



KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Meeting of the Authority

Monday 7th July 2025

10.30am

AGENDA

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

Thursday 7th July, 10.30 am

Ask for: **Kirsty Driver**

To be held at Kent Fire and Rescue Service HQ
The Godlands, Straw Mill Hill, Tovil, Maidstone ME15 6XB

Telephone: **(01622) 692121**

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

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

A Routine Business

- A1. Election of Chair 2025/26
- A2. Election of Vice-Chair 2025/26
- A3. Chair's announcements
- A4. Membership Changes and Apologies for Absence
- A5. Declarations of interest in items on this Agenda
- A6. Minutes of the Authority Meeting held on 18 February 2025 (for approval)
- A7. Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee – 24 April 2025 (for information)

B For Decision

- B1. Review of Proportionality and Appointments to Committees and Outside Bodies for 2025/26
- B2. Community Risk Management Plan 2025- 2029
- B3. Governance and Policy Update
- B4. Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement 2024/25
- B5. Amendment of Carbon Neutral Target
- B6. Provisional Revenue and Capital Budget Outturn for 2024/25
- B7. Treasury Management Year End Report for 2024/25
- B8. Financial Summary Update for 2025/26
- B9. Appointment of Monitoring Officer July 2025

C For Information

- C1. Activity Update (Presentation – can be viewed on the Authority's website)
- C2. Information Update (Presentation – can be viewed on the Authority's website)
- C3. Monitoring Officer's Annual Report 2024/25

D Urgent Business *(Other items which the Chair decides are urgent)*

E Exempt Items

None

Kirsty Driver
Clerk to the Authority
27 June 2025

Please note that any background papers referred to in the accompanying reports may be inspected by arrangement with the Lead/Contact Officer named on each report.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of a Meeting of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority held on Tuesday, 18 February 2025 at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters.

PRESENT: - Mr P Barrington-King, Mr A Brady, Mr N Chard (Chair), Mr P Cole, Mr N Collor, Mr M Hood, Mr D Jeffrey, Mr B Kemp, Mr M Dendor, Ms S Hohler, Mr V Maple, Ms J Meade, Mr M Sole, Mr B Sweetland, Ms Z Van-Dyke.

APOLOGIES: - Mr D Beaney, Mr A Booth, Mr D Crow-Brown, Ms L Parfit-Reid, Mr M Prenter, Mr A Ridgers, Mr S Manion, Mr J McInroy, Mr C Simkins.

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington, the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, Mrs A Hartley; the Director, Response and Resilience, Mr M Deadman; Director Prevention, Protection and Customer Engagement, Mr J Quinn; Interim Director Finance, Mr B Fullbrook, Assistant Director, Response, Mr N Griffiths, Assistant Director, Resilience, Mr C Else; Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions, Mrs N Walker; and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs M Curry.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Mr M Scott, Kent Police and Crime Commissioner, Ms C Valmond, Monitoring Officer, Mrs J Waterman, Independent Person and Mr P Cuttle, External Auditor.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

20. Chairman's Announcements

(Item A1)

- (1) The Chair welcomed Ms C Valmond, the Authority's Monitoring Officer, to the meeting.
- (2) The Chair welcomed Mr P Cuttle, External Auditor, to the meeting. Members also gave their thanks to Paul as he will be standing down as the Authority's External Auditor Engagement Lead. Paul is being replaced by Matt Dean.
- (3) Members gave their thanks and expressed their gratitude to Alison Hartley, Director of Finance who will be retiring from Kent Fire and Rescue Service in May.
- (4) Members welcomed Barrie Fullbrook as the Authority's Section 151 Officer and Interim Director of Finance.
- (5) Members gave their thanks and expressed their gratitude to Marie Curry who is standing down as Clerk to the Authority. Members welcomed Kirsty Driver who will be taking over this role.
- (6) The Authority sent their best wishes to Charlie Simkins who is currently unwell.

21. Membership

(Item A2)

- (1) The Chair gave thanks to the Members who were not standing in the next Kent County Council election for their valuable contribution to the Authority throughout their term of office.
- (2) The Chief Executive, on behalf of Officers of the Authority and Mr V Maple, on behalf of Members gave thanks and gratitude to Mr N Chard for his exceptional leadership as Chair of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority. They acknowledged his invaluable contribution and commitment during his long tenure.

22. Minutes of the Authority – 17 October 2024

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Authority meeting held on 17 October 2024, be approved and signed by the Chair as a true record.

23. Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee meeting held on 6 November 2024

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 6 November 2024, be noted.

24. External Auditors Annual Report 2023/24

(Item B1 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) Members considered the External Auditors Annual report for 2023/24; the assessment made on the Authority's Value for Money arrangements covering key criteria such as financial sustainability, governance and how the Authority has improved on economy, efficiency and effectiveness. Alongside this assessment Members also considered the Opinion of the Financial Statements for the year ending 2023/24.
- (2) Members gave their thanks to Paul Cuttle and the work of the External Auditors.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the External Auditors Annual Report 2023/24 as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the remaining contents of the report, be noted.

25. Financial Update for 2024/25

(Item B2 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Authority considered a report which set out the latest forecast outturn position for the Revenue and Capital Budgets, the forecast on year-end reserve balances as well as the latest treasury position.
- (2) Members placed on record their thanks to the Director of Finance and her team for well written and detailed reports.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the proposal to transfer the final revenue budget underspend to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve, be approved in principle.
 - (b) the contents of the report be noted.

26. Community Risk Management Plan Response Time Standards and Council Tax Consultation

(Item B3 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered the findings from the responses to the public consultation on the proposed changes to the way the Service targets their response time standards. This work forms part of the wider programme of the Service's Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP). The consultation also sought views from the public in relation to setting the Council Tax for 2025/26.

- (2) Members commented on how pleasing it was to see a high number of responses to this year's consultation.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the findings from the public consultation on the proposed changes to response time standards and the council tax options for 2025/26, be approved. This includes:
 - (i) the changes to the Service's response time definitions.
 - (ii) the changes to the Service's response time targets.
 - (iii) the Council Tax options for 2025/26, as set out in the consultation.

27. Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2025/26 and Draft Medium Term Financial Plan 2025-29

(Item B4 - Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered a report setting out proposals for its Revenue and Capital Budgets and Council Tax levels for 2025/26; the assumptions used in developing the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025-29; the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy and related Prudential Indicators; the Reserves Strategy and Capital Strategy.
- (2) Members placed on record their thanks to the Director of Finance and her team for the excellent way in which the Authority's finances are managed.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Statement of Assurances by the Treasurer (Chief Financial Officer), as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.
 - (b) the revenue budget proposals and the resulting net budget requirement for 2025/26 of £98.232m, as set out in Appendix 2, be approved.
 - (c) the £81k revenue budget saving in relation to the Council Tax Administration grant provided to billing authorities, be approved.
 - (d) a total requirement from Council Tax of £64.507m to be raised through the precept to meet the 2025/26 revenue budget requirements, which requires an increase in Council Tax of 5.5%, resulting in the following annual charges for each Council Tax Band be approved.

Council Tax Band	Annual Charge
A	£63.24
B	£73.78
C	£84.32
D	£94.86
E	£115.94
F	£137.02
G	£158.10
H	£189.72

- (e) the Chief Executive and the Director of Finance, in consultation with the Chair of the Authority, to make any late adjustments which may be required to the net revenue budget, arising as a result of any late changes to the Council Tax, Business Rates or Government Funding be approved.

- (f) the Capital Budget of £13.677m for 2025/26 and related expenditure commitments following on in later years, together with the sources of funding identified to fund the expenditure, as set out in Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
- (g) the Capital Strategy, as attached at Appendix 3 to the report, be approved.
- (h) the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy, including the appropriate Prudential Indicators as set out in Appendix 4 to the report, be approved.
- (i) the Reserves Strategy as set out in Appendix 5 to the report, be approved.
- (j) the assumptions being used to develop the Medium-Term Financial Plan for 2025-29 as set out in Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

28. Pay Policy Statement 2023/24

(Item B5 – Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered the draft Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26, which the Authority is required to publish before the start of the new financial year as defined within the Localism Act 2011.
- (2) The Chair congratulated Mr Maple on his appointment to the National Joint Council.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the Authority's draft Pay Policy Statement for 2025/26, as attached at Appendix 1 to the report, be approved.

29. Policy and Governance Update

- (1) The Authority considered a report detailing four new policies for approval as well as a number of updates. The new Policies for approval included:
 - A. Business Engagement Policy
 - B. Intervention and Enforcement Policy
 - C. Home Fire Safety Visit Policy
 - D. Education Policy
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The four new policies as set in out in the report and attached at Appendices 1 to 4, be approved.

30. Amendment to Carbon Neutral Target

- (1) Members considered a report which sought approval to the amendment of the Authority's carbon neutral from 2030 to 2050.
- (2) Mr Hood raised his concerns about pushing back the Authority's target to 2050. In recognising the challenges that the Service would face in trying to hit the target in 2030, he felt that it would be helpful if Members were sited on an action plan which set out how this target would be achieved.
- (3) Mr Sole echoed the comments made by Mr Hood and asked whether the action plan could be brought to the next meeting for further review. Mr Sole said that he would prefer seeing the plan where incremental reviews can be incorporated to measure against hitting our target, say for timeframes of every 10 years, ie targets for 2030, 2040 and 2050.

- (4) In acknowledging the comments made by Members, the Chief Executive explained that as part of the Service's heavy fleet replacement programme, options are being explored for the use of HVO fuel which would have a significant reduction on the Authority's carbon emissions. She explained that these changes would be more financially achievable in comparison to property modifications. However, a replacement plan for vehicles is still a 10-15 year programme. When it comes to property, she also added that the installation of heat source pumps had also been considered, but this was at a considerable cost. In addition some buildings may also require extensive renovations to existing facilities, to enable these changes. As such costs at this stage were prohibitive and could not be progressed unless external sources of funding became available to meet the cost of the necessary work.
- (5) Mr Brady also suggested that the Authority sets incremental targets within the action plan so that progress could be monitored more easily. He also suggested that comparisons be done with other Fire and Rescue Authorities to understand what they are planning to achieve to meet the target, this may help establish some best practice.
- (6) Mr Hood and Mr Sole put forward a Motion to defer this report to the next meeting of the Authority to allow time for the action plan to be reviewed and appropriate targets can be considered.
- (7) Mr Maple added his support for the deferral of this report so that these important issues can be considered.
- (8) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) This report is deferred to the next meeting of the Authority so that time is allowed to review the action plan and subsequent targets, be approved.

All votes carried, with no member voting against.

31. Adoption of the Members' Allowances Scheme 2025/26

(Item B8 - Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) It is a requirement of the Local Authorities (Members Allowances) (England) Regulations 2003 that every local authority must formally adopt a new Members Allowances Scheme each year. The Authority consider the Scheme for 2025/26.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the existing Members' Allowances Scheme, as set out in Appendix 1 to the report, be formally re-adopted for 2025/26.

32. Review of the Authority's Standing Orders and Member Code of Conduct

(Item B9 – Report by Clerk to the Authority)

- (1) Following a comprehensive review of the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members and the Authority's Standing Orders, Members received a report which outlined proposed amendments for approval.
- (2) Mr Jeffrey requested that 2.23 on the Standing Orders 'if a member fails to attend three consecutive meetings without valid reason or prior notification' is changed to **two consecutive meetings** as this would be more reasonable given the infrequency of meetings of the Authority and its sub-committee.

- (3) On the point above Mr Maple requested that reference is also made in the same vein to if the Chair misses two consecutive meetings without valid reason or prior notification, then this is referred to the Vice Chair or Chief Executive to deal with.
- (4) On 3.1 of the Standing Orders, regarding Motions, Mr Hood expressed his concern that giving 5 days' notice in writing should a Member wish to present a Motion would take away from the natural debate held at the meeting. Mr Hood referred to the previous debate held on the Authority's carbon neutral target, an item previously discussed on this agenda. Mr Sole agreed with this view.
- (5) Both Mr Hood and Mr Sole requested that the wording '5 days' notice in writing should a Member wish to present a Motion' be removed from the Standing Orders to which the Chair put this to a vote.

Carried 13 votes for to 2 against.

- (6) RESOLVED that:
 - (a) The Authority's Standing Orders as attached to Appendix 1 of the report and subject to the further amendments as mentioned in (2) and (3) above, be approved.
 - (b) The proposed amendments to the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members, as detailed at Appendix 2 to the report, be approved.

33. Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee's Annual Report to the Authority
(Item C1 – Report by Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee)

- (1) The Authority received a report which detailed a summary of the activities and training undertaken during the year by the Audit and Governance Committee. The report demonstrates the effectiveness of the Committee in assessing and maintaining the Service's internal control environment and governance arrangements.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the contents of the report be noted.

34. Mid-Year Treasury Update 2024/25
(Item C3 – Report by Director Finance and Corporate Services)

- (1) The Mid-Year Treasury Management and Investment update 2024/25 was reviewed at the November 2024 Audit and Governance Committee and is now presented to the Authority for Members' information.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) the contents of the report be noted.

35. Activity Update

(Item C3 - Presentation by Assistant Director Response and Director Prevention and Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety)

- (1) The Authority received a presentation on a noteworthy operational incident which covered the firefighting and rescue techniques that were employed, the equipment and resources used and what was learnt as a result of the incident.
- (2) As part of the presentation there was also an overview on the building safety activities in relation to a high-risk premises in West Malling.
- (3) RESOLVED that the presentation be noted.

36. Information Update

(Item 4 - Report by Chief Executive)

- (1) The Authority considered information updates on:
 - A. Summary of Progress Against the Six Strategies
 - B. Inspection Update and National Issues Update
 - C. Performance Update
 - D. Response and Resilience Update
 - E. Prevention, Protection, Customer Engagement and Safety Update
 - F. Freedom of Information request update
 - G. Insurance Information Update
 - H. Pensions Board Update
- (2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

KENT AND MEDWAY FIRE AND RESCUE AUTHORITY

MINUTES of the Meeting of the Audit and Governance Committee held on Thursday 24 April 2025, at Kent Fire and Rescue Service Headquarters, The Godlands, Tovil, Maidstone, Kent, ME15 6XB.

PRESENT: - Mr A Booth, Mr P Cole, Mr B Kemp, Mr V Maple, Ms J Meade, Mr J McInroy, and Mrs J Waterman (Independent Member).

APOLOGIES: - Mr N Collor, Mr D Crow-Brown and Mr M Hood.

OFFICERS:- The Chief Executive, Miss A Millington; Director of Finance, Mr B Fullbrook; Director Prevention, Protection and Customer Engagement, Mr J Quinn; Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions, Mrs N Walker; Strategy and Risk Manager, Mr P Goodwin; Head of Policy, Dr O Thompson and the Clerk to the Authority, Mrs K Driver.

ALSO IN ATTENDANCE: - Ms H Ward the Authority's Deputy Monitoring Officer; Ms L Taylor and Mr R Smith, Kent County Council (KCC) (Internal Audit); Mr M Dean, Grant Thornton (External Audit).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Chair's Announcements

(Item A1)

- (1) In light of the upcoming elections, The Chair thanked all who have served on the Committee for their contributions.

2. Membership

(Item A2)

- (1) There have been no membership changes to the Committee since the last meeting.

3. Declarations of interest

(Item A3)

- (1) None to declare

4. Minutes

(Item A4)

- (1) RESOLVED that:
 - (a) The minutes of the Audit and Governance Committee held on 29 January 2025 be signed as a true and correct record.

5. External Auditors Indicative Audit Plan for 2024/25

(Item B1 – Report by Director of Finance)

- (1) The Committee received the External Auditors' Indicative Audit Plan for the 2024/25 financial year, a summary of the key areas which the Auditors are required to review to ensure compliance with auditing standards, as well as the basis for assessment of the Authority's Value for Money arrangements.

- (2) In response to questions from Mr Booth on where estimates for building and land valuations come from, The Director of Finance responded that they are from external valuers, however there is the opportunity to challenge where appropriate.
- (3) Mr Booth questioned the Amber rating for financial sustainability. The External Auditor confirmed that this was their judgement for the 2023/24 financial year.
- (4) Mrs Waterman queried whether the scale fee includes the IFRS16 fee or if this is in addition. It was confirmed that the IFRS16 fee is additional.
- (5) RESOLVED that:
 - (a) the External Auditors Indicative Audit Plan for 2024/25, be approved.

6. Accounting Policies and Accounting Estimates to be Applied by Management for 2024/25
(Item B2 – Report by Director of Finance)

- (1) The Committee received a report on the Accounting Policies and Accounting Estimates to be Applied by Management for 2024/25.
- (2) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The responses to the questions raised by the External Auditor in their Audit Risk Assessment, be approved.
 - (b) The proposed accounting treatment in relation to leases, be approved.

7. Treasury Management Indicative Outturn for 2024/25
(Item B3 – Report by Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions)

- (1) The Committee received a report on the Treasury Management Indicative Outturn for 2024/25.
- (2) Mr Booth expressed thanks for the excellent work of the treasury team. The Chair agreed and also gave thanks to the team for their excellent work on treasury management activities.
- (3) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The report on the Treasury Management Indicative Outturn for 2024/25, be approved.

8. Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2025/26 and the Audit Charter
(Item B4 – Report by Director of Finance)

- (1) Mr R Smith, from KCC Internal Audit, introduced to the Committee the Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2025/26, along with the Audit Strategy, the Audit Charter and the Key Performance Indicators.
- (2) Mr Booth questioned whether facilities management is internal or external function. The Director of Finance confirmed it is internal.
- (3) Mr Booth mentioned he was pleased to see the use of Black Box Thinking in the Audit Plan.

- (4) Following a query from Mr Booth on whether mental health support to officer's post incident is included in the audit plan or if this is still open for discussion, The Chief Executive confirmed that mental health support is taken seriously and confirmed that this would be considered for a future audit.
- (5) RESOLVED that: -
 - (a) The Internal Audit Annual Plan for 2025/26, be approved.
 - (b) The Internal Audit Strategy for 2025/26, be approved.
 - (c) The Internal Audit Charter for 2025/26, be approved.
 - (d) The Key Performance Indicators for 2025/26 be approved.
 - (e) Delegated authority be given to the Chief Executive, in consultation with the Director of Finance and Chair of the Audit and Governance Committee to make any changes to the proposed Internal Audit Plan for 2025/26 should any emerging priorities identify a change in assurance needs.

9. Internal Audit Progress Update for 2024/25

(C1 – Report by R Smith – KCC Internal Audit)

- (1) The Committee was provided with an update on the completed internal audit reviews in 2024/25 for Members information.
- (2) Mrs Waterman commented on the delay to Climate Change target. It was explained that this is due to the time and funds needed to replace the fleet.
- (3) Mr Booth questioned when FS02 and FS06 will be ready and why there has been a delay with these. The Internal Auditor confirmed these should be ready in draft within the next 2 weeks. The delays for FS02 were attributed to awaiting information from 3rd party suppliers. The delays to FS06 are due to conflicting pieces of work.
- (4) In response to a question from The Chair regarding the use of CO2 extinguishers in the Computer Comms Room and whether this is legally compliant, The Director of Prevention, Protection and Customer Engagement confirmed this is.
- (5) Mr Cole queried whether the 'Medium' risk rating on page 141 of the report is a typing error. It was confirmed that this is an error and should say 'Low'.
- (6) RESOLVED that:
 - (a) the contents of the report be noted

10. Urgent/other business

- (1) The Chief Executive made comment that an Information Architect will be recruited to undertake a piece of work on document management. The work will involve making all documents accessible and ensuring a well organised and structured system of document control.
- (2) RESOLVED that:
 - (a) This was noted. Further updates will be given in future meetings.

By: Clerk to the Authority

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 26 June 2025

Subject: REVIEW OF PROPORTIONALITY AND APPOINTMENTS TO COMMITTEES AND OUTSIDE BODIES 2025/26

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report will review the political proportionality as required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. It will also confirm the Authority's membership of any outside bodies for 2025/26.

Finally, it will detail the arrangements for the appointment of Members to the Authority's Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC), Audit and Governance Committee and Hearings Panel.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Agree, for the purposes of the statutory review of proportionality, the overall political composition as detailed in the report (paragraph 2 and Table 1 refers).
2. Agree the size and political composition of the Audit and Governance Committee (paragraph 5 and Table 1 refer).
3. Agree the size and composition of the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC) (paragraph 6 and Table 1 refer).
4. Agree that whenever a Hearings Panel needs to be convened, it should comprise of six Members in total, each of which should be nominated by the relevant Group Leader (paragraph 7 refers).
5. Agree the proposed appointments to outside bodies (paragraph 8 and Table 2 refers).

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Clerk to the Authority – Kirsty Driver

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121

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BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. The Authority is required by the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 to review its scheme of proportionality at its Annual Meeting each year, and as soon as practical after any occasion on which the political composition of the Authority changes. The Act requires places on Committees (both overall and within each Committee) to be allocated in proportion to the political composition of the Authority as a whole (subject to the majority group on the Authority being entitled to have a majority on every Committee) unless the Authority decides, without any Member voting against it, to adopt some other arrangement.
2. Since the last annual meeting in July 2024, there have been significant changes to the membership of the Authority.
The political composition is now:
Reform 15; Labour 4; Liberal Democrat 3; Conservative 2; Green 1.
3. The Kent Police and Crime Commissioner is also considered as a member of this Authority but is not accounted for within the terms for political proportionality.

Appointments of Members to Serve on Committees

4. The Authority has two Committees subject to the proportionality rules. These are the Audit and Governance Committee and the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC).
5. In terms of the Audit and Governance Committee, Members will be appointed to serve on this Committee by the Clerk, following discussion and nomination by the Group Leaders which is in line with the requirements of the Act. Members are again requested to approve the size and political composition of the Audit and Governance Committee as shown in **Table 1** below.
6. With regards to the SOACC Committee, previously the Authority agreed that, because of the nature of the business that SOACC conducts (as detailed in 2.6 and 2.8 of Authority's Standing Orders) it was an advantage for this Committee's membership to be smaller than strictly proportionate, whilst still giving the majority party a major seat on the Committee. Members are therefore requested to agree to continue to retain a small SOACC composition as detailed in **Table 1** below.

Table 1

Committee	Total	Reform	Labour	Liberal Democrat	Conservative	Green	Other
Authority	25	15	4	3	2	1	PCC & 1 Independent member
Audit and Governance	10	5	2	1	1	1	1 Independent member
SOACC	6	2	1	1	1	1	
Hearings Panel	6	2	1	1	1	1	

7. There is one other Member body which does not have to be taken into account in the statutory review of proportionality and that is the Hearings Panel. A Hearings Panel will be convened in line with 2.7 of the Authority's Standing Orders in order to hear cases in relation to any allegations made against any member of the Authority that may have breached the Kent Code of Conduct; any allegation of gross misconduct against any Senior Officer of the Authority as well as appeals against pensions decisions. Panels are called on the infrequent occasions when they are required. Membership is not fixed and can vary from Panel to Panel, but each party representative will be nominated by the relevant Group Leader.

