGBTQ+ staff.

<sup>50</sup> Overall, 94% staff answered that they would report it if they saw other members of staff subjected to any kind of discrimination, bullying or harassment at work.

there was a high level of positive response to the statements “*I feel able to be myself at work*” (83.4% positive), “*I am treated with respect by the people that I work with*” (83.7% positive) and “*I think that KCC staff respect individual differences*” (80.7% positive), overall showing only a marginal decrease compared to the previous year. There was a slight increase in the level of positive responses to questions regarding feeling valued for the work they do and to feeling involved in decisions that affect their work. Whilst the overall consistency of these responses with the previous year suggests that KCC is maintaining its position in offering a working environment which most staff experience as safe and trusted and that respects individual difference, there is still more to be done in order to drive more significant improvement.

- 7.24 A range of activity has been progressed during 2023-24 to support inclusivity and foster a trusted working environment, with the launch of neurodiversity guidance and e-learning and the roll-out of inclusion of a race equality objective within performance management action plans. Targeted organisational development interventions have also been introduced, with small coaching-led workshop activities held in high-risk teams<sup>51</sup>, and whole-service sessions, which included sessions on culture growth and development in Social Care and Infrastructure and on the behavioural framework and standards in SEND. This work will continue into 2024/25, with the continued scoping of Member development relating to inclusion.
- 7.25 In acknowledgement of the council’s current operating context and the rate of change, the development and delivery of the KCC Change Hub<sup>52</sup> has been a substantial piece of work undertaken during 2023-24. KCC understands that change can be more challenging for neurodiverse staff; as such, the Change Hub will see further development in the coming year, in order to enhance support for neurodiversity and wellbeing.

#### Staff sickness absence and health

- 7.26 Trends related to staff **absence due to sickness** can also be a useful indicator of the inclusivity of the council’s working environment, for example, where staff are supported at work and their individual needs are met through good conversations with their manager, with preventative measures in place, and good role design, this can help people to stay at work and reduce staff absence levels. In 2023-24, on average 8.24 days were lost to staff sickness, which is a slight increase on the previous year and in line with other similarly sized public sector employers. The top five reasons for sickness absence have remained the same, although fewer days have been lost to COVID, with an increase in the days lost to musculoskeletal illness and mental health. Compared to the previous year, numbers have remained largely consistent across the protected characteristics, with no standout trends for specific groups.

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<sup>51</sup> These are teams where there are resource gaps and the service manager or assistant director has identified risk areas in terms of performance or low levels of wellbeing.

<sup>52</sup> The KCC Change Hub on our e-learning platform, Delta, provides a range of tools to support staff and managers through change.

7.27 In addition to attempts to proactively and positively influence staff wellbeing, extensive work was undertaken in the period to provide support to enable staff who are ill to return to work and promote awareness of the support available for managing various conditions at work. Additionally, a targeted approach has been taken to working with teams with the highest absence levels, particularly for sickness relating to musculoskeletal illness and mental health. This involved delivering pilot Q&A sessions to managers and the provision of 1:1 support from a member of the HR team regarding absence management. A similar approach has been taken with wellbeing work, in addition to the roll-out of the Wellbeing Diagnostic Tool in November 2023, which has been designed to improve managers' approach to wellbeing within their teams and reduce sickness absence as a result. Our partnership with Maximus<sup>53</sup> has also been strengthened, to promote them to our staff and managers to support positive mental health.

### Conclusion & Next Steps

- 7.28 Across the three key areas of this Equality Objective, data for 2023-24 has painted a largely consistent picture when compared to the previous year. The council recognises that building an inclusive environment to create a culture where people feel supported to work, perform, innovate and challenge takes time and that there will be fluctuations in data as the expectations of staff and the work landscape changes.
- 7.29 Data has shown the need for a continued focus on disability inclusion in all areas, to improve the experience of disabled staff at work. Additionally, the 2023 Staff Survey suggested that there may be a need to consider barriers to accessing the right learning and development opportunities for disabled staff and older staff (aged over 35). The Staff Survey also indicated that disabled staff and LGBTQ+ staff have continued to experience bullying and harassment at higher levels, and that there is a need to continue to manage incidences of abuse or harassment from members of the public. Looking ahead, with the introduction of the new pay structure in April 2025, recognition mechanisms will be monitored to ensure equity of application, with any issues addressed accordingly to ensure any impact on minority groups is negated.
- 7.30 Despite this, there were some positive indicators of change. Utilisation of Inclusion Passports continued to rise, with a significant increase in the level of reasonable adjustments in place. Staff Survey responses continued to show that staff are highly likely to report this should an incident occur. This report has also shown that a robust range of work has been delivered to improve inclusion in the period, with a particular focus around improving workplace culture and ensuring staff have access to the adjustments they need to be their best at work.

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<sup>53</sup> Maximus, formerly known as Remploy provide free, confidential, one to one mental health support sessions to help KCC colleagues to stay in or return to work.

## 8. Attract and retain a diverse workforce at all levels of the organisation which reflects the communities that KCC serves.

8.1 During 2023-24, KCC has continued to actively promote diversity within the workforce. In the following sections, this activity has been reviewed alongside a comparison of our workforce profile with the Kent county profile and protected characteristic data relating to staff turnover and the diversity of applicants and new hires to the organisation in the period.

### KCC's Workforce Profile

8.2 The diversity of our workforce profile has remained largely consistent when compared with 2022-23, with modest increases in the proportion of disabled, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic and LGBTQ+ staff. Whilst the proportion of LGBTQ+ staff and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff remains largely in line with the county profile, there are larger disparities in the categories of sex, disability, religion/faith and age (people aged between 16-25 or over 65). It is worth noting that whilst the council has continued work to attract and retain staff from these protected characteristic groups, some disparities remain in part due to societal dynamics and structural inequalities at a local and/or national level; for example, lower proportions of disabled people, people aged 16-25 and people aged over 65 in Kent are economically active.

8.3 Further analysis has shown that these trends are reflected in directorate-level data; for example, when looking at the proportion of disabled staff and LGBTQ+ staff, there is a fairly consistent picture across the directorates. However, the variance is more significant for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff in GET, female staff in GET and DCED, and staff with a faith or religion in CED.<sup>54</sup> As part of strategic workforce planning, directorates are considering how to address these trends.

Category	Workforce Profile as of March 2024	Kent County Profile as per Census 2021	Variance
Current total number of FTE (non-schools)	7,874	N/A	N/A
Current total FTE on grades KR6 or below <sup>55</sup>	3,154	N/A	N/A

<sup>54</sup> GET directorate had the lowest proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff (-4.4% compared to the overall workforce profile). GET and DCED directorates had the lowest proportions of female staff (-16.0% and -12.2% compared to the overall workforce profile). CED directorate had the lowest proportion of staff with a religion or faith (-10.3% compared with the overall workforce profile).

<sup>55</sup> Non-schools staff earning up to £23,262



% who are female	79.7%	51.2%	28.5%
% who are Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic	9.4%	10.6%	-1.2%
% who have declared a disability	5.8%	17.8%	-12.0% <sup>56</sup>
% who are LGBTQ+ (16+)	3.4%	2.7%	0.7%
% who are transgender (16+)	0.4%	0.2%	0.2%
% who have declared a religion/faith	45.7%	53.4%	-7.7%
% aged 16-25	5.8%	16.0%	-10.2% <sup>57</sup>
% aged 65 and over	4.8%	20.4%	-15.6%

Figure 5: KCC's 2024 Workforce Profile compared with the Kent County Profile as per the Census 2021

- 8.4 The diversity of KCC's leadership group<sup>58</sup> is positive and has remained stable, with slight improvements to the proportion of female, Black, Asian or Minority Ethnic, and LGBTQ+ employees.

### Retaining a diverse workforce

- 8.5 Our workforce profile data for 2023-24 has remained relatively constant, demonstrating that the council has continued to retain its workforce diversity. With small increases seen for some of the protected characteristic groups, our workforce profile is indicating that work to attract and retain staff who are disabled, have a faith/religion, are older or younger, or are male or female, particularly within our leadership group, is starting to show an impact but the work needs to continue to drive improvements. The following sections will explore whether retention or attraction issues are playing a part for those groups who are currently underrepresented within our workforce profile for 2023-24.

<sup>56</sup> Whilst the Census 2021 showed that 17.8% of Kent residents have a declared disability, a smaller proportion of these individuals will be economically active and therefore the variance compared with this group will be lower.

<sup>57</sup> Whilst the Census 2021 showed that 16.0% of Kent residents are aged 16-25, many of these individuals will still be in education or training and therefore not economically active and therefore the variance compared with this group will be lower.

<sup>58</sup> Employees on a pay scale of KR13 or above.

## Staff Turnover

- 8.6 As of March 2024, KCC's 12-month rolling turnover has fallen to 11.9%; whilst this has been mirrored across the protected characteristic groups, some groups continue to experience a turnover rate above the organisational average. This is greatest for employees aged 65 and over (25.7%), employees aged 25 and under (23.8%) and LGBTQ+ employees (17.7%). Whilst turnover for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic employees is 16.7%, this has fallen significantly from 22.1% in 2022-23. Whilst the staff turnover results have shown an improvement, it is worth noting that responses to the Staff Survey 2023 relating to 'My Plans for the Future' showed that disabled staff and LGBTQ+ staff responded less positively than non-disabled and non-LGBTQ+ staff.
- 8.7 Accordingly, a range of activity has been conducted in 2023-24 to address this, aimed at improving retention for all staff in addition to specifically targeting groups where the turnover rate is highest. This included support provided to staff groups to raise awareness of KCC's employment offer, coaching and other career development opportunities and reiteration of the council's approach to hybrid working to clarify how staff can engage with this. A deep dive analysis was conducted in order to better understand the factors contributing to the above average turnover rate during 2022-23 for Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, and indicated a potential retention issue for staff from this group who work as social workers and/or live outside of Kent. There has also been a specific piece of work to understand the experience of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic students on the Assessed and Supported Year in Employment (AYSE) programme, to review their onboarding experience and identify any barriers to passing the assessment and continuing employment with KCC. This resulted in making the induction process more robust, including a change to the initial communication with ASYE students to make them aware that equality and diversity needs will be explored as part of the programme induction. Additionally, a further focus group was held to explore discrimination issues from service users in the workplace, which found that KCC's Dignity and Respect at Work policy provides robust guidance to managers on how this should be addressed.
- 8.8 In acknowledgement of the important role that managers play in the retention of staff, the Managing Well Campaign was delivered in 2023-24. This included a spotlight on diversity and inclusion, capturing the new neurodiversity guidance and e-learning and promoting the use of Inclusion Passports, the Good Conversations tool and Workplace Adjustments guidance. Whilst there has been a slight increase in the level of positive Staff Survey responses to questions regarding managers in 2023, insight from engagement forums held in the past year has revealed that some managers feel more comfortable addressing issues for some protected characteristic groups than others, and that a more empathetic and nuanced approach to management may need to be promoted. As such, a cross-council managers' session was held on Inclusion to explore scenarios around race and neurodiversity and followed with distribution of a 'managing inclusively' resource pack. Developing managers will remain as a focus for 2024/25, with an extensive plan of work to support improvement.



## Attracting a diverse workforce

### Diversity of Applicants

- 8.9 Looking at applicants for 2023-24, the equality profile remained largely consistent when compared with the previous year. However, there was an increase in the proportion of applicants who were Black, Asian, or Minority Ethnic and applicants with a faith/religion, which increased by 9.7% and 5.4% respectively. As such, when applicant demographics are compared with our county profile, individuals with a disability have continued to be underrepresented whilst a greater proportion of women and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic individuals have applied for roles compared to our county profile. Indeed, across a number of the protected characteristic groups, KCC has attracted a more diverse pool of candidates compared to our current workforce profile. In support of continuous improvement, activity to attract disabled individuals and people aged 16-25 to apply to work with KCC will continue.<sup>59</sup> In the previous report there was also an ambition to improve equality information declaration rates amongst candidates, particularly around disability; this will be a continued ambition in the coming year.<sup>60</sup>

### Attracting diverse candidates

- 8.10 During 2023-24, there has been an emphasis on utilising a variety of channels to advertise vacancies and promote KCC's profile as an employer, in order to attract a more diverse pool of applicants. Activity has included renewal of our contract with LinkedIn; celebrating and welcoming new joiners and staff moving roles on LinkedIn; a refresh of KCC's home pages on Glassdoor and Indeed; advising managers to share job opportunities in their wider networks for increased visibility, and posting new photos and content to our recruitment website and social media to reflect our diverse workforce. Standard advert wording has also been updated to include references to caring responsibilities and 'let's talk flexibility'.

### Attracting young people

- 8.11 The average age of recruits to KCC is mid-30s, as such one of our goals within the People Strategy is to open-up job and training opportunities for younger people. This ambition has been supported a range of activity in the period, to enhance access routes into KCC, and will be a long-term programme of work to support workforce planning and develop KCC as the "first employer of choice". This has included work to enhance support for Social Work Recruitment and grow entry points for the profession. In March 2024, KCC successfully bid to recruit twelve new Social Work Degree Apprentices to Adult Social Care, and the Think Ahead opportunities were launched.<sup>61</sup> The Supported Internship pilot programme for 16-25 SEND

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<sup>59</sup> The proportion of disabled applicants has increased by only 0.3% in 2023-24, whilst the proportion aged 25 and under has fallen by 2.2%.

<sup>60</sup> In 2023-24, the proportion of applicants who chose not to declare for disability increased by 2.1%.

<sup>61</sup> Think Ahead is a charity working in partnership with NHS and Local Authority community mental health services to provide a route into adult mental health social work for graduates and career changes. This project broadens the opportunities for new and existing staff to secure social work qualifications.

students was also launched in the period as an additional pathway into employment for this group. At the end of 2023, The Workforce Development Team began scoping the re-introduction of in-house Work Experience Programmes, which will be tested alongside the development of T Level Qualifications and Internships across the organisation into 2024/25.

#### Diversity in applicant shortlisting

- 8.12 When considering the equality profile of applicants who were hired in the period compared with those who applied, there were some inconsistencies across the protected characteristics. There has been a consistent trend across the last three years, with a higher proportion of Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic applicants than hires. A deep dive analysis commenced in 2023-24 to understand the reasons behind this trend. Looking at the equality profile of staff hired, disabled staff, Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff, LGBQ+ staff and staff aged 16-25 were hired in greater proportions than their makeup in our current workforce profile, demonstrating an encouraging direction of travel.

#### Improved recruitment processes

- 8.13 Building on improvements made to the inclusivity of KCC's recruitment processes in the previous period, during 2023-24 there has been a particular focus on analysis of candidate recruitment experience surveys, which have been introduced to inform any changes required to enhance the candidate experience. Analysis has identified the need for further information in some areas, and the survey questions are being updated in order to capture this. Improvements have been informed by horizon scanning and benchmarking to ensure our approach reflects current best practice, for example, outreach work and the reasonable adjustments provided within recruitment processes. Improvements were also made on the Tribepad recruitment system, with prompts included on the system and within the supporting guidance to ensure that managers use digitally accessible job descriptions. Additionally, the induction guidance has been strengthened to include details on requesting reasonable adjustments, Access To Work and an Inclusion Passport so that conversations are happening at an early stage of someone's employee journey at KCC. Following the introduction of the Recruitment and Selection training in the previous period, an evaluation has been conducted with very positive feedback and high attendance levels from delegates.

#### Conclusion & Next Steps

- 8.14 Overall, data for 2023-24 has shown a consistent picture compared with the previous year. We have begun to see small shifts in our workforce profile in relation to disability and ethnicity, which may be a result of broader activity to attract and retain a more diverse workforce. Looking ahead, work will continue in order to ensure sustained improvements over the longer-term.

- 8.15 Data on both the retention and attraction of staff demonstrates that experience varies across the protected characteristic groups.<sup>62</sup> Staff turnover rates are falling, but there are still a number of groups where this is higher than the average rate. Overall, this suggests that the council should maintain the approach it has taken to improving attraction and retention in the period, and harness opportunities to gain intelligence on the potential factors contributing to this across the protected characteristics, for example via CMT Open Doors with Staff Groups. There is also the potential to consider how intersectionality may contribute to staff's experiences.
- 8.16 Looking at activity undertaken in the period in support of this Equality Objective, it is evident that extensive work has been introduced to respond to staff retention issues, with a particular focus on the impact our managers can have. The council recognises that culture change takes time, and thus it will be important to continue to review the impact of these measures over the course of these equality objectives.

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<sup>62</sup> Data suggests that the underrepresentation of male staff and disabled staff is contributed to by the low proportion of these staff applying for job opportunities, and lower disability declaration rates amongst applicants. Equally, turnover data suggests that once these groups join the organisation, they tend to stay, despite disabled staff reporting a less positive experience across a number of themes. Conversely, it appears that the underrepresentation of younger staff, staff with a religion/faith and Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic staff results from a retention issue.