Representation on Outside Bodies

8. It is proposed that the Authority continues its representation on the LGA General Assembly and the LGA Fire Commission and as such Members are requested to agree the allocation of places and voting rights, as shown in **Table 2**.

Table 2

	Reform	Labour	Liberal Democrats	Conservative	Green
LGA General Assembly (1 member per party, including Chair of the Authority)	To be confirmed.				
LGA Fire Commission (Two Members normally the Chair and Vice Chair of the Authority)					

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

9. It is important that the Authority complies with the statutory political proportionality requirements as set out in legislation.
10. There are no resource implications arising from this report and any financial costs associated with this will be contained within existing budgets.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Members are requested to:
 - 11.1 Agree, for the purposes of the statutory review of proportionality, the overall political composition as detailed in the report (paragraph 2 and Table 1 refers).
 - 11.2 Agree the size and political composition of the Audit and Governance Committee (paragraph 5 and Table 1 refer).
 - 11.3 Agree the size and composition of the Senior Officer Appointment, Conditions and Conduct Committee (SOACC) (paragraph 6 and Table 1 refer).

- 11.4. Agree that whenever a Hearings Panel needs to be convened, it should comprise of six Members in total, each of which should be nominated by the relevant Group Leader (paragraph 7 refers).
- 11.5. Agree the proposed appointments to outside bodies (paragraph 8 and Table 2 refers).

By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: CRMP 2025- 2029 STRATEGY UPDATE AND NEXT STEPS

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report covers the Authority's latest position for 2025/26 on the implementation of its CRMP (Community Risk Management Plan). Appendix 1 contains the detailed information as part of the public consultation document. If approved, the consultation will begin on 8th July. Following this, the consultation outcomes will be presented to Members for approval at the meeting of KMFRA on 16 October 2025.

This includes a proposal to change the location of one of our water rescue assets. We will consult with our customers on this.

We also want to consult on our new Rural Plan which is Appendix 2. The People Impact Assessments for the Water Rescue proposals and Rural Plan are Appendix 3.

Appendix 4 is the Water Rescue data.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the proposal to consult with our customers on moving our water rescue assets from Sheppey fire station to Rochester fire station.
2. Approve the proposal to consult with customers on our Rural Plan.
3. Approve the questions for consultation.
4. Note the improvements to service provision aimed at addressing risks outlined within our CRMP.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Matthew Deadman – Director Response and Resilience

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121

EMAIL: kmfraclerk@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

Background

1. The Fire and Rescue National Framework for England requires every fire and rescue authority to assess all foreseeable fire and rescue related risks that could affect their communities, whether they are local, cross-border, multi-authority and/or national, and prepare an 'integrated risk management plan', or as it is now referred to within the sector, a 'Community Risk Management Plan' (CRMP).
2. In 2022 we consulted with our customers on a 10-year analysis of the key societal, economic, technological, and environmental changes that were emerging in Kent and Medway and could present risks to local communities.
3. The next stage of the CRMP process was a comprehensive risk analysis and assessment. Undertaken in line with the National Fire Chiefs' Council's "Community Risk Management Planning Strategic Framework", this risk assessment was presented to, and approved by, Members at the meeting of the Authority held on 19 October 2023.
4. Between 1 November 2023 and 1 February 2024, the Authority undertook public consultation on the "Creating a Safer Future – Together" document. This also included consultation on the council tax options for 2024/25.
5. There was overwhelming support for both the risks identified and the areas of focus set out in the CRMP document. This strong mandate has given us a firm basis to move forward to the next stage and form actions under each strategic area.
6. In the strategy period 2025 – 2029, we are ensuring effective integration of actions from our Building Safety, Prevention, and Response and Resilience teams. Our CRMP consultation identified seven areas of focus:
 - Climate change and environment
 - Health and society
 - Rescues
 - Major industry
 - Buildings and places
 - Transport
 - Utilities, fuel, and power

Next steps

7. Each year we update our customers with progress against the agreed actions from our seven areas of focus and continue further consultations on any significant changes to provision of services. This is a necessary element of the CRMP.
8. This report covers the Authority's latest position for 2025/26 on the implementation of its CRMP (Community Risk Management Plan). Appendix 1 contains the detailed information as part of the public consultation document. If approved, the consultation will begin on 8th July 2025. Following this, the consultation outcomes will be presented to Members for approval at the meeting of KMFRA on 16 October 2025.
9. This includes a proposal to change the location of one of our water rescue assets. We will consult with our customers on this.
10. We also want to consult on our new Rural Plan which is Appendix 2. The People Impact Assessments for the Water Rescue proposals and Rural Plan are Appendix 3. Appendix 4 is the Water Rescue data.
11. We will work to reach as many people as possible to hear their views on the CRMP proposals for this year and other issues which may be concerning them.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

12. People impact assessments are attached as appendices to the proposals and budgetary impact assessment has been included in our Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP) if plans are approved.

RECOMMENDATIONS

13. Members are requested to:
 - Approve the proposal to consult with our customers on moving our water rescue assets from Sheppey fire station to Rochester fire station.
 - Approve the proposal to consult with customers on our Rural Plan.
 - Approve the questions for consultation.
 - Note the improvements to service provision aimed at addressing risks outlined within our CRMP.

CRMP 2025-2029 Strategy Update and Next Steps

Introduction

Last year, we consulted with the people of Kent and Medway on our assessment of the risks faced by communities across the county. This risk assessment was contained within our publication [‘Creating a Safer Future – Together: Risk Assessment’ \(the Assessment\)](#).

In addition to setting out our strategic priorities and enabling plans, our assessment outlined how we currently address the risks our communities face, and how we propose to further address those risks to help keep our customers safe. After consulting you, we have grouped risks your community faces under areas of focus relating to:

- **Climate change and environment**
- **Health and society**
- **Rescues**
- **Major industry**
- **Buildings and places**
- **Transport**
- **Utilities, fuel, and power**

We have made progress against the actions within our [delivery plan](#), and we now want to ask for your views and feedback on some important proposals relating to water rescue and our rural plan. You will find these proposals on pages 6 and 10 of this document.

You will also find information about the actions from our delivery plan we have taken or propose to take in 2026. These relate to the seven important areas of risk as listed above. Below is an update on actions we are taking.

1. Climate change and the environment.

Summary

Over the last year we have been working to improve our capability to manage the increase in wildfires. Climate change has contributed to these fires increasing in both frequency and intensity.

Update on actions

- **Ensure we have sufficient vehicles and equipment to meet peak demands flexibly**

We have invested in specialist protective clothing for our firefighters, specifically designed for combating wildfires.

This new personal protective equipment (PPE) consists of a lightweight jacket and trousers that provide protection from heat and fire but is also designed to be less heavy and bulky than our traditional 'structural' firefighting PPE. This helps to reduce fatigue and heat stress on our firefighters. It also helps to extend the life of the more expensive structural PPE by reducing unnecessary wear and tear. We have now issued this PPE to all our operational colleagues and its use will become operational in time for summer this year.

- **Improve our capability to fight wildfire incidents**

Access to wildfires can be difficult, especially with our fire engines, which are not designed to go off road and can be easily damaged.

We have therefore invested in four new Utility Task Vehicles (UTVs). These are small off-road vehicles that can be used to transport firefighting personnel or equipment. They are transported to incidents in a large van, unlike the 8x8 multi-terrain vehicles, which we previously used and transported to incidents on a trailer. The new UTVs and vans require less training input, saving money and maximising colleague time for other activities.

- **Further invest in wildfire firefighting equipment**

We have given our colleagues additional hand tools (such as mattocks) to allow them to create firebreaks (cutting away vegetation to stop fire spreading).

We have also invested in high powered leaf blowers that can be used to rapidly blow out grass fires, rather than having to deploy hoses or beat out fires. This will reduce the time spent at these incidents, as well as reducing the physical demands on our firefighters. These will be operational from summer 2025.

We have been focusing on providing additional specialist training to our colleagues. We now have a team of specialist wildfire tactical advisors. These officers are trained in advanced wildfire firefighting tactics and can be deployed in Kent, and across the UK. We also have a trained wildfire lead in our control room team – helping to anticipate the resource demands of a wildfire incident at an early stage.

Our rural communities are those that are most at risk from wildfire. Fires in field and woodland close to homes can result in property damage and the need to evacuate residents. Water supplies in rural areas can often be more limited in both coverage and the amount of water available. To address this risk, we are working with landowners and communities to better manage green spaces. We also want to develop specific wildfire plans for our most vulnerable communities. We have included these specific measures for addressing wildfire risks in our most isolated communities in our Rural Plan, presented here in appendix 2.

2. Health and society

Summary

We have recently made changes to our ability to provide assistance to the ambulance service. We have developed new policies and procedures, including our ability to lift and move casualties with complex medical needs, and have provided new equipment and training to be able to implement these procedures. These changes have been in place for several months now. Over the last financial year, we attended, on average, three incidents of this type every day. We will be continuing to review the effectiveness of this approach.

Update on actions

- **Provide further training to our colleagues to support people in need**

We ensure all our colleagues receive safeguarding training, equipping them to recognise potential mental health concerns and make appropriate referrals. We actively participate in local Safeguarding Boards, working directly with key services to make sure people get the support they need. We offer mental health first aid courses so our teams can confidently help if someone is having a difficult time.

We recognise that understanding and responding to mental health needs is an evolving process and are committed to continuously learning and developing our approach. We will continue to make sure our messages consider mental health and help people find the right support. We're going to work even more closely with other services to make sure our response to mental health situations is as good as it can be for everyone involved. We will provide fire service colleagues more in-depth training to confidently support people experiencing mental health crises.

3. Rescues

Summary

In 2025/26 we will be focusing on our water rescue capability. Our risk assessment identified that we are a county that has a high number of inland water drownings. In the last five years we have seen a significant rise in the numbers of water rescues in the Medway towns. We want to put more resources in place to address this risk, as well as looking at whether our current resources are in the right place.

Update on actions

- **Make sure our water rescue resources are in the right area and have access to innovations in new equipment to conduct effective water rescues according to local risk profiles.**

When we respond to a water rescue, we send a number of resources that are deployed in a staged way. We send the nearest fire engine. In addition, we send firefighters, who can enter the water in certain circumstances to rescue people. These firefighters are reinforced with more specialist crews (Water Safety Units) each of which carries a boat and are stationed around the county at Sheppey (Sheerness), Larkfield, Tonbridge, Whitstable, and Folkestone.

Sheppey use a small boat that is trailered to incidents by their Water Safety Unit (WSU). Formerly a water rescue station, Sheppey had a Fire Launch (a high-powered rigid inflatable boat), capable of operating at sea and on major rivers. As this was rarely used, it was removed from service and the WSU now use the smaller inland boat.

Maintaining a water rescue capability at Sheppey impacts:

- fire cover in Sheppey – when the crew are mobilised to a water incident, they are unavailable for fire calls in the locality.
- training - the WSU requires a significant training commitment which can reduce fire appliance availability on Sheppey, necessitating moving a fire engine from Sittingbourne, impacting fire cover in that area.

Water rescue capability in Sheppey is also provided by the RNLI (Royal National Lifeboat Institution) who provide an immediate 24/7 response around the Isle of Sheppey.

Most incidents that Sheppey's Water Safety Unit attend are in other parts of the county. This means we must tow the boat from Sheppey. Often, this can be considerable distances to other areas. During this time, the need for the boat to be deployed has passed, and the incident has been resolved in a different way.

Time is a critical factor in water rescues because submersion in water is survivable in most circumstances for 30 minutes. It is therefore vital to minimise the time taken to get a water rescue asset on scene.

We have a dock on the River Medway in Strood where we have a rigid boat. This requires significant training time for crews to maintain competence. This boat is crewed by Larkfield fire station (due to previous training) which means it can take a long time to deploy.

We want to reduce the time it takes to get the right water rescue resource to scene and into the water and improve the speed of response in the water.

We have been exploring the use of Personal Watercrafts (PWCs) which are similar in appearance to a "Jet Ski". PWCs can travel at high speed and can be equipped with rescue equipment for retrieving casualties and require less training time than powered boats. Because we want to ensure that we have water rescue coverage on both sides of the River Medway between Rochester motorway bridge and Sun Pier, the flexibility and speed of PWCs would offer this capability more effectively.

In the light of the above we propose and wish to consult you about the following:

Proposal for consultation:

To move the Water Safety Unit from Sheppey Fire Station to Rochester Fire Station.

Replace the rigid boat currently located on the dock in Strood with a Personal Watercraft (PWC).

Supporting information

- A People Impact Assessment on the proposal is included in appendix 3.
- Most incidents requiring a water safety unit now take place in and around the Strood and Rochester stretch of the River Medway. Between 2019 and 2024 we saw a 235% increase in the number of incidents in the River Medway between Maidstone and Chatham. Further data on this is presented in appendix 4.

Water rescue – looking ahead

If this consultation proposal is approved, we would undertake further analysis to determine if the benefits of the change merit a similar review of water rescue assets across the county. Any future proposed changes would be subject consultation.

Whilst rescuing people from the water is vital, we want to prevent people getting into difficulty in the first place. We have set up a Water Safety delivery group which is:

- working to reduce the risk of water rescues being required.
- working with partner agencies to identify hotspots and understand the circumstances that lead to water rescues being required
- introducing measures including education, the introduction of physical barriers, and the provision of public use lifesaving equipment.
- working in tandem with our water response delivery group to ensure that prevention and response actions are complementary.

4. Major Industry

Summary

Fires involving major industry, and in particularly waste sites, can be time consuming, hazardous, and costly. In our delivery plan we committed to researching and taking advantage of the latest firefighting technologies and innovations to improve our response to these incidents.

Update on actions

- **Review firefighting tactics and operational policy to take advantage of the latest firefighting technologies and innovations.**

Over the course of the last year, we have been researching these technologies and have invested in a firefighting robot. This is a small tracked unit equipped with a large water nozzle and thermal imaging system. It can also be equipped with gas monitoring equipment. It is operated remotely by a single operator.

The robot:

- can be deployed into hazardous areas (for example where cylinders are present), reducing or removing the need to commit firefighters
- can operate for extended periods, reducing the need to use many firefighters who need to be rotated to rest and recuperate.
- went into operational service in March 2025 and has already been deployed to several large incidents, reducing the risk to firefighters and the need for resources
- has been used particularly successfully in conjunction with our drones.

We will be undertaking an initial 12-month review of the robot deployments, evaluating the cost versus benefit, after which we will determine if further investment in this technology will be beneficial.

- **Improve customer awareness of safe battery disposal.**

In recent years, the number of fires linked to batteries, specifically lithium-ion, has increased in the UK. These types of batteries are commonly found in a range of rechargeable household devices such as smartphones, laptops, e-bikes and e-scooters. Results from a survey carried out by an insurance provider in 2024 found that 1 in 9 respondents had experienced a fire or explosion in their home due to a lithium-ion battery or device. Improper charging practices are a significant contributor to these fires.

To tackle these increasing fire risks, we're developing a prevention programme specifically targeting unsafe charging habits. We will also be talking with local authorities to explore how we can make it easier for everyone to dispose of old batteries safely and conveniently.

5. Buildings and Places

Summary

Fires in buildings can involve very different risks depending on the use of the building. Buildings with complicated layouts, or with vulnerable people in them, present particular challenges. We need to make sure we have a good understanding of where these buildings are, and what the best approach is to dealing with a fire should one occur.

Update on actions

- **Complete more response exercises in care settings to enhance firefighter awareness of risks, buildings, and customers.**

In 2022/23 we conducted a detailed review of our approach to reducing risk and responding to fires in care homes. This review resulted in a range of operational learning considerations, including improvements in training on specialist evacuations equipment. The review also highlighted the need for further work on our processes for managing fire survival guidance (FSG) calls from care homes. Since then, we have implemented improvements to our FSG processes and have tested this through more than 30 exercises, which have provided us with a good level of assurance. We have also ensured that risk information against all 1055 residential

care/nursing homes in Kent and Medway is now recorded on our risk information system.

In 2025/26 we will be completing a programme of exercises in care homes in order to ensure that the learning and improvements we have made remain embedded.

- **Review attendance to rural areas, considering specialised equipment to address areas of isolation**

We have been reviewing our attendance to rural areas. We know that it takes us longer to get to more isolated communities than it does in urban areas.

From 21 October 2024 to 18 January 2025, we consulted on changes to the way we measure our response times, and a clear majority of the public agreed with the proposals to change our response time definitions and our response time targets. These changes were approved by Members of the Kent and Medway Fire Authority at the February 2025 meeting of the Authority. We now target a response time to emergencies of 9 minutes in urban areas on 75% of occasions, and 15 minutes in rural areas on 75% of occasions.

To achieve this standard consistently, we know we need to make improvements in the availability of our 'on call' fire engines. These fire engines are typically (although not always) located in more rural areas. However, along with the rest of the fire sector we are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit and retain on-call firefighters. To address this, we have started a major project targeted at improving on call availability through new ways of working. The project has seen some initial success with some improvement to the number of on call fire engines we have available during the day. The project is due to run throughout 2025/26.

As well as our on-call project we want to reduce the likelihood of fires occurring in these areas and mitigate their impact. To do this we will undertake more prevention activities, such as additional home fire safety visits, education, and working with communities to manage green spaces. We already carry out protection activities such as working with local businesses to support them to be fire safety compliant.

- **Roll out a new, risk-based intervention programme (RBIP), to target our education and enforcement work at premises that are most likely to have fire safety issues.**

Unlike domestic premises, businesses and care settings are regulated. KFRS acts as the regulator for fire safety in Kent and Medway. Our approach is to support businesses to comply with their legal obligations in relation to fire safety. To help us target our resources at premises that are most likely to have fire safety issues, we use a risk-based intervention programme (RBIP). A new RBIP was launched in April

2025, which maps out the interventions we will carry out across different premises. This includes engagement, providing information to business owners, and carrying out inspections to help to meet fire safety standards. We will keep Fire Authority Members informed on progress with the new RBIP.

We intend to undertake significant work over the life of this Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) to better understand and support our rural communities. We have outlined how we intend to achieve this in our **Rural Plan 2025-2029**. This plan is attached as appendix 2. Engagement with rural communities will be vital to the success of our work. We welcome views from our customers, partner organisations, and other stakeholders on the content of the plan.

In the light of the above we propose and wish to consult you about the following:

Proposal for consultation

To deliver targeted services to rural communities, to reduce risk and improve our response. We propose to deliver this through implementing the Rural Plan 2025-2029.

- A People Impact Assessment on the proposal is included in appendix 3.

6. Transport

Summary

Over the last year we have been focusing on road traffic collisions. Kent is a major gateway to Europe and has road infrastructure to both passenger and freight traffic to the ports and the Channel Tunnel. In addition, there several major trunk roads crossing the county creating a network of roads that also have a high density of traffic.

Update on actions

- **Review of operational policy and procedure – extrication, rescue, and firefighting – and the need for specialist responders, vehicles and equipment.**

During 2024/25 we have been gathered data on the types of road traffic collisions we attend and how we have had to deal with them.

Improvements in vehicle safety have resulted in fewer instances of people needing to be removed from a vehicle following a collision. However, when we do need to rescue people, the construction methods, materials, safety features and fuel systems of modern vehicles, mean it can often be complicated and more challenging to resolve. At the same time, improvements in vehicle extrication tools have enabled us to adapt our approach. We have recently purchased a new range of battery operated tools that will enhance our rescue capability.

Our current approach relies on splitting our rescue capability across three different fire engine types – heavy rescue pumps, rescue pumps, and pumps. This has allowed us to scale our response according to the complexity of the situation but has some challenges, including training time, the wide range of equipment required, and the number of fire fighters and fire engines we must send to the scene.

In 2025/26 we will be exploring a range of alternative approaches to the way we provide our rescue capability. We want to:

- ensure that those that carry out specialist rescues are trained to a high standard.
- use our equipment efficiently.
- ensure that we have the right amount in the right place to meet demand.

Many of our current heavy rescue and rescue appliances are due for replacement, so it is timely to review what we replace them with. We want to complete our research in this area over the next year to have a new appliance specification, and proposals on new ways of working for 2026/27.

7. Utilities, fuel and power

Summary

During this period we have been focusing on water supplies, as we are increasingly finding problems with the reliability of water network in terms of its ability to provide the amount of water we need. We are also seeing more frequent periods of drought that means we cannot always rely on ponds and lakes to provide the water we need.

Update on actions

- **Review the capability, location, and type of vehicles and equipment providing or transporting water for firefighting.**

and

- **Explore new firefighting equipment that uses less water to achieve the same operational outcomes.**

New housing and infrastructure is putting strain on the water network. This is impacting the reliability and capacity of fire hydrants. We have raised this issue nationally through the National Fire Chiefs Council and are also working with water companies locally to identify and areas where we know there are issues. This allows us to increase the number of resources we send if we know there are issues with water supplies in a particular area.

Additionally, we are looking at what changes we can make to our vehicles and equipment to reduce the impact of a reduction in the quantity and reliability of water supplies available to us. Over the last few years, we have been installing compressed air foam systems on many of our fire engines. This system allows us to apply water and foam more efficiently, meaning in some cases we can make the water supply on a fire engine last longer. We will be looking to roll out compressed air foam systems across the fleet as part of our new fire engine builds. At the same time, we will be updating the tactics we teach to ensure our firefighters are using the water they have in the most efficient way.

When we do require larger volumes of water, we have a range of ways of achieving this. One of these ways is our bulk water carriers. We currently have two bulk water carriers, each of which holds 14,000 litres of water. These are due for replacement, so this year as part of the replacement process, we will be looking at whether to increase the number of bulk water carriers we have. It is likely that we will move to vehicles with a slightly smaller water capacity but more widely located to improve the flexibility and speed of response.

Proposed consultation questions

1. Do you agree with the proposal to move the existing water rescue assets from Sheppey fire station to Rochester fire station? (Yes / No)
2. If you do not agree with the proposal, please detail why you do not agree. (Free text field)
3. Do you agree with the contents of our Rural Plan (2025-2029)? (Yes / No).
4. Do you wish to add any further comments on the contents of our Rural Plan (2025-2029)? (Yes / No). If 'Yes':
 - Would you like to comment on “Responding to Emergences in Rural Areas”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Loss of Public Water for Firefighting”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Community Resilience and Engagement”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Fires in Rural Homes”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Supporting Rural Businesses”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Supporting Farmers and Agricultural Businesses and Workers”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Flooding (Water Safety)”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Road Traffic Collisions”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Wildfires”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Safeguarding”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
 - Would you like to comment on “Supporting medical emergencies in villages and smaller towns”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.

- Would you like to comment on “Evaluation, Review, and Continuous Improvement”? (Yes / No). If yes, free text box.
- Do you have any other comments you wish to make on our Rural Plan (2025-2029)? Yes / No. If yes, free text box.

Kent Fire & Rescue Service

Supporting our rural communities - our rural plan

Foreword

Welcome to the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority's Rural Plan 2025 to 2029.