## 9. Conclusion

- 9.1 Overall, this report has evidenced a positive picture and future trajectory for KCC's progress with its Equality Objectives. 2023-24 has seen substantial improvements to the proportion of Key Decisions which have been supported by an EqIA, with services also increasingly engaging with data collection opportunities and using this data to understand levels of underrepresentation amongst service users. Both the physical and digital accessibility of our information and services has been considered and promoted across services, with specific action taken to address barriers that exist for certain protected characteristic groups, whether this be to access public health services, visit and engage with Kent's natural landscape, or participate in public consultation opportunities. Consideration and mitigation of digital exclusion has also continued to be a priority within service delivery, including within commissioned services. Additionally, we have a breadth of examples of how our Strategic Partnership working has supported equality outcomes more broadly, and specifically contributed to the ambitions of our Equality Objectives. Under our commissioning and procurement Equality Objective, there is great potential with the progress seen within the Commercial Services Group workforce, and the opportunities to extend our own performance measurement mechanisms for commissioning and procurement activity. KCC has sustained its performance regarding its workforce objectives, with a number of positive indicators relating to workplace adjustments, inclusion passports and the diversity of candidates attracted and recruited to the organisation during the period.
- 9.2 Building on the baseline established in the previous year's report, our approach to collecting and analysing data relevant to our Equality Objectives has enabled us to track progress effectively in this year's report. This has shown that our greatest area of success has remained constant, in our Equality Objective relating to the accessibility of our information and services. In support of continuous improvement, our priority will be highlighting and fostering this success between services, and working to identify how we could be more aspirational in the delivery of this Equality Objective. Performance regarding our strategic partnership Equality Objective has also been a highlight of 2023-24, with an extensive range of supporting case studies which have equally supported our ambitions across our other objectives. This period also saw the development of our Strategic Partnership Register survey which has provided a rich source of data to enable the exploration of untapped opportunities and promotion of best practice in the coming year.
- 9.3 Whilst information received for our Equality Objectives relating to data collection/analysis and commissioning and procurement also evidenced some best practice activity across the organisation, examples for these were not as easily obtainable. Developing how we better evidence progress for these objectives will therefore constitute one of our priorities for the coming years and will involve engagement with our divisions across the organisation. Within the commissioning and procurement Equality Objective in particular, there is substantial opportunity to improve both our monitoring mechanisms and the

guidance, processes and templates used to improve practice. There is also opportunity to build on our success in driving up the proportion of Key Decisions which are supported by an EqIA to improve officer compliance with the other requirements of our EqIA Policy.

- 9.4 Data relating to our workforce objectives has evidenced a largely consistent picture compared to the previous year, indicating that the council has been able to maintain the inclusivity and diversity of its workforce during 2023-24. Whilst small improvements have begun to be seen, the council recognises that more substantial changes will take time to materialise as our organisational culture evolves and responds to inclusion activity. Our priorities for these objectives will therefore remain constant, with a focus on monitoring the impact of activity introduced in the period; promotion of disability inclusion; reinforcing our zero-tolerance policy and managing incidents of harassment, bullying or abuse; inclusive recruitment processes; and the attraction of diverse groups to the workforce, including young people.

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**By:** Pascale Blackburn-Clarke  
Customer Experience and Relationship Manager  
**To:** Policy and Resources Committee  
**Date:** 10 September 2024  
**Subject:** Customer Feedback Policy Updates  
**Classification:** Unrestricted

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**Summary:** This report outlines the changes to the Customer Feedback Policy and the key reasons for the Council not adopting the LGSCO's Code for Complaints Handling timescales.

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## **1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In Autumn 2023, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (LGSCO) consulted on the potential introduction of a new code of conduct. The code looked to streamline processes so that they are consistent across all of England's Councils. Timeliness and consistency across all councils played a big part in the Ombudsman's reasons for wanting to introduce the code. Kent County Council responded with robust reasons as to why the proposed changes should not go ahead.
- 1.2 The outcome of the consultation was published on 8 February 2024. The Ombudsman launched the code in February 2024 with a view to Councils adopting it by 2026/27.
- 1.3 This paper is intended to set out the reasons for the Council not proceeding with the code at this present time but to state our intention to do so once the Council has improved its current position in relation to the timescales for complaints handling.
- 1.4 Key performance targets and activity indicators on the level of and response times to complaints are reported on in the Performance Dashboard, which is discussed at Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on a quarterly basis. The latest of these papers is referenced at the end of this report.
- 1.5 An annual report on customer feedback is presented to Governance and Audit Committee. The latest report looking at 2023/4 will go to the October meeting of that Committee. This includes details of the annual letter from the LGSCO which offers valuable opportunities to learn and improve. This year's letter, whilst noting that the Authority had not successfully implemented LGSCO recommendations in 2% of cases, commented that "officers have engaged constructively in meetings with my Assistant Ombudsman during 2024, setting out plans to improve your complaint handling functions. I am pleased you are committed to resolving the situation."

## **2. Code summary**

- 2.1 The code does not impact statutory timelines already set out in the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 for Adult Social Care complaints and for those eligible for Children Act Complaints process but all other complaints for example, SEN, Highways, Education will be impacted.
- 2.2 For Stage 1 complaints the code allows for acknowledgements to be given within 5 days of receipt, followed by a 10 further days for a response. Any extension should be no more than 10 working days without good reason, and the reason(s) should be clearly explained to the individual. Councils are also obliged to provide the LGSCO's details to the complainant at this point.
- 2.3 Stage 2 follows the same acknowledgement within 5 days and 20 further days for the response. Complainants are not compelled to state why they want an escalation.
- 2.4 MPs and Member enquiries can be dealt with however the Council deems appropriate, but it is considered to be good practice to tell residents that they can use the complaint route instead.
- 2.5 The code gives guidance regarding performance reporting. A self-assessment form has to be completed annually and provided as part of the annual reporting of complaints. This also has to be completed following "a significant restructure, merger and/or change in procedures." This will be challenging for us due to our size and constant change.
- 2.6 There is also a line regarding reporting more widely, "organisations should report back on wider learning and improvements from complaints to stakeholders, such as citizens' panels, staff and relevant committees."

## **3. The Council's current position according to Self-Assessment tool**

- 3.1 The LGSCO has developed a self-assessment tool, which Councils are expected to complete to determine the health of their complaints handling. Appendix A holds a completed copy of the self-assessment based on the Council's current position.
- 3.2 With the exception of the time to respond to stage one complaints, the Council broadly is in line with the Ombudsman's ambitions under the code. Sufficient dedicated resources are available within the complaints teams except when there are consistently high numbers of complaints in a particular area leading to service backlogs

## **4. Potential performance impact**

- 4.1 The current KCC policy allows for 20 working days at stage one. We acknowledge our complaints within 3 days but set the clock running from working day of receipt. Our current Key Performance Indicator for responses



within that timescale is set at 85% but this has not been met for a number of years. Performance currently is at 67% (August 2024), largely due to a backlog within Special Educational Needs and Adult Social Care and Health.

- 4.2 Adults and Children Act complaints are exempt from this code, as are service requests. So this position could improve to some extent under the new code. For example, Adult Social Care complaints are allowed under the Local Authority Social Services and National Health Service Complaints (England) Regulations 2009 makes provision for customers and the complaints team to set the timescales for responding. This can be up to 6 months for the most complex of cases, and means that complaints will often not meet the 20 working day KCC standard. This is because an agreement with the customer has been formed to allow for more time to investigate and respond.

Under the code these complaints would be exempt from the described timescales.

- 4.3 However, the vast majority of our complaints come under the Corporate Complaints procedure, which means that a significant volume of complaints will be expected to be handled in this way, including complex areas such as Special Educational Needs (SEN).

- 4.4 The council has three options regarding this new code of conduct:

1. Adopt the code and aim to meet the new standards immediately

In order to maintain our benchmark of 85% and meet the new code standards, it would be necessary to significantly increase the number of staff managing complaints in the dedicated complaints teams. Currently the teams are managing unsustainable caseloads, and the proposed shortening of timescales will make it harder keep up with the pace required.

The number of staff needed in the front line to respond to complaints would also need to be increased, to enable capacity to respond quicker to complaints. This is expected to be significant in terms of cost to the organisation.

2. Acknowledge and accept lower benchmark for complying with the response timescales.

An alternative is to reduce the floor standard benchmark for handling complaints within the prescribed timescale. This may bring criticism and runs the risk of reputational damage if Ombudsman prescribed timescales are routinely missed. Whilst this option may lessen the impact on staff resources in the service, there will still be a drive to respond in the prescribed timescales to meet any new benchmark.

Whilst there is an argument that says complaints teams should prioritise those it knows can be responded to in time to help achieve the benchmark, it is not always possible to tell which cases will or will not be responded to in time, in advance.

3. Maintain KCC's current policy and intend to meet the LGSCO code when practicable

This would enable the Council to continue putting efforts into achieving its current standards and work towards achieving the code when practicable to do so.

- 4.5 It is proposed that the Council adopts option 3. The risk with not adopting the LGSCO code and instead maintaining existing timescales is that as currently we are not meeting these we will be open to more criticism than previously from the LGSCO. However, it will be made clear that the Council aims to meet the code when practicable to do so.

## **5. Risks in accepting the timelines outlined in the Code**

### **5.1 Prioritisation of work**

- 5.1.1 The Council has limited resources and recognises and prioritises the handling of complaints within that. But it is important not to create a situation where unrealistic timelines mean that instead of being able to work on substantively resolving issues, staff are impeded by the need to respond to additional complaints because those timelines have not been met. In short, these proposals risk collapsing not just the complaint system but whole sections of service.

- 5.1.2 For example; a 10 day turn around in a service such as Soft Landscapes where we receive large numbers of complaints at a particular time of year, means that we are asking the very people who are working hard to complete a programme of work to avoid complaints to prioritise complaints over completing the work that caused complaints in the first place, creating a catch 22 scenario.

- 5.1.3 This is also true of many other high-volume services such as Blue Badges, SEN, Highways and Waste.

### **5.2 Resourcing**

- 5.2.1 Staff morale is likely to be impacted in complaints teams where there has already been backlogs and the churn of complaints received and responded to by the Council is high. It is likely that even with a drop in performance timeline expectations staff will be adversely affected by timescales, and we are likely to see attrition and staff turnover. This will impact relationships with teams, knowledge and support to staff on the front line.

- 5.2.2 The point of an effective and efficient customer service complaints team is to ensure that customers get a fair hearing and that lessons are learned from where we have got things wrong. Rushing investigations means that this is a likely casualty and therefore does not result in better outcomes for either the customer or the Council, which should be learning from mistakes.
- 5.2.3 The potential change in timescales also carries a significant risk for front line staff. The organisation has little room for manoeuvre in how it operates in relation to complaints handling, and a large part of why timescales are not met is workloads. Any change in timescales puts significant pressure on those staff too.

### **5.3 Impact to investigations and issues resolved at stage one**

- 5.3.1 The unintended but inevitable outcome of the LGSCO proposals would be a material weakening of initial complaint investigations with additional complaint burdens, which would be unrecoverable through the remainder of the process. In our professional view, it would also inevitably increase escalation to the LGSCO with a reduction in meaningful outcomes at an earlier stage for complaints – something which would stand in opposition to what we believe the fundamental purpose of the process should be. This in itself would then lead to maladministration for having not properly investigated concerns up front.
- 5.3.2 The proposals do not reflect our experience of complainants, most want their issues resolved as quickly as possible, and miss the opportunity to meaningfully investigate and seek to resolve early where things have gone wrong. The proposals will remove the space for check and challenge within the organisation, which may impede the opportunity for concessions and recognition that might resolve the complaint earlier in a global sense.

### **5.4 Ombudsman sanctions**

- 5.4.1 The Ombudsman states;

*“We may make a finding of maladministration where local councils policies and procedures depart from the Code without sufficient explanation. We may also make a finding of maladministration where a local council, without good reason, does not meet the standards in the Code when responding to an individual complaint.”*

- 5.4.2 Whilst not mandatory it appears that we may find ourselves out of favour on complaints that do escalate to the Ombudsman if we fail to meet our own timescales. Current Council performance means that this would be the case in a significant number of cases.
- 5.4.3 However, the Council does have aspirations to meet the code and will endeavour to do so as soon as possible. We are currently not meeting our own standards and we would need to do so before attempting to adopt a code

which halves the current timescales. The reputational and relationship damage to our residents and customers would be significant.

## **6. Legislative powers & Member involvement**

6.1 The code is not mandatory, the LGSCO do not have the legislative powers given to them under the Local Government Act of 1974 to compel councils to adopt the code, however the Ombudsman has advised that Councils need to consider the code and adoption of the guidance on complaints handling within. They have said that they recognise that some Councils will find it more of a challenge than others to adopt but will be looking for Councils to adopt it by 2026/27 which is when they will consider the code as part of their casework.

6.2 The Ombudsman has stated that

*“Councils should follow the Code unless there are good reasons not to. If a council decides not to follow the Code through its policies and procedures this could be set out in the self-assessment or another report to the relevant Member of scrutiny committee explaining the council’s reasons for this.”*

6.3 Councils across England are currently considering their position in relation to the Ombudsman’s code. Some have agreed to take part in a pilot to help understand the impact and practical advice needed to implement the code fully. Whilst it is clear some Councils are able to adopt the code early, for example those who currently handle housing complaints under the code which is already mandated by the Housing Ombudsman; there are others that are still considering how they will approach the code. These are typically facing similar challenges to ourselves.

6.4 Whilst the policy is an operational matter, it is important that Members have an overview of the proposals and an opportunity to comment on the Council’s intention and the current direction of travel, noting the intention to adopt the code when possible.

## **7. Updating the Customer Feedback Policy**

7.1 The customer feedback policy has not been formally updated since 2017, due in part to the pandemic and more latterly to the Ombudsman’s intention to release a code which was expected to have an impact on any policy decisions we needed to make.

7.2 We have reviewed our current policy with a view to remaining with the Council’s current commitment of acknowledging receipt of all complaints within 3 days and responding within 20 working days for Stage One complaints and 20 working days for Stage Two complaints.

7.3 As this Policy deviates from the Ombudsman’s recommended timelines, Members are asked to review and comment on the Council’s policy and timelines.

7.4 Should Members be minded to consider the adoption of the timescales outlined in the Ombudsman's code of complaint handling, it will be necessary to bolster front line services to enable the handling of complaints within a tighter timeframe. There is likely to be a shift in priorities with the Council's Complaints' Service Level Agreements (SLA) being quicker than some of our Service SLAs, resulting in the potential for more complaints rather than fewer complaints as staff juggle business as usual priorities alongside quicker timescales for complaints.

## **8. Other updates to the Policy**

8.1 There have been a number of other updates to the Policy, including:

1. amalgamating all the complaints policies into one
2. adding clear reasons for not accepting complaints, for example legal cases, alternative appeal routes and HR issues.
3. updating contact details and links.

## **9. Recommendations**

9.1 The Policy and Resources Committee are asked to note and comment on the updated Policy, including direction of travel with regards to the Ombudsman's code.

9.2 The Policy and Resources Committee are asked to comment on and acknowledge the self-assessment form at Appendix A.

### **Report Author**

Pascale Blackburn-Clarke  
Customer Experience and Relationship Manager  
[Pascale.blackburn-clarke@kent.gov.uk](mailto:Pascale.blackburn-clarke@kent.gov.uk)

Background papers:

[Link to last P&R performance report in May.](#)

[Link to the Ombudsman's complaints handling code.](#)

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# CUSTOMER FEEDBACK POLICY (COMPLIMENTS, COMMENTS AND COMPLAINTS)

		Amendments
<b>Document Owner</b>	Pascale Blackburn-Clarke <a href="mailto:Pascale.blackburn-clarke@kent.gov.uk">Pascale.blackburn-clarke@kent.gov.uk</a>  Tel: 03000 417025	
<b>Version</b>	V1.0 - September 2017	
	V1.1 – January 2019	Amendment of acts, addition of privacy notice statement and review date of policy.
	V.1.2 – April 2020	Appropriate Policy Document for GDPR
<b>Approved</b>	V1.0 Policy and Resources Committee – 15 <sup>th</sup> September 2017	
<b>Formal Review Date</b>	September 2022	
<b>Version</b>	V2 for endorsement at committee	Amendments to what we will not accept as complaint, timelines for submitting complaints, minor updates including links etc.

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## Introduction

This policy sets out KCC's position on compliments, comments and complaints management.

KCC has a genuine desire to learn from what our customers tell us and use it to improve:

- the services we provide
- the policies we develop
- how we behave as an organisation.

We are committed to operating an effective customer feedback system that demonstrates to the public that we:

- are putting customers at the heart of everything we do
- listen to what residents have to say
- are open, honest and transparent
- are responsive and fair.