This is the first-time we have written a rural plan, which brings together work we have been doing for years in our countryside. It also outlines what we will do in future to meet the needs and risks faced by communities in the countryside, and ensure our services are there for everyone.

We spend your Council Tax on delivering a range of services to help keep you and your family safe. We will continue to evolve to meet the changing needs of our customers, to build a safer future for Kent and Medway.

Over the last five years, we have published a ten-year analysis of potential issues which may impact the people of Kent and Medway, along with a more detailed summary of risks, and a four-year action plan.

This year, we are seeking your knowledge and consent to the services we want to deliver to support our rural communities.

To see more information on how we develop our plans, click [here](#).

Thank you.

Cllr **Name Forename**

Chair of Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

Introduction

The aim of this plan is to support our rural communities in meeting the immediate challenges we face over the next four years. We will achieve this by:

- Reducing the number and impact of fires and other emergencies in rural areas through targeted prevention and protection activities.
- Making sure we have dedicated wildfire response teams ready at key locations, with the right vehicles and equipment to reach incidents in difficult rural areas quickly and safely.
- Working with local people, landowners and other organisations to manage green spaces, helping to stop fires from reaching homes and businesses.
- Enhancing the resilience and capability of rural fire stations and our colleagues.
- Improving the skills and equipment of our firefighters and specialist advisors to tackle wildfires and other outdoor fires.
- Helping people to prepare for and recover from emergencies within rural communities.
- Minimising the environmental impact of fire and rescue operations in rural settings.

Understanding the issues facing rural communities

Kent is a diverse county made up of large urban areas, isolated rural communities, and a long coastline. Approximately 85% of the land in Kent and Medway is classified as rural, with one in three people across the county living in a rural community, and 40% of our businesses based in rural locations.

The geography of Kent sees different risks across the county, which include:

- Isolated communities, which can reinforce pockets of intensive deprivation, with many rural areas disconnected from economic opportunities available in the rest of the county.
- Many rural areas have a higher proportion of older people, than in urban communities. People living with mobility or cognitive impairments are more at risk of injury or death from fires.
- A large rural road network, where we see many road crashes, injuries and deaths.
- The rurality of Kent means we have a large agricultural community, with large numbers of seasonal workers living in temporary accommodation.

- Increased demand for water due to a growing population. This, coupled with aging water infrastructure, has resulted in a less reliable supply from fire hydrants.
- Large areas of inland waterways, where we can see deaths from drownings.

How we provide fire services changes a lot depending on how many people live in an area. Our data shows there are fewer incidents in the countryside, but when they do happen, it can take us longer to get there. 26% of our incidents are in rural areas. Appendix 1 gives a summary of how we define rural and urban areas.

Urban and rural areas have different risks, and we use these risks to work out what services we need to offer and how to reduce risk. In urban areas, we have full-time firefighters who are at the station, ready to go right away. In rural areas, we have on-call firefighters who leave their homes to get to the fire station before heading to the incident.

We know that how fast our fire engines arrive is what our customers value most. Several factors determine the severity and outcome of an incident. The time taken for firefighters to arrive on scene is one of these.

Last year, we asked for your opinion on changing how we measure fire engine response times. Instead of using a county-wide measurement, we suggested having separate targets for rural and urban areas. This wasn't about changing how we respond or where our fire stations are; it was simply about measuring our response times more accurately so we know how long it will truly take us to reach people in an emergency. More than 1,800 people responded to our consultation, and 60% of them agreed with our proposal. Appendix 2 gives a summary of the number of incidents in rural areas.

We're dedicated to overcoming the logistical challenges of effective emergency response in rural areas. We will continue to invest in specialist vehicles that are designed to help our firefighters reach incidents in hard-to-access locations. This

ensures we can provide the quickest and most effective assistance possible, no matter how remote the emergency.

Add graphic with how we measure response times

Emergency – urban – within 9 minutes on at least 75% of occasions.

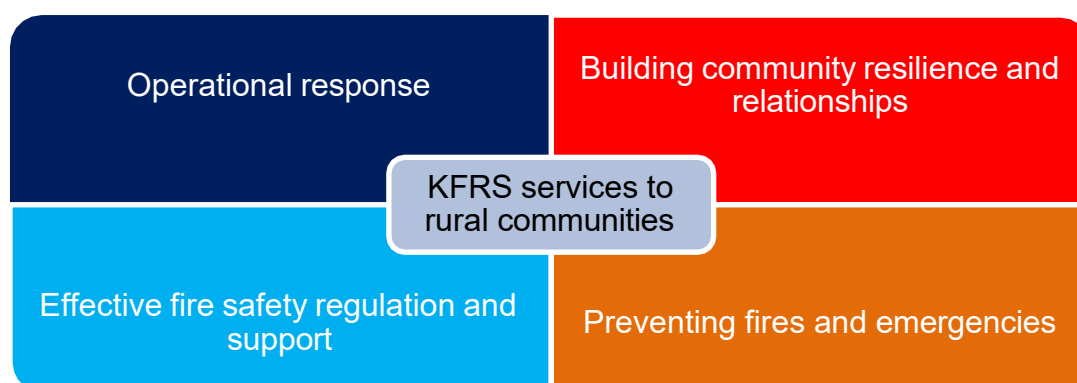
Emergency – rural – within 15 minutes on at least 75% of occasions *.

Non-emergency – within 30 minutes (regardless of location).

* Urban and rural areas will be based on the Kent and Medway rural urban classification at output area level, published by the Office for National Statistics: KFRS Classification Office for National Statistics Classification

The services we provide to our rural communities

Our Building Safety teams support businesses to be fire safety compliant. Our prevention teams carry out home fire safety visits, education programmes, community safety open days and work to understand our communities. We also work with partners to build community resilience and preparedness to support people living in the countryside. We place extra focus on homes and businesses where people and communities are more isolated and may experience longer travel times for fire engines. We have dedicated rural teams in place and hold events at our fire stations and in other community locations.



Building Community resilience and engagement

Community resilience is the ability of a group of people living in the same area to work together to prepare for, respond to, and recover from, challenges or emergencies. These challenges can be natural disasters like floods or storms, or human-caused events like economic downturns or pandemics.

What we do to support community resilience:

Villages across Kent and Medway are encouraged to complete emergency plans, which identify volunteers, resources and key partners who may be able to offer support.

This work is co-ordinated by the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF), which brings together emergency services, local authorities and other key partners like water companies and the Environment Agency. We support the KMRF and [KALC \(Kent Association of Local Councils\)](#) to build community resilience.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Develop new partnerships with rural groups to better understand the risks facing people living and working in villages and small towns and helping to put plans in place to address the risks.

Effective fire safety regulation and support to rural businesses

Businesses in rural areas are really important to our local communities. They provide jobs, places to shop, and opportunities for fun and tourism, all of which help bring people together.

We want to help these businesses stay safe from fire. We do this by talking to business owners and giving them information to help them meet fire safety rules and standards.

We focus our efforts on businesses where fire could have a bigger impact.. We use a process that flags buildings with a higher chance of a serious fire, making sure that businesses in small towns and villages will be priority areas for our help.

Over the next three years, we will prioritise our work – first, by risk category, and then by urban or rural categories. This means we will prioritise rural areas because of the time it may take a fire engine to reach a business in the countryside.

Combined risk category	Description	Intervention	Priority for intervention
Very high and high	<u>Known highest risk buildings only</u>	Regulatory audit	1. Rural hamlets and isolated dwellings 2. Rural village 3. Rural town and fringe 4. Urban city and town 5. Urban major conurbation

What we do to reduce the impact to rural businesses:

- Inspect business premises to make sure they have appropriate fire precautions in place.
- Campaigns to promote fire safety awareness in business premises.
- Provide talks and information to help business owners in smaller towns and villages to understand fire safety legislation and how they can have a fire safe business.
- When needed, require businesses to make changes to their safety arrangements, or in the most serious cases, prohibit the business from using part or all of the building.
- Give firefighters information on potential risks within a building or a site.
- Carry out a programme of exercises so that the crews can test emergency response plans.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Increase our business engagement, working with small business groups and rural organisations like the National Farmers Union, to improve awareness of building safety legislation and responsibilities for business owners.
- Carry out detailed building surveys on complex rural buildings to help firefighters respond to incidents.

Fires in rural homes

In rural areas, we have a rich diversity of housing, ranging from centuries-old timber-framed houses, thatched homes to many mobile homes and caravans.

Each building type presents its unique challenges, with some occupants more vulnerable than others. In rural areas, we also see additional challenges where many homes can be isolated, along with not having suitable water supplies to extinguish fires quickly.

We look to reduce the risks of fires in the home through:

- Campaigns to promote safer behaviours across a range of fire risks, including cooking, chimney fire safety and having bonfires.
- Our home fire safety task force and local crews completed 5,000 targeted visits in rural areas last year. They prioritise high-need households, providing advice, installing smoke alarms, and making referrals.
- Maintain fire hydrants through a dedicated water team and using volunteers to report hydrants which are defective.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Provide tailored advice to customers living in isolated areas on what they can do to prevent fires.
- Develop targeted prevention campaigns to promote fire safety in rural areas.

Supporting farmers, agricultural businesses and workers

Fires in barns, silos, or farm equipment are common and can require lots of Fire and Rescue resources to extinguish. These buildings often house flammable materials like hay or grain, which can make fires intense and dangerous.

Many rural farms store hazardous chemicals like pesticides, fertilisers, or fuel, which can pose significant risks during a fire or spill. Agricultural machinery can be a cause and victim of fire due to mechanical issues or friction, especially when involved in harvesting crops in hot, dry conditions. This can have a big impact on farms and the local community.

We also support the rescue of many animals in rural areas, including livestock and wildlife, where they are trapped or injured following accidents or disasters.

During the summer months, we can see seasonal workers living in caravans or temporary accommodation, often where English is not their first language. The number of fires in caravans is low, but where they occur, the fire is likely to be severe.

What we do to reduce the impact:

- Provide fire safety advice to farmers and agricultural businesses on how to prevent fires starting.
- A specialist trained personnel and an animal rescue unit to support rural communities with saving wildlife and livestock.
- Use drones to help us make quicker, more informed decisions when tackling fires at farm buildings.
- Work with partners to help report issues such as fly tipping that can result in rural incidents.
- We work with farmers through the National Farmers Union (NFU) to make sure emergency water suppliers (EWS) are compatible with our firefighting equipment.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Support farmers to identify potential hazards to firefighters.
- Develop site specific plans, where the risk requires it, to plan our response to fires and put in place measures to reduce the severity of a fire.
- Work with partners to reduce risks, particularly deliberate fires and anti-social behaviour in unoccupied, derelict buildings.

- Identify water sources to help firefighters to quickly extinguish fires.
- Work with farming and local community groups to increase awareness of fire safety issues.

Wildfires

Our rural communities are those that are most at risk from wildfire, with large areas of dry grass, scrubland, and woodland. Wildfires can spread rapidly, especially during hot, dry conditions.

Fires in fields and woodland close to homes can result in property damage and the need to evacuate residents. Water supplies in rural areas can often be more limited in both coverage and the amount of water available.

Wildfires can also be difficult to reach due to rough terrain, limited road access, and the fact that they can be spread over a large area.

What we do to reduce the impact:

- Work with landowners, partner agencies and communities to better manage green spaces, reducing the risk of fires spreading to homes and other buildings.
- Carry out wildfire awareness campaigns with people who live in or visit the countryside.
- Providing guidance on best practice and safety for controlled burns.
- Ensure the latest information is on our website to support rural communities.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Engage with land and property owners to help mitigate the impact wildfire has on communities through the Firewise UK initiative.
- Develop and implement a wildfire prevention plan aimed at reducing the likelihood and impact of wildfires starting (e.g. geographical areas of risk, malicious ignition, discarded glass, fires in the open etc).
- Work with agricultural leaders (including National Farmers Union) to understand the scale of the damage they experience and how we can better support rural communities.
- Improve information sharing with partner organisations and communities to better manage wildfires that might impact on homes. For example, by improving preparedness and land management to reduce the risk of wildfires spreading to buildings and other property.

Flooding (water safety)

Rivers or streams in rural areas can quickly rise during heavy rainfall or melting snow, flooding nearby areas and roads. Floods may be sudden, and rural communities may be particularly at risk, for example being cut off due to limited road access.

What we do to reduce the impact:

- Work with partners to identify vulnerable customers who might require additional support during flooding.
- Support agencies in pumping of water away from properties, minimising damage.
- Supporting partners through the Kent and Medway Resilience Forum (KMRF) in the logistics associated with a flooding event, building stronger community resilience against future incidents.
- Work with partner agencies to raise awareness of flooding and inland water safety through public-facing campaigns.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Work with water safety partners to devise targeted programmes, campaigns and materials to help people living in small towns and villages with flooding.
- Making sure we have the right water rescue equipment in the right places.
- Review our rescue methods and training, specifically for rural water incidents.

Road traffic accidents

Approximately 45 people die on Kent's roads each year. A lot of these deadly crashes happen in the countryside, especially on single-lane roads where the speed limit is 50mph or higher.

Rural roads are usually longer and more isolated. This means it takes longer for emergency services to arrive, which can delay crucial life-saving help. You'll also often see large farm vehicles like tractors on these roads, and they can be involved in accidents.

Finally, in rural areas, there might be fewer people around to witness an accident. This makes it harder for fire and rescue services to know exactly what resources they need, where the crash is, or how serious it is.

What we do to reduce the impact:

- We've adopted the Vision Zero road safety strategy for Kent and Medway. We work in partnership with local councils, police, national highways and other agencies share knowledge and deliver road safety campaigns.

- Work with partners to understand the risk of rural roads and the impacts on local communities.
- Enhanced training for RTCs on rural roads, including vehicle stabilisation on uneven terrain, extrication from complex scenarios, and casualty care in remote locations.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Work with the Kent and Medway Safety Roads Partnership to enhance road safety education.
- Work with the National Fire Chiefs Council to learn best practices for preventing collisions on rural roads.

Water supplies for firefighting

New housing and commercial buildings need water supplies, including water for firefighting. Increased demand has placed strain on an ageing network. Over the past few years, we have seen more incidents where there is poor water pressure. Where this happens, we send more fire engines and use bulk water carriers to the affected areas.

We will continue to work with water companies to ensure there is enough water for us to use in emergencies. We will also look at other ways of ensuring we have a reliable means of accessing water.

What we do to reduce the impact:

- Hydrant Mapping & Maintenance: Ensuring accurate mapping and regular inspection of all accessible water sources (including static tanks, open water).
- Emergency Water Supplies: Identifying and developing emergency water supplies (e.g., private ponds, swimming pools for drafting).
- Have a dedicated team who inspect water hydrants to ensure they are available for firefighting.
- Work with the Kent Association of Local Councils (KALC) and Parish Council to ensure issues with water supplies are reported and fixed at the earliest opportunity.
- Work with water companies to ensure we have water we can use at rural incidents.
- Provide information to our fire crews on the location of fire hydrants.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Influence developers, councils, and water companies to establish emergency water supplies in areas where there is a lack of water or there is poor pressure.
- Put in place more frequent fire hydrant testing in rural areas, to ensure they are functioning properly and meet our firefighting needs.
- Review the types of vehicles we use for getting water to incidents, and where they are based.
- Explore new firefighting equipment that uses less water to achieve the same operational outcomes.
- Develop prevention campaigns about the importance of fire hydrants and reporting leaks and defects.
- Work closely with water companies during the planning phase of new developments to ensure firefighter water needs are incorporated into the infrastructure design.
- Work with communities in rural areas to identify alternative water sources, such as tanks and swimming pools, and make that information available to firefighters.

Supporting medical emergencies in villages and smaller towns

Healthcare and ambulance services are extremely busy, which means they often have limited resources and can't always respond as quickly as they'd like.

The fire service, on the other hand, isn't constantly dealing with such high continual demand, but we're always ready to respond to fires. This means we have the capacity to support the health sector in rural areas by being the first on the scene to provide life-saving medical care.

At every fire station in the county, our firefighters are highly trained in first aid (called Immediate Emergency Care, or IECR). They have defibrillators, oxygen, and other life-saving equipment. This has allowed us to respond to life-threatening medical emergencies alongside the ambulance service for the past twenty years.

What we do to reduce the impact:

- Over the last five years our crews have responded to thousands of medical emergencies, restarting the hearts of many people, increasing their chances of survival. We are committed to continuing to provide this vital service.
- Work with partner agencies to identify those at risk of falls, or other medical conditions, through our safe and well visits
- Continue to work with colleagues in the ambulance service to further improve our response

New actions to deliver our plan:

- Review the way we currently provide 'assistance to ambulance' in rural areas and implement changes in policies, procedures, training, and equipment to deliver improved outcomes in a more efficient and sustainable way. Agree any improvements, in consultation with partner agencies in the health sector.

A workforce to serve rural areas

Most of the countryside communities in Kent rely on our on-call firefighters. They are often people who live in your local area and have other full-time jobs. They volunteer to be firefighters in their spare time, which means they have limited time available for training.

At the same time, firefighting is becoming more specialised. New technologies bring new risks. We want to make sure our on-call firefighters are well-equipped and highly trained to respond to incidents in their community as effectively and safely as possible.

Challenges and solutions

Like other fire services across the country, we've had a tough time recruiting and keeping on-call firefighters. It's especially hard to find on-call firefighters who can work during the day. This means we often have to send fire engines from urban areas to rural areas when there's an incident during the day, which leads to longer response times.

New actions to deliver our plan:

- We've started a project to look at how to get more on-call firefighters available during the day.
- We're also looking at whether we should train them in fewer areas, but make sure they're extremely skilled in the tasks they continue to do.
- Since on-call firefighters are part of the local community, we want to explore new ways they can support their community. This could include leading safety activities, doing home fire safety visits, attending local events, and even running fitness activities. They're also in a great position to gather information about local risks and help address them.

Evaluation, review and continuous improvement

Improving Response and Outcomes

We're collecting data on how long it takes us to reach the most isolated areas and checking if our customers are getting the help they need. We will be working to

reduce risks. We're also looking at what other fire and rescue services do in similar high-risk areas, like what equipment they use and how they respond to incidents. Our goal is to constantly improve our service to the community. We'll do this by using information from our incident records and other tools. We're building a culture where our prevention, building safety, and operational teams work together to stay updated on the latest technologies and ways of working.

Targeted prevention and risk management

We regularly review how we identify people at risk of a home fire and how we carry out our risk-based visits. This ensures our methods are accurate and that we're aware of any new risks.

Finally, the community risks we've identified in our Community Risk Management Plan are backed up by detailed risk assessments. We regularly update these assessments, with the frequency depending on how serious the risk is.

Regular monitoring and review are crucial to ensure the effectiveness of the Rural Plan.

- Key Performance Indicators (KPIs):
- Rural incident reduction rates (fire, RTC, water).
- Response times to rural incidents.
- On-call availability and retention rates.
- Number of rural community safety engagements.
- Uptake of rural specific safety advice.
- Effectiveness of specialist rural training.
- Feedback from rural communities and partners.
- Using incident data to identify trends, emerging risks, and areas for improvement in rural settings.
- A formal annual review of the Rural Plan with key stakeholders.
- Transparent reporting on rural service delivery at the Kent and Medway Fire Authority.

How we categorise rural areas

We use the Rural-Urban Classification (RUC) provided by the Office for National Statistics. This is used in England and Wales to categorise areas as either rural or urban.

The 2021 RUC uses three simplified categories of:

- Urban
- Larger rural settlement
- Smaller rural settlement

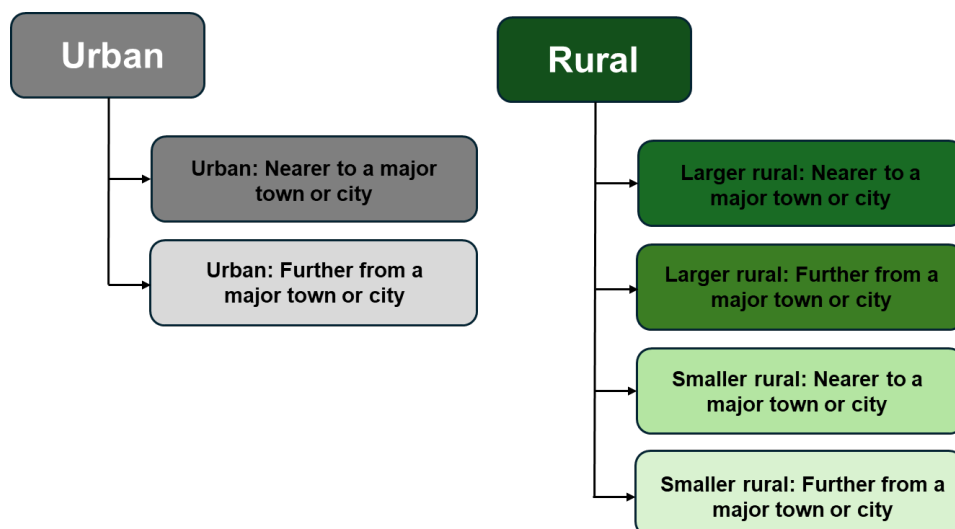
Areas are considered urban if they have many homes close together, or if they're part of a larger developed area with at least 10,000 homes. Other areas are classified as rural, and these are further categorised by how close they are to a major town or city, based on estimated travel time.