KCC has a centralised approach for complaints, comments and compliments management. Individual Directorates and business units are responsible for supplying the centralised function with appropriate information and responses, enabling the feedback team to respond to in a timely manner. Services are also accountable to the Governance and Audit Committee where they may be asked to report to the committee to respond to questions relating to their residents' and service users' feedback and improvements made as a result.

## Aim of policy

The purpose of this policy is to:

- clarify how the public may make a complaint about us
- define the standards the public can expect when they make a complaint
- recognise the importance of customer feedback in providing feedback about Council services and performance
- set out how the Council will monitor customer feedback and use that information to improve services and identify training needs.

## KCC Complaints' Standard

We will acknowledge receipt of a complaint within three working days.

We will use plain English

We will answer all complaints within 20 working days or explain why a reply may take longer.

## What is a complaint, comment or compliment?

### COMPLAINT

A complaint is an expression of dissatisfaction, however made (whether that service is provided directly by the Council or by a contractor or partner), about the standard of / or the delivery of a service, the actions or lack of action by the Council or its staff which affects an individual or group of users.

## Some examples of what might be complained about:

- An unwelcome or disputed decision
- Concern about the quality or appropriateness of a service
- Delay in decision making or provision of services
- Delivery or non-delivery of services
- Quantity, frequency or change of a service
- Attitude or behaviour of staff
- Refusal to answer reasonable questions
- Giving misleading or unsuitable advice
- How a policy decision has directly affected someone negatively

These definitions are in line with those complaints that are considered by the Local Government Ombudsman.

### Examples:

- a customer complains that the Council has failed to follow its own procedures and that the member of staff dealing with them was rude and unhelpful
- a customer requested several months ago that a pothole outside their house needed repairing, the agreed timescale for fixing the pothole has passed and the pothole still has not been repaired
- a customer is unhappy with the delay in carrying out a social care assessment
- a customer who attends an Adult Education Class complains that when they turned up for their class it had been cancelled and no one had let them know.

### COMMENT

A comment is a general statement about policies, practices or a service as a whole, which has an impact on everyone and not just one individual. A comment can be positive or negative in nature. Comments may question policies and practices, make suggestions for new services or for improving existing services.

### Examples:

#### Positive Comment

- I am very happy that the Council has added book reservations to the online system for the Library Service

#### Negative Comments

- I am unhappy with the Council's decision to introduce parking charges at its country parks
- The website has information that is out of date.

### COMPLIMENT

A compliment is an expression of satisfaction, thanks, praise or congratulations. (Internal compliments are excluded from this process).

### Examples:

- I would like to thank the Customer Service Advisor for the prompt and efficient way in which they answered the telephone and dealt with my query. They were most helpful and friendly
- I was very grateful when I needed to see someone about the difficulties I was having that the Council Officer was able to meet with me in the evening.

## Who can make a complaint, comment or compliment?

Any individual or organisation that uses or receives a Council service or has been affected by the actions of the Council can make a complaint if they are dissatisfied with the service. Complaints can also be made by a relative, a Member or MP, carer, friend or advocate on someone's behalf. We may have to seek consent if someone raises a complaint on behalf of someone else to ensure they agree with that person raising a concern about the service they have received.

If someone lacks capacity to provide such consent, we will need to be satisfied that the person is acting in their best interests. Without this, any response we may be able to provide will be limited in its content.

We will accept complaints relating to:-

- statutory or non-statutory services provided to individual customers
- services provided to schools
- services commissioned and delivered through other providers on behalf of the Council.

The Customer Feedback Policy does not cover complaints from members of staff, trainees, apprentices, or persons on work placements, involving working conditions, pay or other internal grievances.

We will not accept complaints:

- on a matter where the customer or the Council has started legal proceedings or has taken court action, this does not include cases where the customer has simply threatened legal proceedings against the Council. We will investigate complaints from customers that are not related to the legal proceedings or where the investigation will not prejudice the outcome of any current court action or legal proceedings (or criminal investigation).
- which are considered to be the initial reporting of faults, for example on the highways or initial request for services.
- on issues that have already had a decision at Court or in Tribunal.
- on issues that have already had a final decision from the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.
- through the complaints process from members of staff, current or former, in relation to personnel issues. We will only investigate complaints from staff, current or former, if they are in relation to accessing a service as a customer outside of their employment.
- Where over 12 months have passed since the complainant was aware of the issue occurring. We will exercise discretion to accept matters being raised as a late complaint if there are mitigating circumstances that meant someone was unable to raise a complaint earlier.

- Where there is an appropriate alternative route for a complaint to be raised, i.e. appeals panels or tribunals.
- Where someone is seeking payment for loss or damages against the Council. These claims will be passed to the Insurance team to be handled as a claim. We can investigate a complaint but will not be able to decide if we can award damages on behalf of the Council.

In the interests of public efficiency, the Council reserves the right not to pursue a complaint if it is deliberately repetitious or raised with the intent to frustrate processes. The Council expects staff to be treated with respect and dignity throughout the process and will not tolerate rudeness or abuse from people wishing to raise a complaint. The Council reserves the right to discontinue communication if any unacceptable behaviour persists.

If the complaint relates to a member of staff, the Council may not be able to provide details of the outcome of that complaint, depending on the nature of the complaint and its allegations.

## Complaints and Safeguarding

Safeguarding procedures and protection of an individual take precedence over the complaint procedures. Therefore, a complaint investigation may be suspended, depending on the circumstances of the case, until the relevant safeguarding procedures have been concluded.

## How a complaint can be made

A complaint can be accepted in any form (including face to face, email, via social media or by telephone). However, for the sake of clarity, any complaint, and the steps taken to deal with it, should be recorded in writing. We must take account of the complainant's individual circumstances and specific needs when communicating during the complaint process, bearing in mind such issues as disability and first language.

## Stages of the complaint's procedure

Before submitting a formal complaint, we would advise initially raising any issues directly with the member of staff that has been dealing with the person or their immediate manager. Most problems can be resolved this way. However, if informal resolution has been unsuccessful, a formal complaint can be raised.

The KCC complaint process follows three steps:

### Stage 1: Local Resolution

Our standard is to acknowledge the complaint within **three working days**, and to provide a full reply within **20 working days**. Where this is not possible, we will keep the complainant informed at the earliest opportunity before the completion of 20 working days when a full reply is likely to be sent, if this is known. The customer feedback team will work with the service responsible to address the issues raised in the complaint.

## Stage 2: Complaint Escalation

If someone remains dissatisfied, their complaint can be investigated by writing to the Corporate Director of the service involved or responding to our response, requesting it to be escalated to stage 2.

The timescale for a formal response is **20 working days**. For more complex cases it will be a maximum of 65 working days.

At the conclusion of stage 2, the person complaining will be informed of their right to escalate their complaint to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman.

## Stage 3: Local Government and Social Ombudsman

If the person remains unhappy with the outcome of an investigation, they can ask the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) to conduct an independent review of their complaint.

To make a complaint, compliment or comment please use one of the following contact methods:

- [fill in our online form](#)
- call 03000 41 41 41 or text relay 18001 03000 41 41 41
- write to Customer Feedback at Invicta House, County Road, Maidstone ME14 1XX

## Exceptions to the KCC complaints' procedure

There are separate procedures for complaints relating to the following services. This is to take into account the statutory requirements Kent County Council is required to meet.

### Adult Social Care Complaints

#### Stage 1

We will acknowledge the complaint to confirm we have received it, and a member of the Customer Care and Complaints team will contact the person making the complaint to discuss a plan of action to deal with the concerns. This initial communication will normally take three working days.

We aim to respond to most complaints within 20 working days, but additional time is required to investigate more complex complaints. We will keep the complainant informed of any delays in the process. People can expect their complaints to be listened to, to be investigated fairly and responded to.

#### Escalation Stage

The majority of complaints will escalate straight to Ombudsman following investigation and response at Stage 1, however there are circumstances where it may be appropriate to review the complaint and supply a further response, this might be where the complainant

submits new information that was previously not available or asks follow up questions following receipt of their Stage 1 response or where the Council feels there is value in supplying a further response. Each complaint will be considered individually in respect of the circumstances.

## **Stage 2**

If it has not been possible to resolve the complaint, then further contact should be made with the Customer Care and Complaints team using the contact methods above to see if anything further can be done. Contact can however be made at this point with the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#) who will review the way we have dealt with the complaint.