Based on estimated travel times, each category is then divided into:

- Nearer to a major town or city
- Further from a major town or city

When combined, it provides the following six types of categorisation for an output area

Output area types



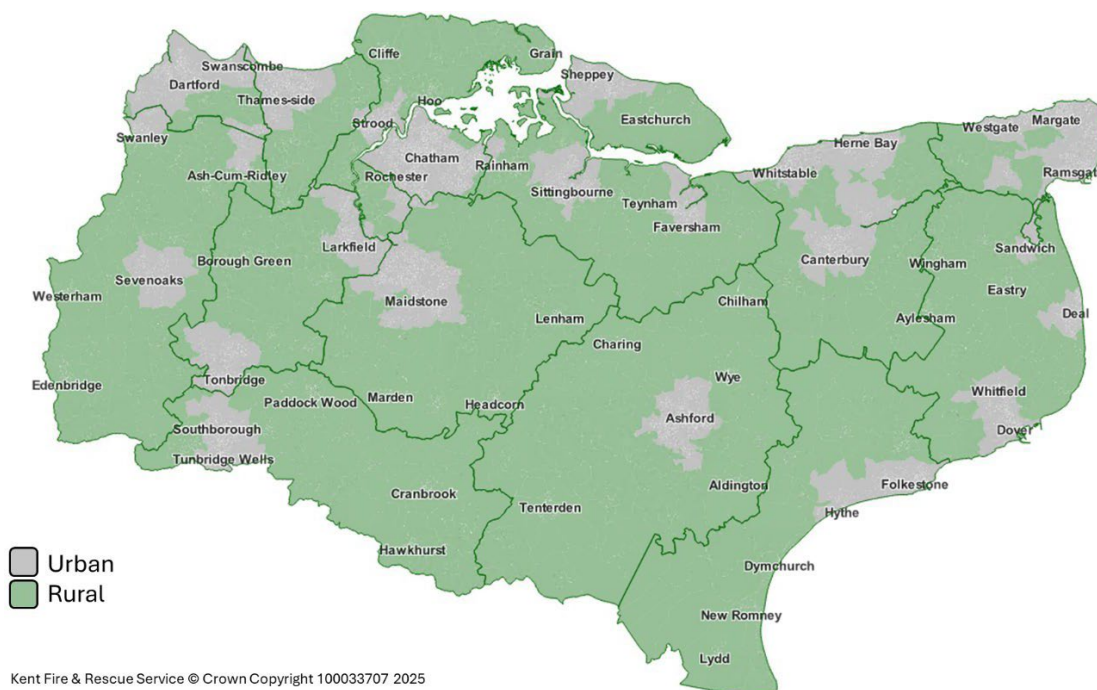
Kent and Medway has 5,734 output areas across the county following the changes made during the 2021 census. The current profile consists of:

Number of output areas	Percentage output areas	Output areas classification	How we classify areas
3,032	53%	Urban: Nearer to a major town or city	Urban
1,340	23%	Urban: Further from a major town or city	Urban
565	10%	Larger Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	Rural
120	2%	Larger Rural: Further from a major town or city	Rural
526	9%	Smaller Rural: Nearer to a major town or city	Rural
151	3%	Smaller Rural: Further from a major town or city	Rural

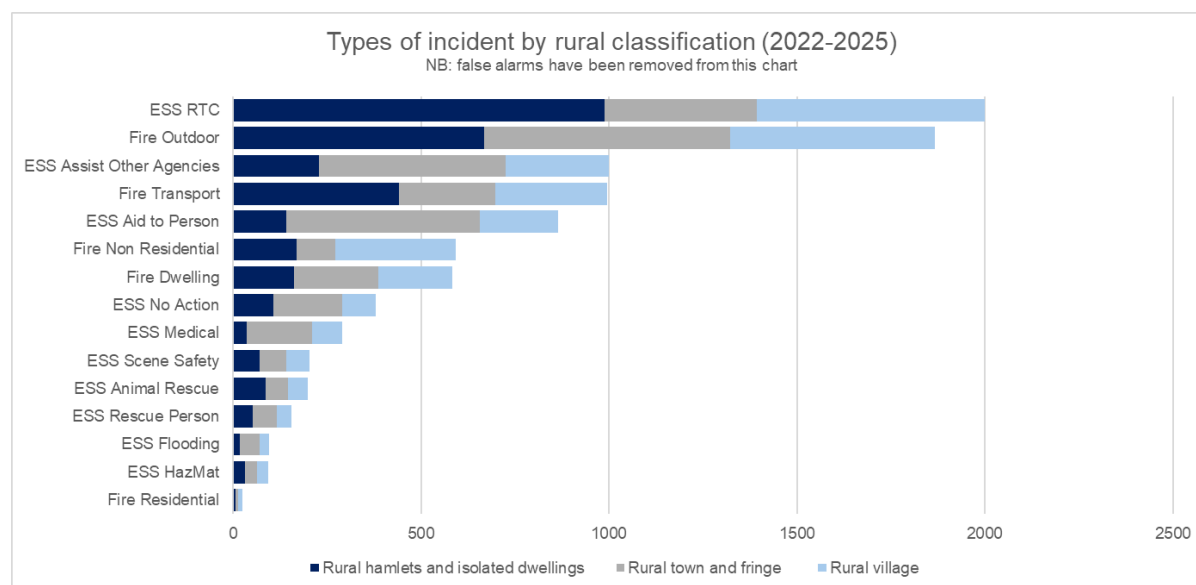
While 24% of output areas are within rural output areas, they cover a greater geographical area.

We have used this profile to provide two categories – urban and rural. This allows us to look at the needs of communities when developing our services.

The map below provides an overview of the county by KFRS urban and rural categories.



Appendix 2 to Rural Plan



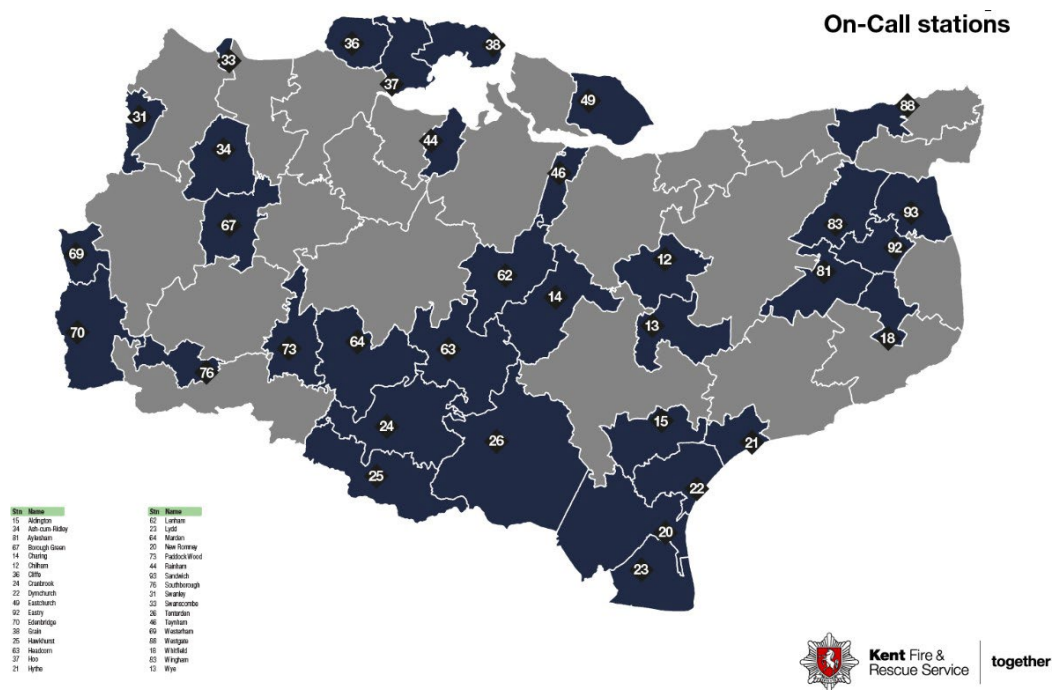
Incidents in rural areas

Over the last three years, 26% of the incidents we have attended have been in rural areas.

		2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	Total
Rural hamlets and isolated dwellings		1,617	1,417	1,402	4,436
Emergency	1,523	1,304	1,273	4,100	
Non-emergency	94	113	129	336	
Rural town and fringe		1,827	1,703	1,560	5,090
Emergency	1,584	1,466	1,279	4,329	
Non-emergency	243	237	281	761	
Rural village		1,452	1,258	1,270	3,980
Emergency	1,338	1,156	1,129	3,623	
Non-emergency	114	102	141	357	
Grand Total		4,896	4,378	4,232	13,506

Of all the fires and rescue incidents we attended in rural areas over the last three years, just over 40% were either road traffic crashes or outdoor fires

Responding to emergencies in rural areas



We regularly review the location of our resources according to risk, demand, and isolation. Our fire stations are in places depending on the level of risk in each area.

People Impact Assessments in support of public consultation proposals (B2. Appendix 1. CRMP 2025-2029 Strategy Update and Next Steps.

Specifically:

To move the Water Safety Unit from Sheppey Fire Station to Rochester Fire Station.

Replace the rigid boat currently located on the dock in Strood with a Personal Watercraft (PWC).

And

To deliver targeted services to rural communities, to reduce risk and improve our response. We propose to deliver this through implementing the Rural Plan 2025-2029.

PROJECT/ACTIVITY NAME:

To move the Water Safety Unit from Sheppey Fire Station to Rochester Fire Station.

Replace the rigid boat currently located on the dock in Strood with a Personal Watercraft (PWC).

People Impact Assessment (PIA)

	YES/NO		YES/NO		YES/NO
Race	No	Marital Status & Civil partnership	No	Sexual Orientation	No
Gender	Yes	Gender re-assignment	No	Religion and Belief	No
Age	Yes	Pregnancy and Maternity	No	Disability	Yes
Any other group(s) you have identified which could be affected (Please specify)			Customers in and around the Isle of Sheppey. Customers in and around the Medway Towns. KFRS firefighters.		

Who will be impacted by this project/activity? If you have answered yes (in the table above) to any of the protected characteristics groups, please include the impact details within this table.

Impacted People	Impact Description
Gender	<p>Insert from BBC News 28th May 2025:</p> <p>Water safety experts have issued a warning to take care around open water after 11 people accidentally drowned in the South East last year.</p> <p>Figures released on Wednesday by National Water Safety Forum (NWSF) show the region placed high on a list of fatal water-related incidents in 2024, with 193 having died across the UK in total.</p> <p>The NWSF list, drawn from its 2024 Water Incident Database, states that five people died across Kent and Medway, four in East and West Sussex, one in Surrey and one in Brighton and Hove.</p> <p>A total of 84% of the accidental water deaths in the UK last year were male, with inland waters such as rivers, canals, lakes, reservoirs and quarries accounting for the majority of incidents.</p> <p>ENDS.</p> <p>Males have a significantly higher suicide rate than women across all age ranges. We are seeing trends toward men specifically trying to end their own life in and around the River Medway by jumping into the water from height.</p> <p>The balance of men to women in both areas is very similar (48.93% males to 51.07% females in Medway, compared to 49.54% males to 50.45% females in Swale (Sheppey)).</p> <p>Whilst moving the WSU from Sheppey to Rochester could adversely impact at risk males in the Sheerness area, our data suggests that we are more likely to see higher numbers of attempts at ending life by entering the River Medway in</p>

	<p>the Rochester and Strood area. We believe this may be as a result of the infrastructure there (2 high bridges), geographical conditions (fast tides), and the higher population density. So, whilst there is an impact on males in both Rochester and Sheppey as a result of the proposed move we believe that, on balance, moving the WSU will have a beneficial impact on males by putting us in a better position to intervene and save life.</p> <p>In Kent, between 2019 and 2024, we were called to help 321 people in the water. Of these 321, we recorded:</p> <p>Fatalities – 9 females : 34 males - (79% males)</p> <p>Injuries – 28 females : 66 males – (70% males)</p> <p>Non-injuries – 82 females : 102 males – (55% males)</p>
Age	<p>Males aged 45 to 64 years have generally had the highest suicide rates since 2010. (Office for National Statistics).</p> <p>In Kent, we see the highest proportion of fatalities in males aged 30-39. Injuries and non-injuries are highest among males from age 20-60.</p> <p>Water related injuries and fatalities in females in Kent show a relatively even spread across age groups, with the exception of the 20-29 age group, which shows a significantly higher number of injuries and those requiring rescue but without injury.</p>
Disability	<p>Medway district ranks highest in the county for those with either a limiting disability, Swale ranks 3rd (limited a lot) and 5th (limited a little).</p> <p>The ability to more quickly get to those with physical disabilities who are in distress in the water should have a positive impact. Taking into account the data above, this should have a more positive impact in the Medway area (higher proportion of those living with disabilities) although we anticipate this to be marginal.</p> <p>Areas are comparatively balanced in terms of risk when it comes to mental health. Medway ranks 3rd in county for mental health issues in aged 16+ and 1st for aged 65+, whilst Swale ranks 2nd for 16+ and 4th for 65+.</p> <p>In terms of WSU coverage, the ability to have a faster response to those in mental health crisis trying to end their own life in and around the River Medway should have a positive impact on outcomes for those with mental health disabilities.</p>
Customers in and around the Isle of Sheppey	<p>Customers living in and around the Isle of Sheppey may experience a negative impact in terms of an increased attendance time for a Fire Service Water Safety resource to attend in the event of a rescue situation involving water or mud. If the WSU from Sheppey is relocated, the nearest WSUs will be located in Rochester or Whitstable.</p> <p>In the period 2019-2024 there were 31 mobilisations of a WSU to incidents on Sheppey's station ground. Of these 31, 12 involved reports of a person either threatening to jump into water, or in the water. 4 incidents were to reports of persons needing rescue from an unstable surface (e.g. mud). The remaining 15 were to incidents involving the rescue of animals, assistance to other agencies, or vehicles stuck in water.</p> <p>However, in the same period, there were 23 occasions when we needed to mobilise fire engines to incidents in the Sheppey area, where Sheppey's wholtime fire engine would have been the closest but were not available due to them being deployed elsewhere with the WSU. This totalled 258 hours. Of these</p>

	<p>23 occasions, 7 were to reports of a fire, 7 were to those in need of medical assistance, 4 were to fire alarms sounding, and the remainder were to incidents including lock outs and assistance to the Police.</p> <p>Overall, whilst there may be a negative impact on customers in Sheppey regarding water safety resource provision, we believe there will be a positive impact on availability of the Sheppey wholetime fire engine. It is not possible to say what the overall net effect will be in terms of future incident outcomes, but we will keep this under review through the course of this CRMP.</p>
Customers in and around the Medway Towns	<p>Customers living in and around the Medway Towns should see a positive impact on safety. Moving the WSU to Rochester will see a significantly reduced attendance time to incidents in and around the River Medway in this area. Deploying the WSU is unlikely to see a significant impact on customers exposed to other risks, such as fires, as a result of the Rochester crew being deployed with the WSU as they are typically deployed to the same water rescues as a first response in their fire engine.</p> <p>In the period 2019-2024 there were 374 mobilisations of a WSU to the area covered by Rochester, Strood and Chatham – over 10 times more than Sheppey. Of those 374 occasions, 260 involved reports of a person either threatening to jump into water, or in the water.</p> <p>Whilst the movement of the WSU will result in the crew from Rochester needing to be deployed out of the area to other water rescue incidents (e.g. to Sheppey), this will be a net positive. I.e. The WSU on Sheppey is a net ‘exporter’ of water rescue assets, whilst a WSU at Rochester would be a net ‘importer’ of the same services.</p>
KFRS firefighters	<p>We anticipate an overall positive impact on our firefighters. The nature of the water rescue incidents in the River Medway around Rochester, Strood and Chatham is such that firefighters are often making the choice to enter the water from the river banks to prevent individuals at immediate risk of drowning due to fast flowing currents. This procedure is not within their current operational practice. Whilst they do have some equipment and training that provides them with the means to reduce the risk to themselves, this is not recognised best practice and places them at a level of risk that we wish to avoid.</p> <p>If the reverse is applied, it may be seen that there may be a negative impact on the safety of firefighters in Sheppey who may feel the same pressure to act. However, the number of occasions this is likely to occur is far fewer than in the Medway Towns. Additionally, the geography has some differences that may reduce the risk. Sheppey is home to more still water (ponds, lakes and ditches). Much of the water risk also comes from the North Sea and estuary areas covered with an immediate response from the RNLI. Our WSU is rarely used for such rescues. We will continue to maintain the training of our firefighters at Sheppey as Water First Responders – able to wade safely in still or slow moving waters to conduct rescues.</p> <p>We will keep the exposure of our firefighters to risk under review during the CRMP. We will do this by identifying any occasions where firefighters operating in the Sheppey area feel they have to undertake operational discretion (stepping outside policy and procedure) to conduct a water rescue – and we will take action to help prevent this in the future should it prove to be the case.</p>

Completed by Matt Deadman, Director of Response and Resilience

Date: 27 May 2025

PROJECT/ACTIVITY NAME: Rural plan

To deliver targeted services to rural communities, to reduce risk and improve our response. We propose to deliver this through implementing the Rural Plan 2025-2029.

People Impact Assessment (PIA)

Review details aim an intended effect

The aims and intended effects of the rural plan is to support our rural communities in meeting the immediate challenges we face over the next four years. We will achieve this by:

- Reducing the number and impact of fires and other emergencies in rural areas through targeted prevention and protection activities.
- Making sure we have dedicated wildfire response teams ready at key locations, with the right vehicles and equipment to reach incidents in difficult rural areas quickly and safely.
- Working with local people, landowners and other organisations to manage green spaces, helping to stop fires from reaching homes and businesses.
- Enhancing the resilience and capability of rural fire stations and our colleagues.
- Improving the skills and equipment of our firefighters and specialist advisors to tackle wildfires and other outdoor fires.
- Helping people to prepare for and recover from emergencies within rural communities.
- Minimising the environmental impact of fire and rescue operations in rural settings.

The rural plan is an impact assessment, which outlines what we do, and what services we propose for the future to meet the needs and risks faced by communities in the countryside. This people impact assessment provides further evidence and information to support the rural plan.

Following public consultation and KMFRA agreeing the rural plan, specific people impact assessments will be developed for actions which results in changing policy, processes and service provision.

	YES/NO		YES/NO		YES/NO
Race	Yes	Marital Status & Civil partnership	No	Sexual Orientation	No
Gender	No	Gender re-assignment	No	Religion and Belief	No
Age	Yes	Pregnancy and Maternity	No	Disability	Yes
Any other group(s) you have identified which could be affected (Please specify)			<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Business owners in rural areas• Farmers and agricultural workers• Customers living in isolated areas		

Who will be impacted by this project/activity? If you have answered yes (in the table above) to any of the protected characteristics groups, please include the impact details within this table.

Impacted People	Impact Description
Race	<p>Negative impact</p> <p>Due to the demographic of high-risk premises, we are aware that there are communities that are potentially disproportionately impacted by Building Safety inspections. This is due to the risk profile being considered higher due to the number of fires that occur within food outlets, and the number of premises that have been converted into commercial and domestic without local authority consent. Our risk-based intervention programme prioritises high-risk premises in rural areas due to the time it takes us to reach rural incidents. To be able to better support the community and provide effective risk reduction initiatives, we have started to collect EDI data to analyse the impact of Building Safety Inspections and enforcement action.</p> <p>Our website has accessibility features that allows the user to adjust a number of features, including language whilst viewing and printing information.</p>
Age	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>More than a quarter of the population of Kent and Medway is over the age of 60 (Kent County Council district profiles) and this is forecast to grow in the coming years. Rural villages and small towns have a higher proportion of older people than urban areas.</p> <p>Our data highlights that older people are more likely to be injured or killed as a result of a fire than other age groups. This is due to a number of factors, including a greater number of people having mobility and sensory impairments. Providing targeted Home Fire Safety Visits in rural areas provides a positive impact to help people live in their home longer, give free smoke alarms and tailored fire safety advice to help reduce the likelihood of a fire.</p> <p>The Kent and Medway road network is approx. 5,400 miles long. Much of this covers rural areas, with many miles of single carriageway and country lanes. Department for Transport data on road casualties for different road types (RAS0302) shows that in 2022 the majority of road fatalities occurred on rural roads. Rural road fatalities (59%) are overrepresented compared to the proportion of rural road traffic (44%).</p> <p>The proposed actions are likely to have a positive impact on safety of the public as a whole, but will have a greater positive impact on road users from higher-risk age groups, for example young drivers and older drivers. In 2022, nationwide road fatalities increased for road users aged 50–59 and 70+, reflecting an ageing population. Between 2018 and 2022, 41% of motorcycle killed or seriously injured casualties across the country were under the age of 30, and the age group with the highest number of killed or seriously injured casualties were people aged 30–39 (19%).</p> <p>Our website has accessibility features that allows the user to adjust a number of features, including language whilst viewing and printing information, with videos that contain subtitles to ease understanding.</p>
Disability	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>Data from Kent County Council highlighted that in 2021, nearly 18% of the population (281,423) were considered disabled under the Equality Act. In</p>

	<p>addition, 116,477 people had a long-term health condition that didn't limit their daily activities. In Medway, 17.4% of people had a disability or long-term illness. Many rural areas have a higher proportion of disabled residents compared to urban areas. For example, Romney Marsh ward in Folkestone and Hythe has 29.3% of people reporting living with a long-term illness or disability. More people become disabled as they age, which links with having more older people living in rural areas compared to urban towns.</p> <p>The rural plan should positively impact on the lives of people living with disabilities through targeted home fire safety visits, community engagement and tailored advice.</p> <p>Our website has accessibility features that allows the user to adjust a number of features, including language whilst viewing and printing information.</p>
Business owners in rural areas	<p>Positive and negative impacts</p> <p>Approximately 40% of Kent & Medway businesses are based in rural locations. Our response times to incidents in rural villages and towns is longer than in urban areas. Our on-call project aims to provide more daytime fire engines available to respond to emergencies in rural areas. A faster response should positively impact rural businesses.</p> <p>Our risk-based intervention programme prioritises high-risk premises in rural areas due to the time it takes us to reach rural incidents. By prioritising high-risk business premises in rural areas, our inspections should provide a positive impact by reducing the likelihood and severity of a fire.</p> <p>There can be a negative impact on businesses where our Building Safety Inspections require improvements to be made to a premises and they have been impacted negatively financially (e.g. increase of cost of living). This has the potential to strongly impact the business and owners. Within the Regulators Code and Enforcement Management Model our Inspectors will only be enforcing to the minimum standard of the Article 50 guidance. Following this, if there is a requirement for expenditure then the business can put a plan in place and KFRS will work with them to ensure that work is being undertaken to a satisfactory level and working towards reducing the risk.</p>
Customers living in isolated areas	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>Customers living in isolated areas should see a positive impact on their safety. Kent and Medway has areas which are densely populated, such as Dartford (16.6 people per hectare), Thanet (13.6) and Gravesham (10.9). There are also areas, such as Ashford (2.4), Folkestone & Hythe (3.1) and Sevenoaks (3.3) with much lower levels of density. Throughout the county, there are large geographic areas of isolated homes, which can see longer response times to incidents.</p> <p>We're dedicated to overcoming the logistical challenges of effective emergency response in rural areas. We will continue to invest in specialist vehicles that are designed to help our firefighters reach incidents in hard-to-access locations. This ensures we can provide the quickest and most effective assistance possible, no matter how remote the emergency.</p>

	<p>In addition, proposals to provide tailored advice to customers living in isolated areas on what they can do to prevent fires, along with specific rural events and campaigns should have a positive impact for people living in rural areas.</p> <p>Success in reducing fires in rural areas will reduce the economic impact of loss of property and land, as well as the impact on tourism or disruption to daily commutes.</p>
Farmers and agricultural workers	<p>Positive impact</p> <p>As of 2021, there were more than 2,500 agricultural holdings in Kent, employing more than 13,000 people. Nearly 40% are employed as seasonal workers (more than 5,000), with many living in temporary accommodation. Between 2016 and 2021, there was a growth in the number of agricultural workers in the following Boroughs and Districts: Maidstone (26%), Swale (26%) and Tonbridge & Malling (27%).</p> <p>The rural plan is likely to positively impact farmers and agricultural workers through many elements of the plan, including wildfire prevention work, identifying additional water supplies, building stronger community resilience and further work to understand the scale of the damage farmers experience and identifying additional support.</p>

What stakeholder (colleague, customer, rep bodies, forum, working group) consultations have occurred in the development or implementation of this proposal?

Liaison with the Community Intelligence and Partnership Team have engaged with groups and communities to build relationships and understand issues facing communities.

Kent analytics data, Kent County Council

KALC

Kent Rural Partnership

KFRS on-call project

Water Safety Unit Data

Data is based on statistics covering the period 2019 - 2024



Water Safety Units

KFRS has 5 Water Safety Units (WSU) across the county.

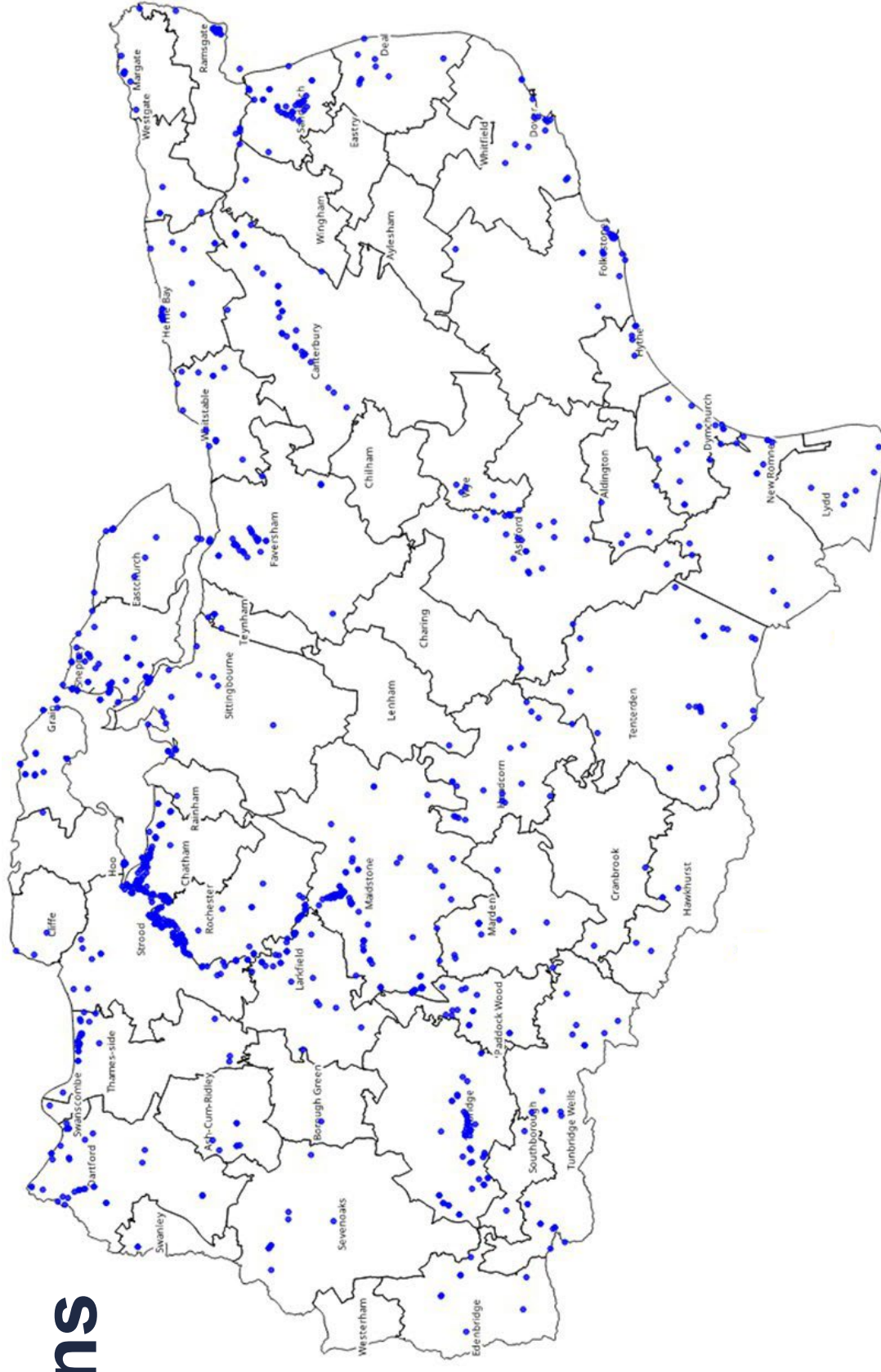
In this data they are referred to as:

- 48T1 – located in Sheppey (Sheerness)
- 19T1 – located in Folkestone
- 65T1 – located in Larkfield
- 72T1 – located in Tonbridge
- 85T1 – located in Whitstable

These units are operated by specially trained firefighters who can swim in swift water and operate boats.

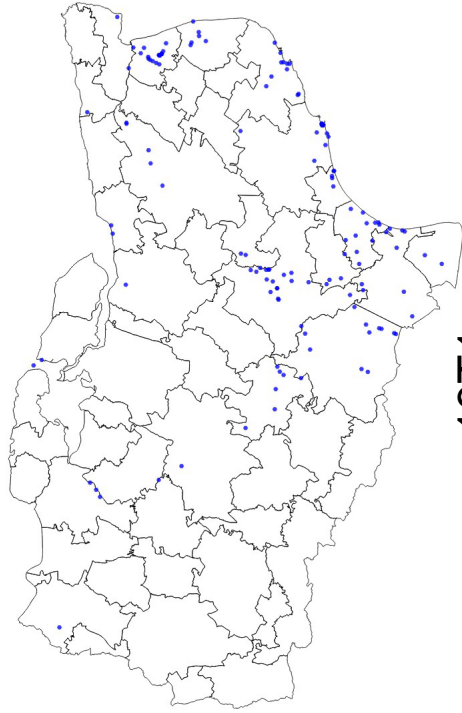
WSU Mobilisations

All incident locations to which a water safety unit has been mobilised

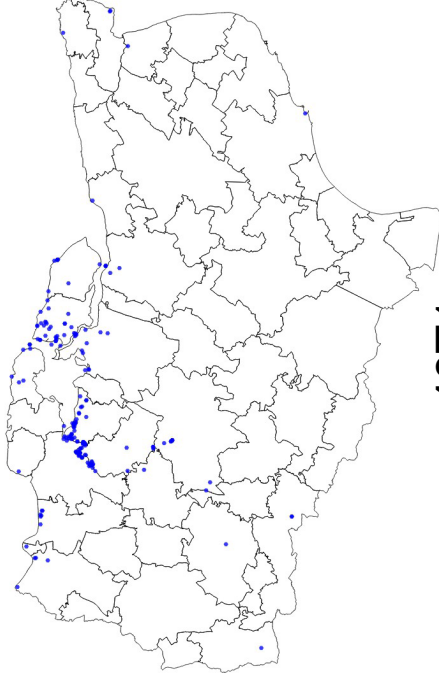


Kent Fire and Rescue Service © Crown Copyright 100033707 2025

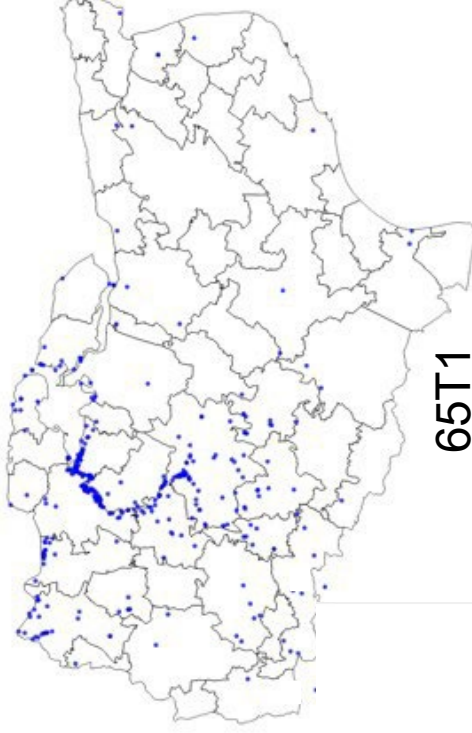
Mobilisations By WSU



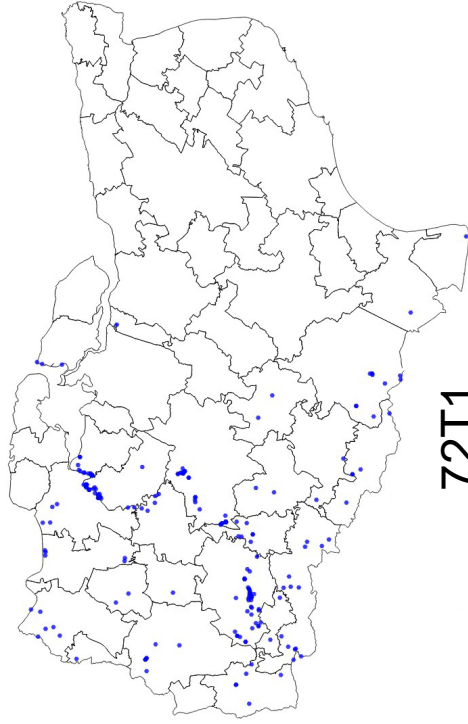
19T1



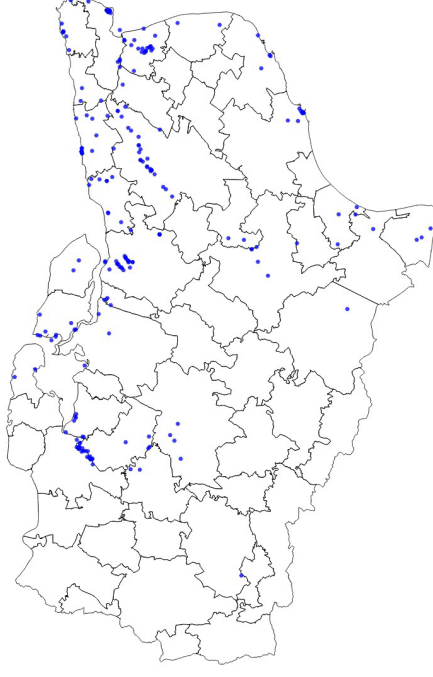
48T1



65T1



72T1

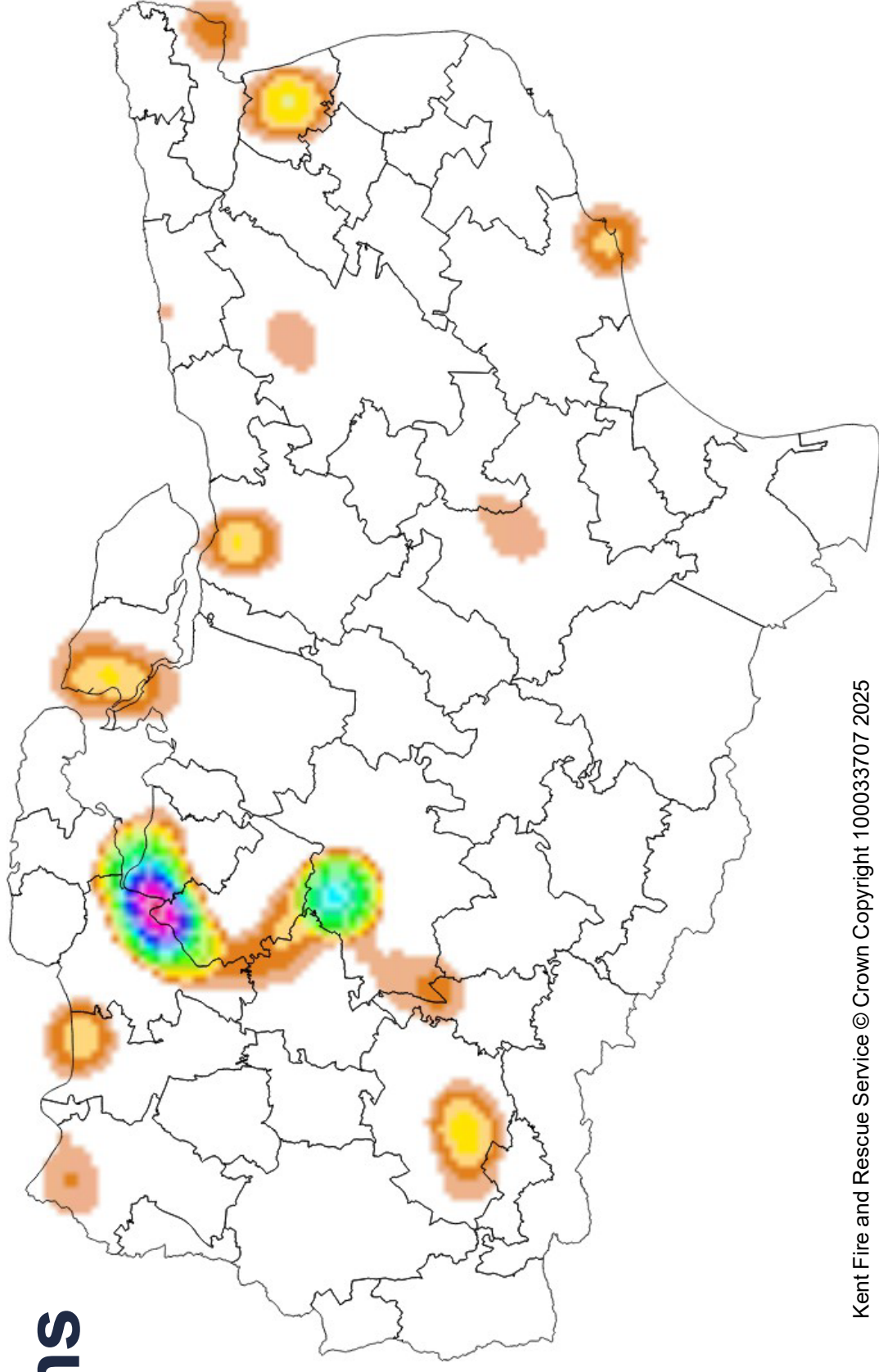


85T1

WSU Mobilisations

Density map based on the incident locations to which a WSU has been mobilised.

The map shows comparatively intense areas of activity on the River Medway, particularly in the Rochester area and, to a lesser extent, Maidstone.



Kent Fire and Rescue Service © Crown Copyright 100033707 2025

Time Committed

WSU	Time Committed 2019-2024	Hours
FJK19T1	6 days 13 hours 49 minutes 45 seconds	157:49
FJK48T1	10 days 18 hours 58 minutes 25 seconds	258:58
FJK65T1	25 days 2 hours 57 minutes 52 seconds	602:57
FJK72T1	12 days 1 hours 57 minutes 26 seconds	289:57
FJK85T1	13 days 1 hours 38 minutes 47 seconds	313:38
	67 days 15 hours 22 minutes 15 seconds	1623:22

This shows the overall amount of hours that our WSUs have spent committed to operational incidents.

WSU	Max Time Comm
FJK19T1	08:23
FJK48T1	06:25
FJK65T1	06:37
FJK72T1	07:17
FJK85T1	06:15

This shows the maximum amount of time that our WSUs have spent committed to a single incident (including travel time to the incident).

WSU	Average Time Comm
FJK19T1	01:03
FJK48T1	01:07
FJK65T1	01:12
FJK72T1	01:18
FJK85T1	01:06

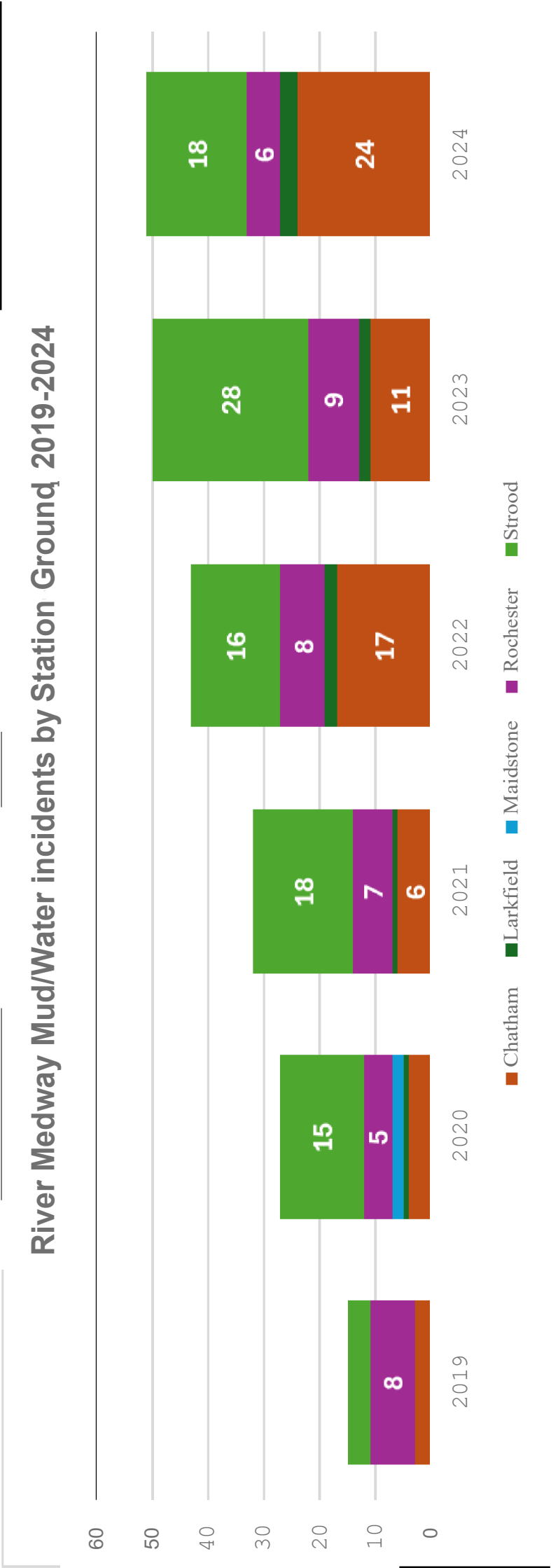
This shows the average amount of time that our WSUs have spent committed to an incident (including travel time to the incident).

River Medway Water Incidents

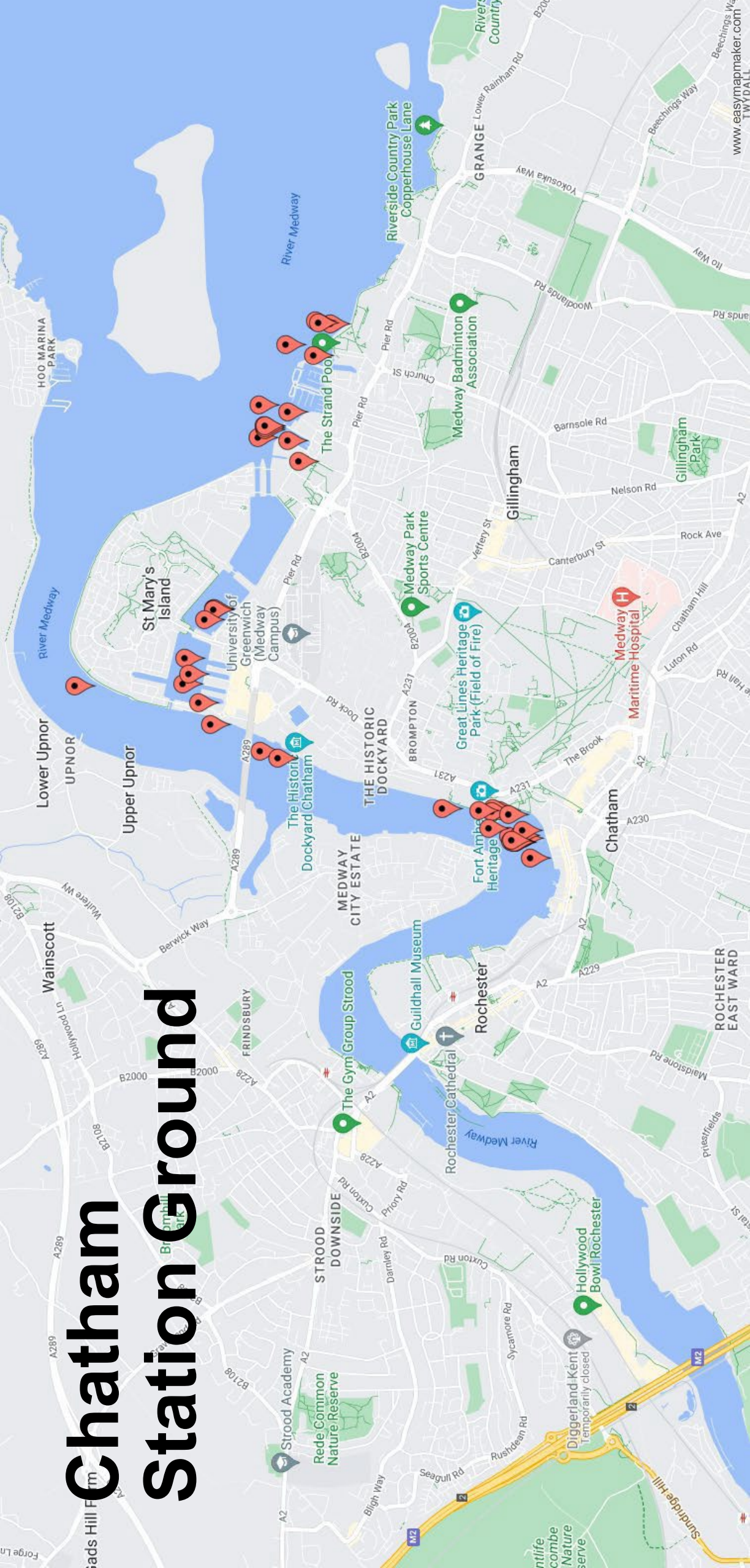
January 2019 – December 2024



Incident Overview



Chatham Station Ground



Incidents on the map

included: threat to jump or enter water, in the water/mud, false alarm

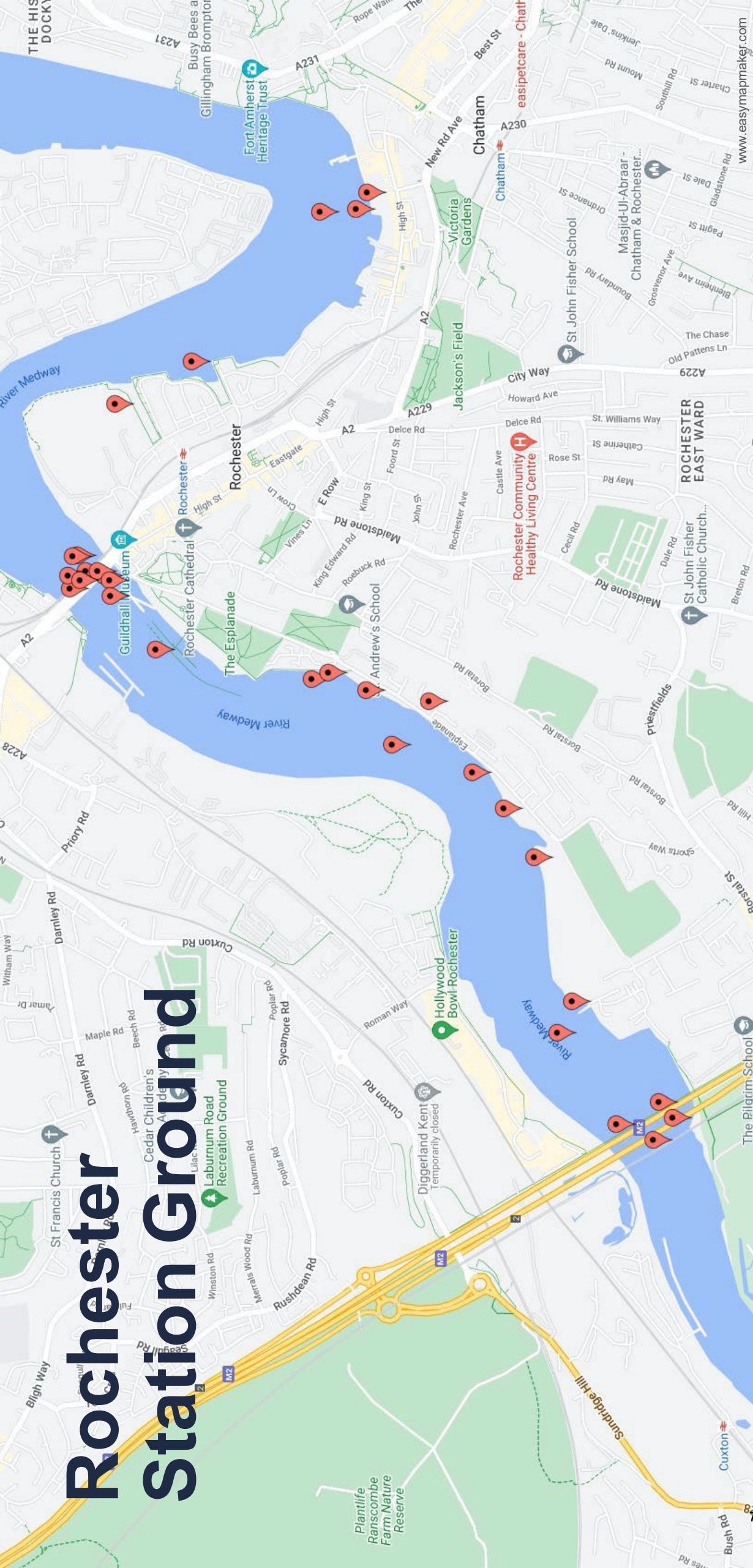
excluded: person already removed from height, water, etc., lake, boat, or not above water