To make a complaint about Adult Social Care please use one of the following contact methods:

- [fill in our online form](#)
- email: [customercarecomplaintsadults@kent.gov.uk](mailto:customercarecomplaintsadults@kent.gov.uk)
- call: 03000 41 04 10
- write to: Customer Care and Complaints Team, 3rd floor Invicta House, County Road, Maidstone ME14 1XX
- text relay: 18001 03000 41 04 10

## **Children's Social Care**

The majority of complaints will be handled via KCC's usual complaints process, however if the complaint is regarding services in relation to the below criteria, it may be handled as a Statutory Children Act Complaint.

- Children in need
- Looked after children
- Special Guardianship support
- Post-adoption support

All new complaints are assessed for eligibility to use this statutory process. Who is making the complaint, what is being complained about, or another concurrent procedure may prevent a complaint from being progressed through this procedure. The customer will be advised accordingly by the Children's Complaints Team if this affects them.

## **Children Act Complaints process**

### **Stage 1 – Local Resolution**

Most issues can be settled quite simply by discussing the problem with a member of staff. Customers may prefer to write to us, and support should be offered locally to do this if required. Formal complaints must be sent or forwarded to the Children's Complaints Team ([csccomplaints@kent.gov.uk](mailto:csccomplaints@kent.gov.uk)) promptly, this is so they can be monitored and progressed correctly.

We will work with the team involved and aim to settle complaints as quickly as possible, usually between 10 and 20 working days. If we become aware that the complaint investigation will take longer, we will keep the complainant updated.

## **Stage 2 - Investigation**

If it is not possible to settle a complaint at Stage 1, or the complainant remain dissatisfied with the response, the complainant may request that their complaint progresses to Stage 2 of the procedure. This can be requested by contacting the Children's Complaints Team and involves an investigation by an Investigating Officer and Independent Person who are appointed to examine the complaint in detail.

If we investigate at Stage 2:

- an Investigating Officer with no prior knowledge of the case will look into the issues raised;
- an Independent Person from an external provider, will also be appointed to oversee the complaint investigation;
- the Investigating Officer and the Independent Person will contact the customer to discuss the complaint and make sure they fully understand the issues.

When the investigation is complete, the Council's response to the findings of the investigation will be sent to the complainant, copies of the investigation reports will also be provided. We aim to do this within 25 working days of the investigation starting, but it can take longer. We will keep the complainant informed of progress. Where it is not possible to complete the investigation within 25 working days, it may be extended to a maximum of 65 working days.

## **Stage 3 – Review Panel**

If the complainant remains dissatisfied following the Stage 2 investigation, they have a right to request for their complaint to be considered again, this time by an Independent Review Panel. A Review Panel will be held within 30 working days of the request being accepted.

## **Stage 4 Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman**

If the complainant remains unhappy with the decision made by the panel about your complaint, they can complaint to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#)

To make a complaint about Childrens Social Care, Special Educational Needs or Education please use one of the following contact methods:

- [fill in our online form](#)
- write to Kent Children's Social Services, Customer Care, Kroner House, Eurogate Business Park, Ashford, TN24 8XU
- call 03000 41 11 11
- email [cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk](mailto:cscomplaints@kent.gov.uk)
- text 07860008025, start your message with the word complaint.



## **Complaints by Governors**

If the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman refuses to consider a complaint brought by a governor, then the local authority will arrange for the complaint and/or the investigation to be independently reviewed. This process only applies where a governor makes a complaint in relation to:

- a. Their personal treatment by the local authority or the conduct of officers acting on behalf of the local authority, and
- b. Relating to their role as a governor of a local authority controlled or maintained school, and
- c. Where the actions complained of do not relate to the management of the school and are not covered by the School's existing complaint process,
- d. Where the LGSCO has refused to consider, accept or investigate the complaint and
- e. Where the incidents complained of took place within the last six calendar months

A copy of any report will be provided to the complainant and the Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education.

## **Complaints about Schools**

If a parent/carer is worried about their child's learning or welfare at school, speak to their child's class teacher or head of year first. If they are not satisfied with the teacher's response, arrange to speak to the head teacher. If this isn't practical, they can ask for a copy of the school's complaints procedure to help them decide whether they wish to make a formal complaint.

## **Local Authority Schools**

The School Information Regulations (England) requires local authority-maintained schools to have a procedure published online for dealing with all complaints relating to their school and to any community facilities or services that the school provides. The procedure should be available to anybody who wishes to make a complaint against the school.

Each school can decide on how many stages the procedure will include, usually two or three.

If a parent/carer remains dissatisfied after completing the school's complaints procedure, then they have a right to refer their complaint to the Secretary of State for Education.

Further information can be obtained by calling the National Helpline on 0370 000 2288 or going online at: [Complaints procedure - Department for Education - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](http://www.gov.uk) or by writing to:

Department for Education School Complaints Unit 2nd Floor, Piccadilly Gate Store Street  
Manchester M1 2WD

## **Ofsted**

In certain circumstances, Ofsted will investigate complaints by parents about their child's school, they will then decide whether to use their inspection powers to facilitate an investigation. Further



information about what complaints Ofsted will investigate can be found online at:  
<https://www.gov.uk/complain-about-school/state-schools>

### **Academy and Free Schools**

The Education (Independent School Standards) Regulations 2010 requires Academy and Free Schools to have a procedure for dealing with complaints from parents of pupils. The procedure must comply with part 7 of [The Education \(Independent Schools Standards\) Regulations 2014](#).

The ESFA (Education and Skills Funding Agency) handles complaints about Academies and Free Schools and if you remain dissatisfied following the Academies complaints procedure the complainant has a right to defer to the ESFA by going [online](#) or by post to: Complaints Team Education and Skills Funding Agency, Cheylesmore House, Quinton Road, Coventry, CV1 2WT

### **Complaints relating to Schools Admissions or Home to School Transport**

#### **Primary and Secondary Schools**

A parent or carer can appeal if you were refused a place at one of their preferred schools.

To appeal for a primary school place please read our [guide](#).

To appeal for a secondary place please read our [guide](#).

#### **Appeal hearing**

The hearing lets a parents/carers explain to an independent appeal panel why they think their child should be given a place at the school and lets the school explain why it could not offer their child a place.

#### **Decision – Primary**

There is a legal maximum class size for reception, year 1 and year 2. This is 30 children per teacher. A parents/carers appeal can be turned down if all the classes have already reached their legal limit, unless:

- the admission arrangements were unlawful
- the admission arrangements weren't correctly and impartially applied
- the decision to refuse admission wasn't reasonable.

We will write to tell the parents/carers the panel's decision as soon as possible. We cannot tell anyone of the decision by telephone.

#### **Decision – Secondary**

We will write to tell the parents/carers the panel's decision as soon as possible. We cannot tell anyone of the decision by telephone.

## **School Transport Appeals**

If parents/carers are unhappy with our decision to turn down their application for free school transport they can call us on 03000 41 21 21 to discuss the reasons why. If they are still unhappy then they have the right to make [an appeal](#).

Parents/carers can attend the hearing to put your case to the panel.

The decision will be sent to you in writing within 5 working days of the appeal hearing.

## **Complain about the appeals process**

Parents/Carers can complain about the way the appeal was carried out, but they cannot complain about the decision itself. To complain about the way in which the appeal was carried out parents/carers can refer their complaint to the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](#).

## **Complaints about a County Councillor**

Our county councillors all adhere to the Kent Code of Conduct for Members.

### **Stage 1**

Further information can be found here:

- [our guide on how to make a complaint](#)
- [the Kent Code of Conduct for Members](#)

Complaints alleging that councillors have breached the code of conduct are reviewed by a Monitoring Officer and an Independent Person. They decide if any action should be taken and if the matter should be investigated and referred to a Hearing Panel.

They will not deal with complaints about things that are not covered by the Kent Code of Conduct for Members. The complaint must state the reasons why it is considered that the councillor has not followed the Kent Code of Conduct for Members.

### **Stage 2**

The complaint must be sent to:

- email [democratic.services@kent.gov.uk](mailto:democratic.services@kent.gov.uk)
- print and post the councillor complaints form to Democratic Services, Kent County Council, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ.

## **Requests for Information**

To complain about our response to a request for information under the Freedom of Information Act or other related legislation:

## Stage 1

Send full details of the complaint asking for an internal review to the Chief Executive's Office

- email [freedomofinformation@kent.gov.uk](mailto:freedomofinformation@kent.gov.uk)
- write to Chief Executive's Office, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone, Kent ME14 1XQ.