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Rochester Station Ground



Incidents on the map

included: threat to jump or enter water, in the water/mud, false alarm

excluded: person already removed from height, water, etc., lake, boat, or not above water

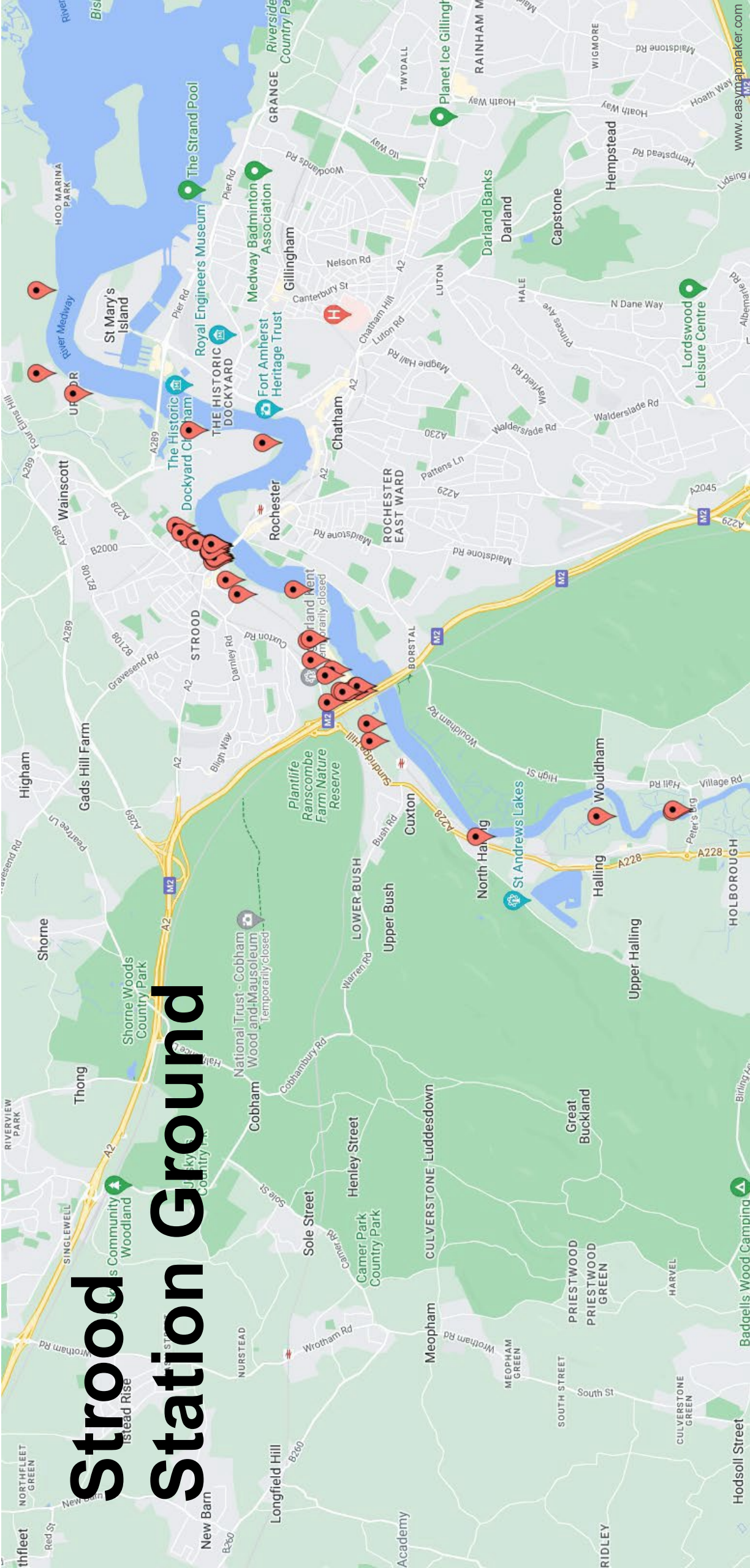


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Rescue Service**

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www.easymapmaker.com

Strood Station Ground



Incidents on the map

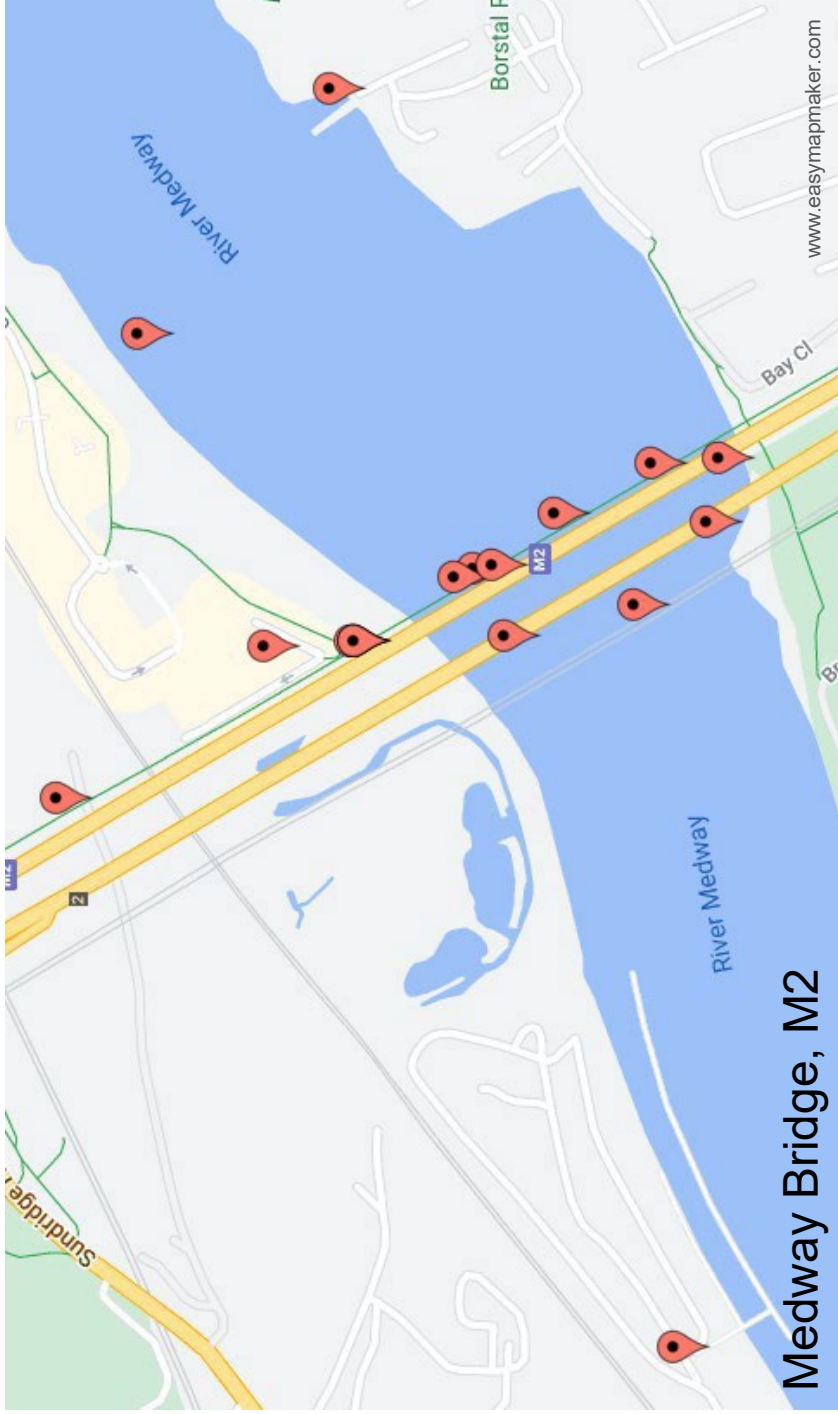
included: threat to jump or enter water, in the water/mud, false alarm

excluded: person already removed from height, water, etc., lake, boat, or not above water

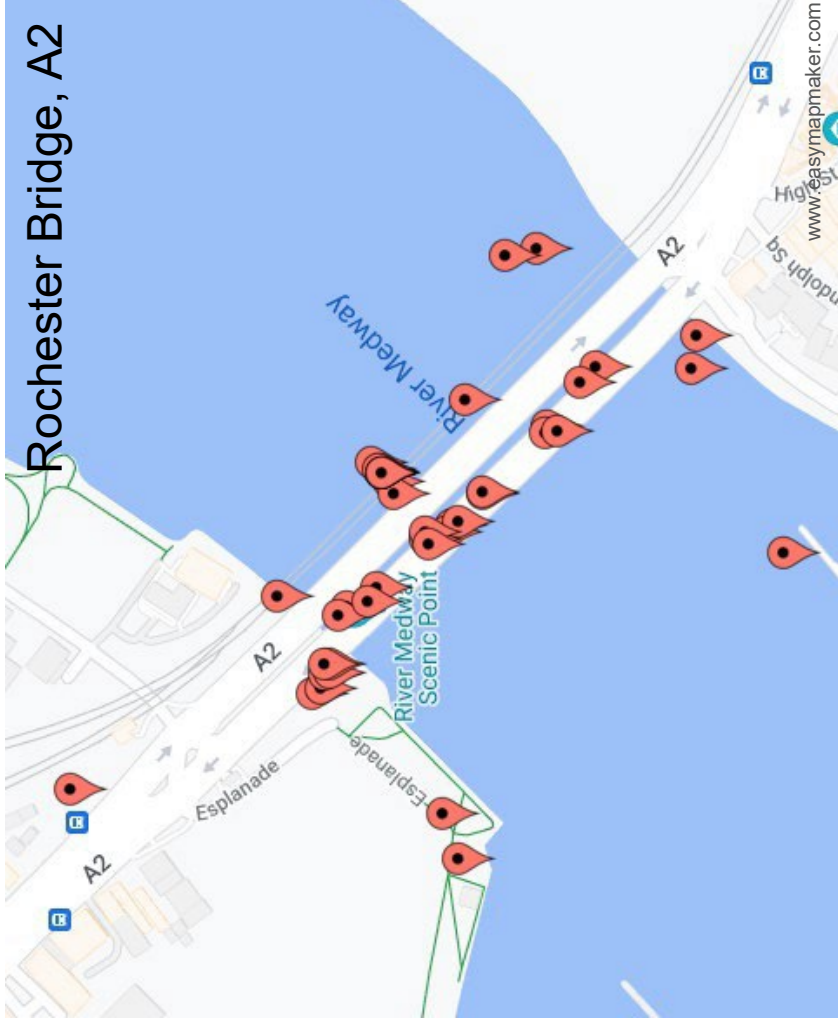


**Kent Fire &
Rescue Service**

together



Medway Bridge, M2



Rochester Bridge, A2

By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: POLICY AND GOVERNANCE UPDATE

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report covers the following governance issues:

- A.** Overview of policy reform and policy governance
- B.** Policy update

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the two revised policies set out in table 1. Paragraphs 13 and 14 and appendices 1 and 2 refer.
2. Note the remaining contents of the report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Head of Policy – Owain Thompson
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121
EMAIL: kmfraclerk@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

1. Over the past 12 months the structure and organisation of the Authority's policies (Tier 2) and underlying procedure (Tier 3) have been reformed and revised. This approach was approved by Members at the meeting of KMFRA on 05 July 2024. However, because of the changes to the membership of KMFRA since then, it was thought that it would be helpful to set out an updated overview of this for Members.
2. This work to reform policy and procedure was been undertaken to address the following issues: improve understanding and clarity about what is policy and what is procedure; establish clear and consistent terminology for policy and procedure; provide a consistent approach to layout, style and accessibility of policy and procedure; ensure clarity about how each policy supports KFRS' organisational aim (even if indirectly); set out the data sources and inputs used to assess compliance with, or make assessments relating to, each policy.
3. Our core organisational documents have been organised into four tiers. Policies sit at Tier 2 and procedure sits at Tier 3. The tiers and document types, along with a summary of their function and purpose, are set out in the table below.

Tier	Document type	Function and purpose
Tier 1	Strategy and governance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Related to legal formation of KFRS • The operation and powers of the Fire Authority, corporate governance, or the Service's organisational aim and strategic challenges
Tier 2	Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clear, simple statements of how KFRS intends to conduct its activities • Level of detail will be appropriate to the area, so could be guiding principles where the themes are broad (e.g. data protection or IT) or more specific where precise detail and instructions are required (e.g. HR topics) • If further information is required, then the 'how' is detailed in the linked procedure and guidance • All policies must go to CMB for approval and then KMFRA for A&G for approval or information
Tier 3	Procedure and Guidance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Describes how policies will be put into action • Sets out more information where there is a 'procedural tail' to a policy and a need for further information • What should be done • When things should be done • Who should do things • Can contain illustrative and practical examples

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What records must be kept
Tier 4	Forms and templates	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Forms linked to Tier 3 Procedure • Examples: mileage or expenses claim forms

4. The Service has a framework of approximately 90 policies which frame how we meet our legislative and strategic requirements. Responsibility for these sits with the teams to which they relate, for example: HR, Finance, Building Safety, Customer Safety, Operational Policy. The application of the tiered structure provides greater clarity over policies and the underlying procedure that is linked to them.
5. As part of this work policies and procedure have been put into a new template to ensure consistency and the inclusion of key criteria across every policy; for example, the data inputs relating to the policy, a statement of how that policy supports the Authority's organisational aim, and a list of the underlying procedure for the policy.
6. This makes the policies clearer and more focussed. It also ensures that Tier 2 policies and Tier 3 procedure are organised in a clear and consistent format and structure, and meet the accessibility requirements of the [Public Sector Bodies \(Websites and Mobile Applications\) \(No. 2\) Accessibility Regulations 2018](#).
7. All Tier 2 policies will have a people impact assessment (PIA) undertaken. As part of meeting the requirements of the [Equality Act 2010](#), the PIAs will assess the potential effects of Tier 2 policies and their underlying Tier 3 procedure on those with protected characteristics.
8. Effective governance for Tier 2 policies and Tier 3 procedure includes consultation, approvals and lines of responsibility. Oversight of the development of new policies and any significant amendments to existing policies is provided by a dedicated internal body called the Policy Steering Group. This meets every month and acts as a scrutiny and advisory body for Corporate Management Board (CMB) ensuring that new policies and significant amendments to existing policies meet an appropriate organisational need, support the overall organisational aim (directly or indirectly) and are suitable for end users. This also extends to consideration of potential indirect or unintended impacts of new policies by ensuring all teams from across the Authority can be sighted on new policies during their pre-approval stage.

Policy approval bodies

9. As part of the work to further improve the governance of the Authority's policies, a comprehensive review was undertaken of the mechanisms by which policy is approved. This has resulted in improved governance and transparency by identifying the policies that need to come to KMFRA or the Audit and Governance Committee for Members' approval (along with the rationale for needing to do so), and those policies that can be approved by CMB and brought to Members for information (as opposed to approval).

10. The three approval bodies and scope of each are as follows:

- **Corporate Management Board (CMB).** This is the default and covers most policies as these relate to the organisation's internal, routine day-to-day functions. These will go through the internal governance processes and be brought to CMB for approval. However, if a policy needs to go to KMFRA or Audit and Governance Committee for final approval, to ensure the necessary degree of rigour and oversight it must still go through CMB first, before progressing to either KMFRA or Audit and Governance Committee. Any decision about whether to approve or progress a policy to either KMFRA or Audit and Governance Committee, will sit with CMB and be based upon a consideration of whether it meets the criteria set out below.
- **Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority (KMFRA).** If one or more of the following are met:
 - i. The policy falls within the Scheme of Delegations, under section 1.2 b) "*establishment and use of reserves setting and revision of prudential indicators for capital financing*". An example would be the Financial Planning Policy.
 - ii. The policy falls within the Scheme of Delegations, under section 1.2 c) "*All matters relating to the appointment, and terms and conditions of employment, of the Chief Executive and such other employees as the Authority may specify under Standing Order 2.6.*" NB: Standing Order 2.6 relates to those employees covered by SOACC (Senior Officer Appointment Conditions and Conduct Committee). An example would be the Disciplinary Policy as the underlying Tier 3 procedure for this covers disciplinary matters for senior officers.
 - iii. The policy relates to a matter for which CMB determine it appropriate to have the oversight and approval offered by KMFRA. Examples would include those that relate to the regulated functions, such as the Intervention and Enforcement Policy (relevant team: Building Safety), or policies that have a wider sensitivity, such as the Safeguarding Policy (relevant team: Customer Safety), Procurement Policy (relevant team: Procurement) or the Charging Policy (relevant team: Finance).
- **Audit and Governance Committee (A&G).** If the policy falls within the Committee's terms of reference. These cover "accounting policies", which are those relating to bribery, fraud, corruption, money laundering, corporate risk management, and risk financing and insurance.

11. A summary of the current 23 policies that would be required to come to KMFRA (18 policies) and A&G Committee (5 policies) for approval, along with the rationale for doing so, is set out in the table below. In addition to the policies in this list, when CMB determine it is necessary, other policies may be brought to Members for approval and added to this list.

Policy	Approval body	If KMFRA, Scheme of Delegations or oversight	Team
Anti-Bribery Policy	A&G Committee	N/A	Finance
Anti-Fraud and Corruption Policy	A&G Committee	N/A	Finance
Anti-Money Laundering Policy	A&G Committee	N/A	Finance
Corporate Risk Management Policy	A&G Committee	N/A	Finance
Risk Financing and Insurance Policy	A&G Committee	N/A	Finance
Debt Recovery and Write-off Policy	KMFRA	Scheme of Delegations - 1.2b Reserves	Finance
Disciplinary Policy	KMFRA	Scheme of Delegations - 1.2c Chief Exec and SOACC	HR
Financial Planning Policy	KMFRA	Scheme of Delegations - 1.2b Reserves	Finance
Pay Policy	KMFRA	Scheme of Delegations - 1.2c Chief Exec and SOACC	HR
Recruitment and Selection Policy	KMFRA	Scheme of Delegations - 1.2c Chief Exec and SOACC	HR
Artificial Intelligence (AI) Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Policy and Governance
Automatic Fire Alarms Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Building Safety
Business Engagement Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Building Safety
Charging Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Finance
Code of Ethical Conduct	KMFRA	Oversight	HR
Code of Ethics for Senior Managers	KMFRA	Oversight	HR
Community Right to Challenge Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Policy and Governance
Community Risk Management	KMFRA	Oversight	Policy and Governance

Planning (CRMP) Policy			
Intervention and Enforcement Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Building Safety
Management of Policy and Procedure Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Policy and Governance
Modern Slavery Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Procurement
Procurement Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Procurement
Safeguarding Policy	KMFRA	Oversight	Customer Safety

12. The policies listed above are those from the current list of policies. This list will be updated as required when any relevant new policies are approved.

A. Policy Update

Lead/contact officer: Owain Thompson, Head of Policy

01622 692121 kmfraclerk@kent.fire-uk.org

Policies that require Members' approval

13. Since the last meeting of the Authority in February, two policies that meet the threshold for requiring Members' approval have been significantly revised. These are the Modern Slavery Policy and the Procurement Policy.
14. These have passed through the appropriate internal governance process. Table 1 below summarises each policy, the main revisions and the reason for it being brought to Members for approval. A copy of each policy is attached at Appendices 1 and 2 for Members' approval.

Table 1. Policies for Members' approval

Policy	Summary of why developed or key changes	Reason for KMFRA approval	Department
Modern Slavery Policy (V4)	Significantly revised to recognise new public procurement legislation. Also brought into line with new Tier 2 Policy and Tier 3 Procedure format. Published as V4.	Oversight	Procurement

Procurement Policy (V7)	Significantly revised to recognise new public procurement legislation and new routes to market. Also brought into line with new Tier 2 Policy and Tier 3 Procedure format. Published as V7	Oversight	Procurement
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Policies for Members' information

15. To ensure that they remain up-to-date and effective, the Authority's policies are revised as required based on a variety of factors, which may include changes to legislation, changes to procedures and practices, and the scheduled policy review dates. This may also include the development of new policies. Table 2 below summarises new policies, or policies that have been revised or undergone review since the last meeting of the Authority. These are policies that are not required to come to Members for approval. Copies of these policies can be made available to Members upon request.