Or to complain about a request for access to personal information (subject access requests) or report a suspected Data Protection breach:-

- email [dataprotection@kent.gov.uk](mailto:dataprotection@kent.gov.uk)
- write to Information Resilience & Transparency Team, room 2.71, Sessions House, County Road, Maidstone, Kent. ME14 1XQ

## Stage 2

If the complainant is still unhappy, they can raise the matter with the Information Commissioner:

- call 0303 123 1113
- email [casework@ico.org.uk](mailto:casework@ico.org.uk)
- go to the [Information Commissioner's website](#).

## Complaints relating to the Fluency Duty (Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016)

**Customers wishing to make a complaint under the Fluency Duty Code of Conduct (Part 7 of the Immigration Act 2016) should do so under the normal KCC complaints' procedure.**

Public authorities are subject to the fluency duty in relation to all of their staff who work in customer-facing roles.

The fluency duty does not extend to workers employed directly by a private or voluntary sector provider of a public service.

For the purposes of the fluency duty, a legitimate complaint is one about the standard of spoken English of a public sector member of staff in a customer-facing role. It will be made by a member of the public or someone acting on his or her behalf complaining that the authority has not met the fluency duty.

A complaint about a member of staff's accent, dialect, manner or tone of communication, origin or nationality would not be considered a legitimate complaint about the fluency duty.

For more information on the Fluency Duty Code of Conduct please visit [Microsoft Word - 20161128 FINAL Code of Practice.docx \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](#)

## Confidentiality

Any complaint processed through the procedure will be dealt with in accordance with the requirements of the Data Protection Act (DPA) 2018, General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Freedom of Information Act. A Privacy Notice is available which defines how information is collated and stored for the purposes of handling customer feedback.

## Equalities Data

While responding to customer feedback we may collect equalities data which may include, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, disability or if the person is a carer.

It is not necessary to submit any equalities information if the person chooses not to. KCC is committed to the principle that all our customers have the right to equality and fairness in the way they are treated and in the services that they receive. Any information provided will be used to see if there are any differences in views for different groups of people, and to check if services are being delivered in a fair and reasonable way. No personal information which can identify the individual, such as a name or address, will be used in producing equality reports. We will follow our Data Protection policies to keep all personal information secure and confidential.

Individuals' equalities data will not be included as part of the complaint unless it has been referred to in the body of the complaint and needs to form a part of the investigation or is relevant in how we provide the response.

Processing is necessary for reasons of substantial public interest as the lawful basis on which we collect and use people's special category data for statutory purposes (e.g. when investigating a complaint) or for equalities monitoring, (e.g. when identifying or keeping under review the existence or absence of equality of opportunity or treatment between groups of people with the view to enabling such equality to be promoted or maintained.)

Details of KCC's Equality Policy can be viewed on our website [Equality, diversity and inclusion - Kent County Council](#)

## Vexatious and Unreasonably Persistent Behaviours

The Council is committed to dealing with all complaints equitably, comprehensively and in a timely manner. It does not normally limit the contact that complainants have with Council staff and offices. The Council does not expect staff to tolerate behaviour which is abusive, offensive or threatening and will take action to protect staff from such situations.

If communication from members of the public is offensive or threatening however, consideration will be given to limit the level of contact.

The County Council's guidance on handling unreasonably persistent and vexatious behaviours is set out in separate guidelines and can be located on our website [Complaints and compliments - Kent County Council](#)

## Compliments, Comments and Complaints Monitoring

All customer feedback should be logged, including those that are resolved at first point of contact.

We will collaborate and share learning from customer feedback across the organisation. This will help us to improve our services for our customers. This insight should be used within the business planning process. We are committed to reducing the number of upheld Ombudsman complaints through the thorough investigation of complaints at Stages 1 and 2.

The complaints' system data will be used to report on the Corporate Key Performance Indicators and to compile the Annual Customer Feedback report. This report is presented to the Governance and Audit Committee which is webcast on Kent.gov.uk, the report will then be made available on the website. The report will contain high level information relating to:

- the number of complaints, comments and compliments received by each Directorate.
- how complaints are received; telephone, letter, e-mail
- % answered within standards
- % of those upheld
- performance relating to Local Government Ombudsman complaints
- examples of complaints received and investigated by the Ombudsman
- identified improvements to service delivery introduced in response to complaints
- recommended action to minimise or avoid similar complaints in the future
- recommended procedural improvements for handling and resolving complaints
- identified training and information needs
- compensation paid.

Services will be responsible for, and accountable for, reporting to Governance and Audit the nature of their complaints received at Stages 1 and 2, when requested.

Separate reports detailing the performance of Adult Social Care and Children, Young People and Education complaints are also prepared and presented to their relevant committees.

Our latest reports can be found here - [Complaints and compliments - Kent County Council](#)

## Other Relevant Policies

There are other relevant policies and procedures that staff should reference, these are available on KNet (KCC's intranet):

- Customer Feedback Privacy Notice
- Unreasonably Persistent and Vexatious behaviours Policy
- Data Retention Policy
- Operating Standards
- Records Management Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Data Quality Policy
- Equalities Policy

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## Self-assessment against the requirements of the Code

Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<b>1: Definition of a service request and complaint</b>	We recognise the difference between a service request and a complaint, and these are defined in our policies and procedures.	Yes	
<b>2: Exclusions</b>	Our complaints policy sets out circumstances where we would not consider a complaint. These are reasonable and do not deny individuals access to redress.	Yes	
<b>3: Accessibility and awareness</b>	We provide different channels through which individuals can make complaints. These are accessible and we can make reasonable adjustments where necessary	Yes	
<b>4: Complaint handling resources</b>	We have designated, sufficient resource assigned to take responsibility for complaint handling. Complaints are viewed as a core service and resourced accordingly.	Yes	Under the Council's current 20-day stage one complaints it considers it has sufficient resource with dedicated teams to support Directorates in handling complaints.

<b>Code section</b>	<b>Action</b>	<b>Do we follow the Code: Yes/No</b>	<b>Explanations and Commentary</b>
<b>5: The complaint handling process</b>	We have a single policy for dealing with complaints covered by the Code and individuals are given the option of raising a complaint where they express dissatisfaction that meets the definition of the complaint in our policy.	Yes	
<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 1)</b>	We process stage 1 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.		No – the Council responds to ‘corporate’ complaints within 20 working days.  The Council starts the time from day of receipt, not from acknowledgement of the complaint. The code allows for time to start from acknowledgement. Resulting in 15 day timescales in total.
<b>6: Complaints stages (Stage 2)</b>	We process stage 2 complaints in line with timescales and processes set out in the Code.	Yes	The council starts timescales from day of receipt and not from acknowledgement. This allows for 25 days in total. The Council will continue to start from date of receipt and work to 20 days.
<b>7: Putting things right</b>	When something has gone wrong we take action to put things right.	Yes	
<b>8: Performance reporting and self-assessment</b>	We produce an annual complaints performance and service improvement report for scrutiny and challenge which includes a self-assessment against the Code.	Yes	An Annual Report is presented to Governance and Audit Committee.



Code section	Action	Do we follow the Code: Yes/No	Explanations and Commentary
<b>9: Scrutiny &amp; Oversight</b>	We have appropriate senior leadership and governance oversight of the complaints process and performance.	Yes	<p>The person responsible for managing the complaints teams, has access to both the Chief Executive and the Council’s Monitoring Officer and a regular slot at CMT.</p> <p>Key performance and activity indicators are presented quarterly to Policy and Resources Committee and an Annual Report is presented to Governance and Audit Committee.</p>

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**From:** Clair Bell, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services  
 Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10 September 2024

**Subject:** Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings  
 24/00070 - Nuclear compliance 2024

**Decision no:** 24/00070

**Key Decision:** *involves a new Strategy or Policy outside of the Policy Framework*

**Classification:** UNRESTRICTED

**Electoral Division:** Romney Marsh – Tony Hills

**Is the decision eligible for call-in? Yes**

**FOR INFORMATION ONLY**

**Summary:** A decision was taken outside of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee as it could not reasonably be deferred to the next programmed committee for the reason(s) set out below.

This was necessary to ensure that sufficient time was available post taking the decision to update and amend the Dungeness B Offsite Emergency Plan in time for the next multi agency exercise (which is in late September) and consider any changes to the KCC emergency plan prior to the exercise.

**Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to note that Decision No. 24/00070, Nuclear compliance 2024, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council’s constitution.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 In accordance with governance arrangements, all significant or Key Decisions must be *considered by the relevant* Cabinet Committee for endorsement or recommendation prior to the decision being taken by the Cabinet Member or Cabinet.
- 1.2 Due to the timescales involved to update the Dungeness B Offsite Emergency Plan in time for the next multi agency exercise and to consider any changes to the KCC emergency plan prior to the exercise it was not possible for this decision to be discussed by the Cabinet Committee prior to it being taken by the

Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services. Therefore, in accordance with the process set out in the Council's Constitution, the Chairman for this Cabinet Committee, and Local Member were informed prior to the decision being taken and their views were recorded on the Record of Decision attached. After the decision was taken, it was published.

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### **Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to note that Decision No. 24/00070, Nuclear compliance 2024, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

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## **2. Background Documents**

- 2.1 Record of Decision No. 24/00070  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126414/RoD%2024-00070%20Nuclear%20compliance%202024%20signed.pdf>
- 2.2 24/00070 Decision Report  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126415/24-00070%20-%20Decision%20Report.pdf>
- 2.3 Decision Report Appendix B – Aerial photo view of Proposed Revision to Detailed Emergency Planning Zone (DEPZ)  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126416/24-00070%20-%20Appendix%20-%20Aerial%20Photo.pdf>
- 2.4 Decision Report Appendix C - Published Equality Impact Assessment (EQIA)  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126417/24-00070%20-%20EQIA.pdf>

## **3. Contact details**

<p><b>Report Author:</b> Andy Jeffery Head of Resilience and Emergency Planning Telephone number: 03000 42 18 71 Email address: <a href="mailto:andy.jeffery@kent.gov.uk">andy.jeffery@kent.gov.uk</a></p> <p>Adam Feacey Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager Telephone number: 03000 41 27 34 Email address: <a href="mailto:adam.feacey@kent.gov.uk">adam.feacey@kent.gov.uk</a></p>	<p><b>Director:</b> Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure <a href="mailto:Rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk">Rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</a> 03000 41 67 16</p>
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## DECISION REPORT TO COMMITTEE

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**From:** Peter Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services  
Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure

**To:** Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee – 10 September 2024

**Subject:** Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee Meetings  
Urgent Decision 24/00078  
Disposal of Land at Intersection of M20/M25, Swanley, Kent

**Decision no:** 24/00078

**Key Decision:** *involves expenditure or savings of maximum £1m.*

**Classification:** **Unrestricted report with Exempt Appendix A**, which is not for publication under Paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Local Government Act 1972 - Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information).

**Electoral Division:** Swanley – Perry Cole

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**Is the decision eligible for call-in?** *No – exempt*

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### FOR INFORMATION ONLY

**Summary:** An urgent decision was taken outside of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee as it could not reasonably be deferred to the next programmed committee for the reason(s) set out in below.

#### **Recommendation(s):**

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to note that Decision No. 24/00078, Disposal of Land at Intersection of M20/M25, Swanley, Kent, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

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### 1. Introduction

- 1.1 In accordance with governance arrangements, all significant or Key Decisions must be listed in the Forthcoming Executive Decision List and should be submitted to the relevant Cabinet Committee for endorsement or recommendation prior to the decision being taken by the Cabinet Member or Cabinet.

- 1.2 Due to the timescales involved in the property transaction which were not anticipated, and the completion scheduled for 27 August 2024, it was not possible for this decision to be discussed by the Cabinet Committee prior to it being taken by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services. Therefore, in accordance with the process set out in the Council's Constitution, the Chairman and Group Spokespersons for this Cabinet Committee, the Chairman and Spokesmen for the Scrutiny Committee were informed prior to the decision being taken and their views were recorded on the Record of Decision attached. After the decision was taken, it was published.

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## Recommendation(s):

The Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee is asked to note that Decision No. 24/00078, Disposal of Land at Intersection of M20/M25, Swanley, Kent, was taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

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## 2. Background Documents

- 2.1 Record of Decision No. 24/00078  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126424/24-00078%20-%20URGENT%20ROD.pdf>
- 2.2 24/00078 Decision Report  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126418/24-00078%20-%20Executive%20Decision%20Report%20-%20Disposal%20of%20Land%20at%20Intersection%20of%20M20M25%20Swanley.pdf>
- 2.3 Decision Report *EXEMPT* Appendix A
- 2.4 Decision Report Appendix B - Site Plans  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126420/24-00078%20-%20Appendix%20B%20-%20Site%20Plans.pdf>
- 2.5 Decision Report Appendix C - 24/00078 Equality Impact Assessment  
<https://democracy.kent.gov.uk/documents/s126421/24-00078%20-%20Appendix%20C%20-%20EqIA.pdf>

## 3. Contact details

<b>Report Author:</b> Simon Dodd Disposals, Acquisitions & Special Projects <a href="mailto:s.dodd@kent.gov.uk">s.dodd@kent.gov.uk</a> 03000 41 69 76	<b>Director:</b> Rebecca Spore Director of Infrastructure <a href="mailto:Rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk">Rebecca.spore@kent.gov.uk</a> 03000 41 67 16
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By virtue of paragraph(s) 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A  
of the Local Government Act 1972.

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## POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE - WORK PROGRAMME 2024/25

<b>27 November 2024 – 10am – agenda setting 16 October at 3pm</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan</li> </ul>	John Betts Dave Shipton	<i>Regular Item - Annual item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Programme 2024/25</li> </ul>		
<b>15 January 2025 – 10am – agenda setting 2 December at 3pm</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan</li> </ul>	John Betts Dave Shipton	<i>Regular Item - Annual item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent</li> </ul>	Tim Woolmer	<i>Regular Item - Annual item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department</li> </ul>	David Whittle Matt Wagner	<i>Regular Item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Kent and Medway Partnership Domestic Abuse Strategy</li> </ul>	Iona Hunter-Whitehouse	<i>Annual Progress Report</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Programme 2025</li> </ul>		
<b>5 March 2025 – 10am – agenda setting 20 January at 2.30pm</b>		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Risk Management (Including RAG ratings)</li> </ul>	David Whittle Mark Scrivener	<i>Regular Item - Annual item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cyber Security</li> </ul>	Lisa Gannon	<i>Regular Item - Annual item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Contract Management Review Group update</li> </ul>	Clare Maynard	<i>Regular Item - Biannual</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work Programme 2025</li> </ul>		
<b>8 July 2025 – 10am – agenda setting TBC</b>		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update</b></li> </ul>	John Betts Dave Shipton	<i>Regular item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department</b></li> </ul>	David Whittle Matt Wagner	<i>Regular Item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Kent Partnerships Update - Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) and Kent Connects</b></li> </ul>	Rebecca Spore Phil Murphy Julie Johnson	<i>Regular Item – Annual Item</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Work Programme 2025</b></li> </ul>		

## PATTERN OF REGULAR ITEMS

<b>JANUARY</b>	<b>Annual</b>	Draft Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Zena Cooke Dave Shipton
	<b>Annual</b>	Implementation of the Armed Forces Covenant in Kent	Tim Woolmer
	<b>Every other meeting</b>	Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department	David Whittle Matt Wagner
<b>MARCH</b>	<b>Annual</b>	Risk Management (Including RAG ratings)	David Whittle Mark Scrivener
	<b>Annual</b>	Cyber Security	Lisa Gannon
	<b>Six-monthly</b>	Contract Management Review Group update	Clare Maynard
	<b>Every other meeting</b>	Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	Zena Cooke Dave Shipton
<b>MAY</b>	<b>Annual</b>	Kent Partnerships Update - Kent Estates Partnership (KEP) and Kent Connects	Rebecca Spore Phil Murphy Julie Johnson
	<b>Six-monthly</b>	Facilities Management update	Rebecca Spore
	<b>Every other meeting</b>	Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department	David Whittle Matt Wagner
<b>JULY</b>	<b>Every other meeting</b>	Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	Zena Cooke Dave Shipton
<b>SEPTEMBER</b>	<b>Six-monthly</b>	Contract Management Review Group update	Clare Maynard
	<b>Every other</b>	Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and	David Whittle

	<b>meeting</b>	Deputy Chief Executive's Department	Matt Wagner
	<b>Every other meeting</b>	Regular Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) update	Zena Cooke Dave Shipton
<b>NOVEMBER/ DECEMBER</b>	<b>Annual</b>	Annual Equality and Diversity Report (in 2022 moved to January)	David Whittle
	<b>Six-monthly</b>	Facilities Management update	Rebecca Spore
	<b>Annual</b>	Draft Revenue and Capital Budget and Medium-Term Financial Plan	Zena Cooke Dave Shipton
<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	Enterprise Business Capabilities - Update	Lisa Gannon
<b>TBC</b>	<b>TBC</b>	Update on KPSN	Lisa Gannon