Table 2. Policies for Members' information

Policy	Summary of why developed or key changes	Team
Driving at Work Policy (V4)	Policy and procedure updated and restructured to reflect current practices and improve clarity. Also brought into line with new Tier 2 Policy and Tier 3 Procedure format. PIA reviewed and updated.	Fleet and Equipment Services
Transparency Policy (V7)	Policy and procedure updated and restructured to reflect current practices and improve clarity. Also brought into line with new Tier 2 Policy and Tier 3 Procedure format. PIA reviewed and updated.	Policy and Governance
Incident Command Policy (V3)	Moved to new Tier 2 format. Addition of statement regarding command hours and National Operational Guidance. Updated wording on incident command handover.	Operational Policy and Capability
Purchasing Card Policy (V4)	Moved to new Tier 2 format, wording revised to align to the updated Procurement Policy.	Finance

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

16. There are no direct impacts from the contents of this paper which cannot be contained within existing budgetary provision. A people impact assessment has been completed for each policy referenced in this report.

RECOMMENDATIONS

17. Members are requested to:
 - 17.1 Approve the two revised policies set out in table 1. Paragraphs 13 and 14 and appendices 1 and 2 refer.
 - 17.2 Note the remaining contents of the report.

Modern Slavery Policy



Policy owned by:	Procurement and Commercial Team
Version 4	Tier 2 (Policy)
Policy applies to:	Colleagues, Members, Volunteers, Cadets, Contractors

Organisational aim

The Authority is committed to upholding the highest standards of ethical conduct and human rights across all areas of its operations. Our aim is to prevent, identify, and eliminate all forms of modern slavery, human trafficking, servitude, and forced labour from within our organisation and throughout our supply chains. We seek to embed a zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery by ensuring robust governance, effective training, transparent procurement practices, and collaborative engagement with colleagues, suppliers, and partners. This policy underpins our dedication to continuous improvement and compliance with the Modern Slavery Act 2015, reinforcing our role as a responsible public sector organisation that champions fairness, integrity, and accountability.

Introduction

Modern slavery is a crime and a violation of fundamental human rights. It takes various forms, such as slavery, servitude, forced and compulsory labour and human trafficking, all of which have in common the deprivation of a person's liberty by another to exploit them for personal or commercial gain. To tackle these crimes, the Modern Slavery Act 2015 was introduced.

The following definitions are encompassed within the term 'modern slavery' for the purposes of the Modern Slavery Act 2015:

- 'Slavery' is where ownership is exercised over a person
- 'Servitude' involves the obligation to provide services imposed by coercion
- 'Forced or compulsory labour' involves work or service extracted from any person under the menace of a penalty and for which the person has not offered them self voluntarily
- 'Human trafficking' concerns arranging or facilitating the travel of another with a view to exploiting them.

This document sets out the approach on the Authority's zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery, human trafficking and all forms of servitude and forced and compulsory labour in all our own commercial and supplier relationships, and in any of our supply chains.

Service Policy

The Authority is committed to acting ethically and with integrity in all our business dealings and relationships. We are dedicated to implementing and enforcing effective systems and controls to ensure that modern slavery is not taking place within our own operations or in any part of our supply chains. We also ensure colleagues are sufficiently trained to identify potential risks. This overarching commitment is supported at the highest level, with cross-team collaboration ensuring a harmonised and effective approach.

Our customers – Working with charitable organisations and our wider business and supply community to facilitate positive action on modern slavery.

Our People – Helping to protect our own colleagues, volunteers and job applicants from becoming victims of modern slavery through fair recruitment practice, pay and conditions, and having support mechanisms in place, such as access to whistleblowing and an employee assistance programme. The policy and training teach everyone that works for us to spot signals of possible modern slavery as they perform their roles.

The Code of Ethical Conduct, for our colleagues, is an endorsement of the – Seven Principles of Public Life (also known as the Nolan Principles) and outlines the ethical standards those working in the public sector are expected to adhere to. The Authority publishes annually a Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement.

Specific Provisions of the Modern Slavery Act 2015.

1. Section 54 of the Act makes provision for new business measures, which requires companies with an annual turnover above £36m, and carrying out a business, or part of a business in the UK, to develop a Modern Slavery Statement, also known as a Transparency in Supply Chains Statement, which is to be updated and published annually. The Authority is compliant with this requirement.
2. Following consultation in 2019, Section 54 of the Act includes provision for all public sector authorities to publish their own annual Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement, as of 1 April 2021 and applying to actions taken in the previous financial year. The statement must set out the organisation, structure and supply chains, evidence the Authority's own policies, preventative and monitoring measures, set out how risks are identified and addressed within its supply chains as well as plans for continuous improvement.
3. The requirements of the statement are set out as six discretionary areas of reporting in sections 54(5) (a) to (f) of the Act and are mandatory inclusions;
 - the organisation's structure, its business and its supply chains;
 - its policies in relation to slavery and human trafficking;
 - its due diligence processes in relation to slavery and human trafficking in its business and supply chains;

- the parts of its business and supply chains where there is a risk of slavery and human trafficking taking place, and the steps it has taken to assess and manage that risk;
- its effectiveness in ensuring that slavery and human trafficking is not taking place in its business or supply chains, measured against such performance indicators as it considers appropriate;
- the training about slavery and human trafficking available to its colleagues.

Training

All colleagues

4. Mandatory online safeguarding training is provided for all colleagues, which includes a section on modern slavery. The training develops knowledge of how to spot the signs of exploitation providing scenario-based questions to improve understanding of what it looks like in real life as well as the law around modern slavery.

Commercial and Procurement Team

5. Specific training has been provided for members of the Commercial and Procurement Team to further develop their skills and knowledge of how modern slavery risks can be addressed during the pre-procurement/specification, selection, award stages of a procurement process and throughout the contract management phase to ensure that all suppliers that we engage with are.
 - fully compliant with the Modern Slavery Act 2015
 - clear, transparent, accountable and auditable
 - free from ethical ambiguities

Governance

6. The Authority's Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement, shall be developed by the Head of Commercial and Procurement in conjunction with the Assistant Director Customer & Building Safety Customer Engagement & Safety, Head of HR and the Head of Finance. The statement must be approved by the Authority prior to publication each year. Publication of the statement must be no later than six months after the end of the financial year.

Compliance with this Policy

- Our zero-tolerance approach to modern slavery must be communicated to all suppliers, contractors and business partners at the outset of our business relationship with them and reinforced as appropriate thereafter.
- Furthermore, KFRS is dedicated to ensuring that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations are integrated into all applicable stages of its procurement activities
- The prevention, detection and reporting of modern slavery in any part of our organisation or supply chains is the responsibility of everyone within the Authority. Individuals are required to avoid any activity that might lead to, or suggest, a breach of this Policy.

- The Authority encourages openness and will support anyone who raises genuine concerns, even if they turn out to be mistaken.
- Individuals are encouraged to raise concerns about any issue or suspicion of modern slavery in any parts of our business or supply chains of any supplier tier at the earliest possible stage.
- If it is suspected that a breach of this Policy has occurred or that it may occur, the individual must report to either their Line Manager or the ER team in Human Resources or report it in accordance with the Speak Up Policy as soon as possible.

Publication

7. Each year the Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement, must be approved by Corporate Management Board, and the Members of the Fire Authority, dated with the financial year it refers to and be made public on the Authority's website and include a link to the statement in a prominent place on the website's home page.

Relevant legislation and codes of practice

This policy is in accordance with the Crown Commercial Service Procurement Policy Notice 02/23 and this is further developed under sections 6(23), 6(44/2/d) & 7(1) of The Procurement Act 2023, and the PPN009 Tackling modern slavery in government supply chains. Links provided below.

The Procurement Regulations published by the government have been amended to enable Contracting Authorities to make certain modern slavery offences under the Act as grounds for Mandatory and Discretionary exclusions of bidders from public procurements.

Please see below a list of – with associated links - to the relevant legislation and codes:

- Crown Commercial Service Procurement Policy Notice (PPN) 02/23 - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-0223-tackling-modern-slavery-in-government-supply-chains/ppn-0223-tackling-modern-slavery-in-government-supply-chains-guidance-html>
- PPN 009: Tackling modern slavery in government supply chains https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67af7c93e270ceae39f9e27a/PPN_009_Tackling_modern_Slavery_in_government_supply_chains.pdf
- Section 54 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2015/30/contents/enacted>
- Nolan Principles - Principles of Public Life <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-7-principles-of-public-life>
- The Procurement Act 2023 <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/contents>
- Statutory Guidance regarding modern slavery: how to identify and support victims [Modern Slavery: Statutory Guidance for England and Wales \(under s49 of the Modern Slavery Act 2015\) and Non-Statutory Guidance for Scotland and Northern Ireland \(publishing.service.gov.uk\)](https://www.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/115441/Modern_Slavery_Statutory_Guidance_for_England_and_Wales_(under_s49_of_the_Modern_Slavery_Act_2015)_and_Non-Statutory_Guidance_for_Scotland_and_Northern_Ireland.pdf)

Linked Procedures (Tier 3)

n/a

Related Tier 2 Policies

Tier 1 – KMFRA Procurement Regulations

Tier 2 – Procurement Policy

Data inputs and controls

- Reports or records of Partners, Suppliers or affected Supply Chains where evidence of Modern Slavery has been proven or shown, and the investigations related.
- Formal Legal contract exit information if this has been proven and new contracts in place.

Document audit information

Senior responsible manager	Head of Commercial and Procurement
Authorised by	KMFRA
Direct enquiries to	Head of Commercial and Procurement
Review by	3 years from each version date
People Impact Assessment	https://apps.powerapps.com/play/e/27c435cb-29db-4983-be8e-37b968c7b0a7/a/6e63c130-0149-4f5b-9b29-214747a496e6?tenantId=2bd1b712-51b1-4e0e-a3b4-81bfa47b30c3&sourcetime=1739269187443
Security classification	Not protectively marked
Version number	4
Version change summary	26/06/2025 – Major change to recognise new UK Public Procurement Legislation, revised PPN, and bring in line with new Policy template format

Procurement Policy



Policy owned by:	Procurement and Commercial Team
Version 4	Tier 2 (Policy)
Policy applies to:	Colleagues

Organisational aim

The aim of this policy is to provide a clear, consistent, and accountable framework for the procurement of all goods, services, and works contracts within the organisation. This policy and the relevant Tier 3 procedure documents, support the organisational aim of "Customer – Saving lives and reducing harm" by ensuring that all goods, services, and works contracts are procured efficiently, cost-effectively, and in compliance with all legal and regulatory requirements.

Through robust procurement practices, the organisation ensures that resources are directed where they are most needed, supporting frontline services, enhancing operational effectiveness, and enabling timely delivery of critical outcomes that directly contribute to customer safety and wellbeing.

Introduction

Procurement is the act of acquiring goods, services and works from third parties. Procurement is a much broader term than simply 'purchasing'. The procurement process spans the whole cycle from the initial identification of needs through to managing the end of a contract (or the end of the useful life of an asset), and all stages in between these ends of the spectrum.

Procurement is sometimes viewed as being just a process, but this is not the case.

Procurement spans a full value chain of activities which, if real value is to be delivered, must be properly understood by colleagues within and outside of the procurement function.

Service Policy

The policy of the Authority is to conduct procurement activity in accordance with its legal obligations, in a way that aligns to accepted procurement best practice for the purpose of delivering value for money.

The Policy has 4 main objectives:

1. To help secure value for money and maximising public benefit in the way the Authority spends money, so that it can demonstrate it bought the right things at the best value for money.
2. To promote compliance with the law, rules and procedures which govern the spending of public money.
3. To promote transparency and market competition, and to comply with transparency

- and reporting requirements and standards.
4. To assist and guide colleagues on how to conduct procurement compliantly and in accordance with best practice and to protect individuals from undue criticism or allegations of wrongdoing

Before choosing to procure, source or buy anything.

- Before any procurement or sourcing exercise, we should run through several checks to ensure that sourcing or buying a good or service is the best course of action. The following check list of items must be considered and indeed answered before engaging in a procurement activity or route.
- When engaging the Procurement Team, they will require that you complete a Procurement Initiation Document (PID) and these are the questions the team will ask and will not proceed until these are answered:
 - Can the requirement be met by current contracts / suppliers, processes, current teams, products or software?
 - If not, why not?
 - What is the likely spend?
 - How have you established / calculated the likely spend?
 - Do you have agreed budget to spend?
 - Is the spend one off or an ongoing annual cost?
 - If a Product or Software solution are there ongoing maintenance or licence costs?
 - When do you require the good / service?
 - Do you have a defined and agreed set of requirements?
 - Have you engaged with the end users to define these requirements?
 - If you have reached out the market
 - who have you spoken to?
 - What, if anything, have you agreed to?
 - what other routes to market have you investigated?
 - Can you evidence all of the above?
- Once you have answer all of the above, the procurement team will be better placed to help, advise and guide you through the routes to market.

Regulations

Roles, responsibilities and structure of the Commercial and Procurement Team

- Delivery of good procurement and commercial outcomes relies on colleagues from different parts of the organisation working effectively together. Understanding the respective roles and responsibilities of all those that play a part in procurement is an important aspect of ensuring high quality outcomes.
- Set out below are the high-level roles and responsibilities of the principal stakeholders in the procurement process. Please refer to the Commercial and Procurement Team for any additional detailed advice.

Commercial and Procurement Team

- The Commercial and Procurement Team provides help and advice on all aspects of buying goods or services for the organisation.
- We will help you with any aspect of procurement, whatever you are buying. The level of spend informs the extent to which the Commercial and Procurement Team must be involved. Please see the Procurement Routes for further details.
- Some of the services we offer include:
- Developing a procurement plan to help the Authority meet its CRMP objectives.
 - Development and maintenance of Category Strategies.
 - Development and maintenance of the Procurement Pipeline: -
 - Publishing a pipeline for 18 months. This promotes early engagement with procurement and is therefore very important
 - Resource planning to deliver the Pipeline.
 - Giving support and training for all those involved in procurement.
 - Working with you to develop commercial and procurement approaches for your requirements.
 - Managing specific tender processes.
 - Giving you information on existing agreements and guidance on procurement procedures (including your legal obligations);
 - Being consulted at the earliest opportunity in strategic planning for acquisitions of goods or services or works from third parties (external sources).
- Guiding the selection of the right suppliers or service providers on quality, delivery, service and price to meet requirements.
 - Guidance on contract management (or management of the most significant contracts) with contracted suppliers, defining the principles governing relationships and monitoring performance.
 - Monitoring and reporting procurement performance.
 - Maintaining knowledge of the supplier marketplace.
 - Maintaining contract management arrangements.
 - Documenting effective change control mechanisms to support the contract management arrangements.
 - Facilitating early market engagement with prospective suppliers to help determine specifications
 - Managing Risk Management

Customer (including Customer Teams)

- The role of the customer is important in defining the goods or services that are being purchased on behalf of Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS). Alongside the professional procurement advice provided by a procurement specialist, budget holders and customers have a significant input into the procurement process.

- The term "customer" is used to describe the individual (or team) with responsibility for formulating the requirement i.e. the goods, services or works required.
- The key elements of the customer's role in procurement include:
- Identifying requirements and communicating their needs to Procurement
 - Ensuring there is an adequate budget to make the proposed purchases.
 - Ensuring all purchases are compliant with the PRS.
 - Ensuring the Authority's Procurement Team is informed and involved at the earliest opportunity.
- Adequately defines user's needs, identifying minimum standards and desirable elements.
- Ensuring appropriate documentation is produced to support procurement, as required (e.g. project plan, risk register, terms of reference, decision logs, evaluation criteria, business case, Transparency Notice Procurement Form).
- Ensure compliance with relevant legal obligations relating to the goods, services or works to be purchased e.g. environmental / health and safety etc.
 - Ensure any conflict (or potential conflict) of interest is declared and managed.
- Where appropriate, prepare a business case for approval.
- Ensure that adequate funding is in place for the whole life cost where this can be reasonably assessed.
 - Contribute to drafting the tender specification.
 - Contribute to development of the procurement strategy and risk assessment.
- Be involved throughout the life cycle of the contract, i.e. the selection, award, implementation, review and management.
- Provide technical expertise and input to support the bid assessment fairly and transparently.
- Prepare the technical recommendation in any bid assessment report providing evidence if necessary.
- Creating and approving procurement requisitions, purchase orders and goods received notes in a timely manner in the Authority's workflow system, in line with Officers Scheme of Delegation.
 - Customers should not deal directly with bidders or potential bidders before or during the Procurement process without the full involvement of and/or approval by the Category Manager or Head of Commercial and Procurement.

Customer Engagement Support Team (CEST)

- Within KFRS the Customer Engagement Support Team provide a central ordering and support function for the low-level transactional purchasing of goods, works and services and BAU Support.

Organisation of the Procurement Function

- The Commercial and Procurement Team is organised according to categories of supply, meaning that sub-teams within the team specialise on the procurement and commercial management of specific goods, services and works. Organising along category lines allows

Category Managers to focus deeply on their specialist areas, gaining insight and expertise from colleagues across the organisation and reflecting that in procurement activities. There are category teams within KFRS which specialise in:

- Facilities and Property Management.
 - Fleet.
 - Professional services.
 - PPE & Clothing
 - Operational Equipment.
 - IT and related services.
- The current team structure is in Appendix 1

Procurement Governance

- This section focusses on the governance landscape within KFRS as it relates to procurement. In this context, “governance” refers to the law, rules and oversight bodies that state the way in which we must conduct procurement activity.
- There are 4 primary sources of governance which must be adhered to in relation to procurement matters:
- Our legal obligations, principally set out in The Procurement Act 2023 and Procurement Regulations (2024).
- Senior KFRS Boards and Steering Groups.
 - The KFRS Scheme of Delegation; and
 - The KMFRA Procurement Regulations.
- All procurement, regardless of value, must be conducted in accordance with the Authority’s Strategic direction, the KMFRA Procurement Regulations and the UK public procurement principles of equal treatment, non-discrimination, mutual recognition, transparency and proportionality.

Legal Obligations in Relation to Procurement

- Public sector procurement in the UK is subject to a legal framework which encourages free and open competition and value for money, in line with international and nationally agreed obligations and regulations. The regulations which govern public procurement were passed into national law by The Procurement Act of 2023 and further developed by both the Regulations (The Procurement Regulations 2024) and the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) of 2025. These have been approved by Parliament and enacted into UK Law. As a public sector body KFRS is subject to the terms of these Regulations and must undertake procurement in accordance with them.
- Kent Fire and Rescue Service (KFRS) maintains its commitment to the elimination of Modern Slavery within its supply chain and publishes an annual Modern Slavery and

Transparency in Supply Chains Statement which goes alongside its own Modern Slavery Policy. Furthermore, KFRS is dedicated to ensuring that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations are integrated into all applicable stages of its procurement activities.

Direct Award

- All procurement activity conducted by KFRS colleagues is subject to the rules set out in the Procurement Regulations (2024). There is a presumption in the national Regulations and KMFRA Procurement Regulations that all public procurement is subject to competition. Additionally, procurement activity (including compliance with this process) is subject to the terms of KFRS' Code of Ethical Conduct.
- Procurement of goods and services without competition is known as a Direct Award. In the past such requests within KFRS were known as "Waivers". The term "Direct Award" will replace both "Single Source" and "Waiver".
- All Single Source Procurement requires the publication of a Contract Details Notice, regardless of value. This informs the market publicly that we are not competing the requirement, the value of the contract and the reasons why we are not competing the requirement. This notice also comes with a mandatory 8 working day standstill period where no award or work can happen – and gives the market time to challenge our Direct Award.
- Formal approval must be gained prior to the award of a contract without competition. Direct Award Procurement will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, where it has been proven that no viable or appropriate alternative is available. It is incumbent upon the requestor of Direct Award action to make a clear and compelling written justification, backed by evidence, not to compete the requirement openly.
- All Direct Award Procurement requires the approval of senior stakeholders (Assistant Directors or above), dependent on the financial value of the proposed spend, prior to the proposed Direct Award action being undertaken. No retrospective approval for direct award action will be given, and in such circumstances the relevant Assistant Director and Director will be informed. Corporate Management Board (CMB) will agree all single source contracts. Therefore, no Direct Award procurement should take place without clear justification and CMB sign off.
- Approval of direct award action does not release KFRS from its legal obligations under the Procurement Regulations 2024. Colleagues should not knowingly seek approval for direct award action that would breach the law. Corporate Management Board does not accept any single source action requests which involve a breach of Procurement Regulations, particularly any submitted on grounds of urgency in circumstances where requirements are reasonably foreseeable and might otherwise have been avoided (e.g. through earlier action).
- The process for requesting a Direct Award Procurement and responsibility for completion of each step in the process is as follows:

Step	Activity	Responsibility for
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		Completion
0	Engage with Procurement team to outline the request, work through the Decision Tree & options to avoid single source procurement and agree the evidence that must be provided to support the request. The output of the engagement will be reflected at step 4 (below).	Requesting Official, working with Procurement Category Lead
1	Completion of Single Source Procurement Request Form (inc supply of evidence supporting the request)	Requesting Official
2	Assistant Director/ Director and Budget Manager approval	Requesting Official to seek Assistant Director and Budget Manager approval for the request
3	Submission of completed Single Source Procurement Request Form to Procurement	Requesting Official
4	Procurement Category Lead reviews the request and if necessary, seeks clarification / further information	Category Lead
5	Category Lead makes approve/decline recommendation to the Head of Commercial and Procurement	Category Lead
6	Head of Commercial and Procurement approves or declines the request (and as necessary, passes the request to any subsequent approvers). If the Head of Commercial and Procurement declines the request, it will be passed to the Chief Executive or CMB for a final decision	Head of Commercial and Procurement (on advice from Category Lead)
7	If the requirement has a total contract value of £100k or more, the Chief Executive or CMB must approve	CEO / CMB (on advice from the Head of Commercial and Procurement)
8	Once all the internal approvals have been sort and gained, Procurement must publish a compliant Transparency Notice, and all parties must wait the requisite 8 working days standstill before progressing any further	Category Lead and Procurement Admin

* Where a request is in relation to a requirement supporting a Corporate Project, the Project Sponsor (or Director) must approve the request.

- The operational demands placed on KFRS are fully recognised by the Procurement team, and in some circumstances procurement action may need to be taken very quickly to support urgent operational needs. The intention of the policy on single source procurement is not to prevent or hinder the acquisition of goods and services needed urgently, and colleagues must contact Procurement at the earliest opportunity to discuss such requirements.
- CMB is committed to reducing the number of direct award procurements conducted. Use of single source actions will be monitored and routinely reported to CMB and Assistant Directors. Repeated and/or excessive use of single source procurement will be challenged.
- As the organisation must publish such awards - all requests for direct award procurement must be completed using the form which can be downloaded from the Procurement intranet site here: [Transparency Notice request form](#)

Procurement Routes - Routes to Market

Introduction

- Our goal is to make procurement simple, transparent, efficient and value adding.
- The Commercial and Procurement Team are experienced and qualified procurement professionals (or in some cases working towards formal qualification), all of whom know and understand the value that the function can deliver. Good procurement goes much deeper than transacting a process. Procurement must be considered as a value chain that exists from the moment a requirement is identified to the time that a contract terminates, and any assets are disposed of. Our aim is to deliver a professional, value adding support service. To enable Procurement to do that effectively all colleagues are required to engage openly and pro-actively in the processes defined here.
- The process descriptions are necessarily summarised or in part high level representations of much more detailed topics. The Commercial and Procurement Team are willing to add further detail as required.
- The Procurement Routes described in this document are intended to help guide and support colleagues through all levels of procurement activity in KFRS. Following the routes will help to facilitate best practice and consistency across the organisation, and they are consistent with legislation and public sector procurement policy.
- Further source documentation is referenced throughout the procurement journey. You are encouraged to use the source documentation for every procurement exercise to ensure you are always using the most recent guidance and templates.

- This Policy is not a substitute for legal and professional advice, and neither does it aim to be an exhaustive source of every aspect of procurement process or related legal obligations. You must consult with relevant procurement (who also have access to independent legal advice) and technical colleagues wherever appropriate.
- You should ensure, when working with this guidance that you identify and comply with any relevant internal organisation guidelines, policies or procedures. The procurement journey and related processes described here are mandatory aspects of the KMFA Procurement Regulations / Framework. Colleagues are not authorised to conduct any aspect of procurement activity which does not accord with the processes set out here and in the wider PRS / PF.
- To help simplify procurement process, there are just 3 routes. The route that you are required to take depends primarily on the estimated contract value. In some circumstances the Commercial and Procurement Team may require the selection of a procurement route to be based on the level of risk/criticality associated with the contract and the requirements (but this will be dealt with on a contract-by-contract basis – initially, the value will guide the selection of process).
- In all cases, the default position is to use an existing KFRS contract or catalogue wherever one is available. KFRS has several existing contracts or catalogues in place which have already been subject to competitive procurement and demonstrate value for money. Going outside such arrangements is likely to incur a greater administrative and cost burden and dilutes the benefits of aggregation which can otherwise be achieved.
- Where a contract/catalogue already exists the Commercial and Procurement Team are unlikely to approve using an alternative route, unless there is a clear justification which clearly and unequivocally demonstrates why the existing agreement cannot deliver the requirement to the necessary quality and/or best value for money.
- The Commercial and Procurement Team works with customers to develop and maintain contracts for goods and services that are central to the delivery of our services, and/or purchased regularly. The benefits of using existing contracts and catalogues include the following:
 - It helps to ensure value for money and leverage purchasing power
 - Quality and sustainability (as well as price) will have already been evaluated.
 - Supplier standards compliance, licenses, Health and Safety will have been considered.
 - Legal responsibilities and audit requirements will have already been considered.
 - Shorter timescales, as many obligations are already met.
 - They account for threshold aggregation rules.
 - They will deliver our Terms and Conditions, which are designed to protect our legal position.
 - They enable active contract management, price and quality control.
 - Support the management of contractual and commercial risk

There are 3 Procurement Routes colleagues should take when looking to procure or source a good or service for the service. The procedure for each route is clearly defined and detailed in the Tier 3 Procedures documents, but in summary the routes are defined below, and each

relate to the total cost of the good or service being procured and also means the total overall value of the whole life of a contract.

Route 1 – Self Service

This Route is available for all small or one-off purchases, where a contract is not in place and where one payment option is a corporate Purchasing Card, **up to £1,000 (ex VAT)**. It is also available at the discretion of a member of Corporate Management Board (for example in the resolution of emergency incidents for purchasing additional services out of hours).

Route 2 – Self Service with a minimum of 3 Quotes

This Route is for unregulated procurements which are low risk, non-repetitive and valued over **£1,000 to £24,999 ex VAT**.

Route 3 – Formal Procurement

This Route is for requirements valued **over £25,000 ex VAT**. Procurement will lead the sourcing exercise in conjunction with customer inputs.

CONTRACT MANAGEMENT

- Contract management is the process of systematically and efficiently managing the delivery of whatever has been contracted for. The act of proactively managing contracts will help to maximise financial and operational performance and minimise risk. Simply, effective contract management will help KFRS get what it pays for.
- Contract management aims to ensure:
 - Goods and services are being delivered as agreed to the required level of performance and quality.
 - The relationship between the two parties remains open and constructive, aiming to resolve or ease tensions and identify problems early.
 - Formal contract governance is maintained and used to resolve performance issues and drive innovation and continuous improvement.
 - Changes to the contract are agreed via the appropriate procedures and clearly documented.
 - Value for money (VfM) secured during the procurement process continues to be realised throughout the term of the contract.
 - The management of the contract is transparent and auditable.
 - Support the management of contractual and commercial risk

- Contract management is a shared responsibility between customer teams and the Commercial and Procurement Team. Please see the Contract Management Toolkit for details of specific roles and responsibilities of the Contract Manager and the Commercial and Procurement Team. The level of activity expected in the management of contracts will vary, according to the value of the contract. This is also set out in detail in the Toolkit.
- Responsibility for undertaking the Contract Manager role will generally fall to the customer team. However, there may be some exceptions, for example where contract value and risk are judged to be particularly high. In such cases the formal Contract Manager role may be a member of the Commercial and Procurement Team or senior officer within KFRS).
- The Contract Manager must have sufficient experience and seniority to enable them to undertake the role effectively. If Contract Managers feel they are not fully equipped to undertake the role they must seek advice from Procurement.

Contract Management Toolkit

- KFRS has developed a suite of guidance and a toolkit to help Contract managers undertake their role. The guidance and toolkit are available here: [Click here](#).

Relevant legislation and codes of practice

Procurement Act 2023 - <https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/contents>

Procurement Regulations 2024 -

<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2024/9780348259728/contents>

National Procurement Policy Statement 2025 -

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/67ab330e1a116437c7ed88da/E03274856_National_Procurement_Policy_Statement_Elay.pdf

KFRS Modern Slavery Statement - <https://www.kent.fire-uk.org/modern-slavery-and-transparency-supply-chains-statement-202324>

Linked Guidance (Tier 3) and other documents

Tier 1 - KMFRA Procurement Regulations

Tier 3 - Procurement Policy Procedures

Related Tier 2 Policies

Tier 2 – Purchasing Card Policy

Tier 2 – Disposals Policy

Tier 2 – Social Value Policy

Tier 2 – Modern Slavery Policy

Tier 2 – Supplier References Policy

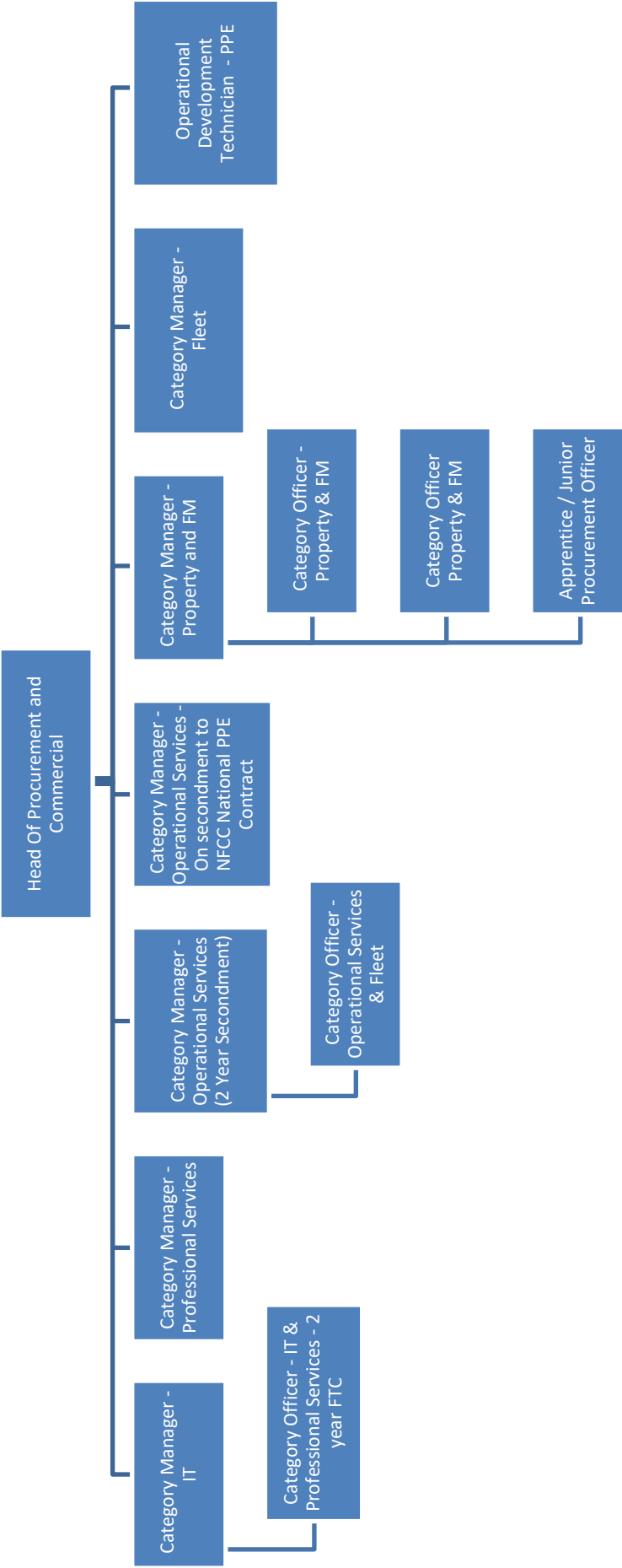
Data inputs and controls

- Reports or records of Procurement Projects not being let in the prescribed way or completed via differing routes.
- Formal Legal Challenges to any KFRS Procurement Project or Award.

Document audit information

Senior responsible manager	Head of Commercial and Procurement
Authorised by	CMB
Direct enquiries to	Head of Commercial and Procurement
Date first implemented	07 April 2020
Date of most recent approval (significant amendments)	26 June 2025
Review by	26 June 2028
People Impact Assessment	https://apps.powerapps.com/play/e/27c435cb-29db-4983-be8e-37b968c7b0a7/a/6e63c130-0149-4f5b-9b29-214747a496e6?tenantId=2bd1b712-51b1-4e0e-a3b4-81bfa47b30c3&sourcetime=1739269187443
Security classification	Not protectively marked
Version number	7
Version change summary	<p>V7 (26/06/2025) Major change to recognise new UK Public Procurement Legislation, new thresholds for spend and routes to market. Brought into Tier 2 and Tier 3 format.</p> <p>V6 (09/01/2025) All four 2025 expiry date Procurement Policies will have an extension to 31/12/2025 to cover the overlap with the new Procurement legislation and introduction new KFRS Tier 2 Procurement policies. Expiry date changed from 07/04/2025 to 31/12/2025 and updated to V6.</p>

Appendix 1 Procurement Team



By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority –7 July 2025

Subject: MODERN SLAVERY AND TRANSPARENCY IN SUPPLY
CHAINS STATEMENT 2024-25 AND KMFRA PROCUREMENT
REGULATIONS

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report covers the following:

- A.** Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement 2024-25
- B.** KMFRA Procurement Regulations
- C.** Legislative update on the Procurement Act 2023

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2024-25. Paragraphs 1 and 2 and Appendix 1 refer.
2. Approve the KMFRA Procurement Regulations (Tier 1 document). Paragraphs 3 to 6 and Appendix 2 refer.
3. Note the remaining contents of the report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Gavin Wolstenhulme
TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121
EMAIL: kmfraclerk@kent.fire-uk.org
BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

COMMENTS

A. Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2024-25

Lead/contact officer: Gavin Wolstenhulme, Head of Procurement

01622 692121 kmfracclerk@kent.fire-uk.org

Background

1. The Procurement Team has prepared the Authority's 'Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement' for 2024/25. This sets out the steps taken by the Authority during this period to ensure that modern slavery does not form a part of any of our supply chains.
2. The statement is published in accordance with section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (Transparency in Supply Chains) Regulations 2015. The Statement is attached at Appendix 1 for Members' consideration and approval.

B. KMFRA Procurement Regulations

Lead/contact officer: Gavin Wolstenhulme, Head of Procurement

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Background

3. The KMFRA Procurement Regulations (formally known as the Procurement Standing Orders (PSO)), is a formal document which sets out the legislative framework, by which the Authority and therefore Kent Fire and Rescue (KFRS) conducts and authorises the procurement of goods, works and services.
4. These regulations and the associated policy and procedure and guidance documents, support the organisational aim of "Customer - Saving lives and reducing harm" by ensuring that all goods, services, and contracts are procured efficiently, cost-effectively, and in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements.
5. With the advent of the new UK Public Procurement Legislation detailed below, our Procurement Team have sought to update these regulations and bring them in line with the requirements of the new legislation. These are coupled with an update to the thresholds of spend colleagues need to consider for the differing contracts and routes to market.
6. The KMFRA Procurement Regulations are attached at Appendix 2 for Members' consideration and approval.

C. Procurement Act 2023

Lead/contact officer: Gavin Wolstenhulme, Head of Procurement
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7. The Procurement Act 2023 came into force on 24 February 2025. This represents a significant change to public sector procurement. Consequently, to aid public authorities in moving over to the new regulations, the government implemented a six-month transition phase. The co-ordination of the Authority's response to this is being managed by the Head of Procurement and Commercial.
8. The new regulations aim to give 'contracting authorities' (such as KFRS) greater flexibility to design their own procurement processes, for example by involving potential suppliers in the process of designing a requirement. In doing so, the aim is to improve innovation and ease some of the demands and restrictions of the previous procurement legislation.
9. Alongside this the national regulations contain enhanced transparency requirements for contracting authorities, who will need to let markets and the public know in much greater detail information about what is being procured, when, by what means, how much is being spent, and the performance of the contract. This will take place via the publication of public notices over the course of a contract's life.
10. The Authority's Procurement Team are fully trained and certified in the new regulations. A review and update of all procurement documentation has been carried out to ensure that it reflects the new requirements and processes. First among this is the development of previously mentioned KMFRS Procurement Regulations, and then an updated procurement policy and linked internal procedures and guidance. Within this are changes in thresholds of spend and necessary changes to internal procurement processes. Once these are completed and approved, the Procurement Team will put in place a series of internal training sessions for those colleagues who need to manage sourcing and contracting exercises, for example the Corporate Management Board, the Strategic Leadership Team, and nominated budget managers. It is intended that this training will be in place by the summer and completed by the end of the calendar year.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

There are no direct impacts from the contents of this paper which cannot be contained within existing budgetary provision.

RECOMMENDATIONS

11. Members are requested to:

- 11.1 Approve the Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement for 2024/25. Paragraphs 1 and 2 and Appendix 1 refer.
- 11.2 Approve the KMFRA Procurement Regulations (Tier 1 document). Paragraphs 3 to 6 and Appendix 2 refer.
- 11.3 Note the remaining contents of the report.

Modern slavery and transparency in supply chains statement 2024/25

This statement sets out the steps taken during 2024/25 by Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority and is published in in line with section 54(1) of the Modern Slavery Act 2015 and the Modern Slavery Act 2015 (Transparency in Supply Chains) Regulations 2015.

What is Modern Slavery?

Modern slavery is a serious crime being committed across the UK in which victims are exploited for someone else's gain. It can take many forms including trafficking of people, forced labour and servitude.

It is a very real and present threat to our society and is sadly all around us but often hidden from sight and difficult to spot. Many victims also do not identify that way.

We share the actions we have taken so far in this statement.

Our ambition

Since the Modern Slavery Act became law live police operations have increased significantly.

- According to a modern slavery helpline, calls were up by more than 19% in 2023
 - [Modern slavery helpline receives record number of calls in 2023, report finds | UK News | Sky News](#)
- The main type of exploitation was thought to be Labour abuse
- Potential victims in the Care Sector were up 30% from 708 in 2022 to 918 in 2023
- 3 potential victims forced surrogacy (first time)
- 4 cases of organ harvesting

Changes in personal circumstances here in the UK because of the cost-of-living crisis sadly could also lead to an increase in victims of this crime. Households that have been pushed into poverty are more susceptible to being exploited.

¹ [Modern Slavery: NRM and DtN statistics, January to March 2025 - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

² https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---ed_norm/---ipec/documents/publication/wcms_854733.pdf

Measuring the true impact may not be possible as victims fear homelessness, deportation, or starvation if they speak out.

Protection and prevention are central to everything we do at Kent and Medway Towns Fire and Rescue Authority (the authority). Together with our partners and suppliers we take our responsibility seriously. Driving the change that we all want to see happen. Every member of our organisation can act on any concerns they identify. Together we are working towards a world that is free of slavery, persecution, and exploitation.

This statement shares what we have done so far. It also details our commitment on what we will do to help combat this offence. We are focused on where we can make a difference, and we are proud that we have made a good start. We know that there is still much to do, and it will take time to stamp out modern slavery.

Who are we?

Every minute of every day, we are here to save lives and make our county even safer. We are a forward-thinking, modern fire and rescue service with a long and proud history. Together with our customers we are creating a safer future for Kent and Medway Towns.

Helping to keep people safe in their homes, where they work and in places of education. We are there for our customers when needed – whether it is a fire, a road crash, or a water rescue.

The service is formed of over 1,610 members of our team. We have 55 fire stations, a training centre, control centre and service headquarters all within Kent and Medway Towns. We also have around 50 volunteers available to support customers.

Prevention from harm is a big part of what we do. We have 21 Safe and Well officers who give a reassuring service to both the public and any member of our teams who may have encountered someone identified either through operational incidents or home fire safety visits as being 'at risk.' The team works closely with other agencies such as social services, mental health teams, local

authorities, housing associations and the police. Together they put high risk intervention measures in place, often at very short notice.

12,206 safe and well visits and 15,298 home fire safety visits were made in Kent and Medway Towns throughout 23/24.

We also have 16 designated safeguarding officers (DSOs) with 7 of these out-of-hours supported by a Safeguarding Lead and Safeguarding Case Manager. Our internal and external safeguarding processes make sure the service helps to protect the safety and welfare of children and adults at risk as our teams meet them during their work. We have a safeguarding policy and guidance that includes activities that are undertaken to protect specific children, young people and adults who are suffering, or likely to suffer, abuse harm or neglect. Our teams raised 468 safeguarding cases between April 2024 and March 2025.

Our customer promise sets out our commitment to all customers. Working with them we aim to create a safer future for Kent and Medway Towns. We promise to provide excellent, personalised and accessible services. We also promise to maintain our customers' trust and to work with our customers to keep improving. Our promise, in many ways, is in line with our ambition included within this statement.

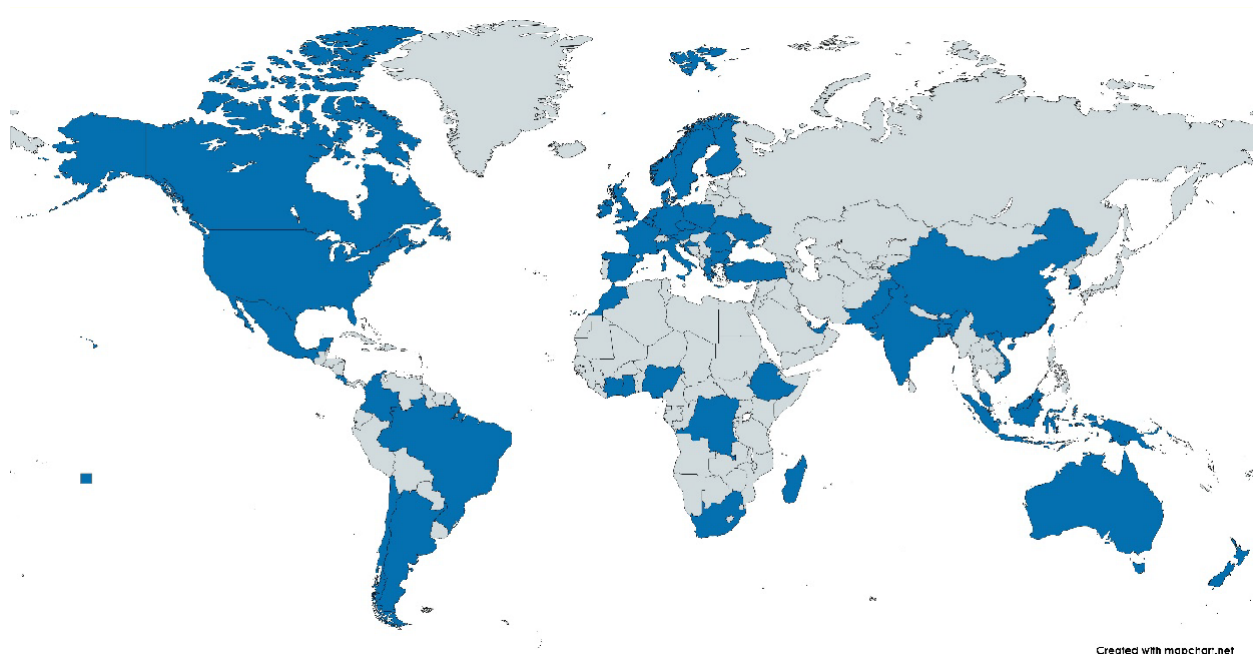
We are committed to a culture of listening and understanding to encourage everyone to be curious and compassionate. We have internal and external whistleblowing routes for colleagues to raise concerns to prevent and identify harm. This culture and practice not only help us all to value differences and be kind it means we are able to identify when someone is at risk of harm.

We don't just comply with the relevant laws and practices on how we should treat colleagues, customers and anyone who comes into contact with our organisation. We extend our role beyond compliance by making sure we do not tolerate discrimination in our business practices, or the behaviours of anyone within our organisation or networks.

You can find out more information on [who we are](#) and [what we do](#) elsewhere on this website.

Our sourcing map

Our average annual expenditure with third parties is £31.05m and we currently source a variety of goods and services from 59 countries worldwide (an increase from 57 as published in our 23/24 statement, this despite ongoing conflicts. Although supplies from Ukraine have been limited).



List of countries we source goods and services from

- United Kingdom
- Argentina
- Australia
- Austria
- Bangladesh
- Belgium
- Bulgaria
- Brazil
- Canada
- Chile
- China
- Colombia
- Costa Rica
- Croatia
- Czech Republic

- Denmark
- Ethiopia
- Finland
- France
- Germany
- Ghana
- Greece
- India
- Indonesia
- Italy
- Ivory Coast
- Liberia
- Luxembourg
- Madagascar
- Malaysia
- Mexico
- Monaco
- Morocco
- Netherlands
- New Zealand
- Nigeria
- North Macedonia
- Norway
- Pakistan
- Papua New Guinea
- Poland
- Qatar
- Republic of Ireland
- Romania
- Slovakia
- South Africa
- South Korea
- Spain
- Sweden
- Taiwan
- Thailand
- Turkey
- UAE
- Ukraine
- USA
- Vietnam

Our progress: What are we doing about modern slavery?

Our suppliers

Our sourcing map shows our extensive global supplier base. Given the ongoing global supply issues alongside rising costs, it is an evolving picture. To assure the continuity of critical goods and services needed for our front-line our map has expanded substantially. This reflects the work that the Authority is doing to have greater transparency in our supply chains.

We understand modern slavery could appear in our supplier's business, or any supplier in the chain from raw material to disposal.

As a publicly funded organisation, we ensure absolute transparency in all our purchasing decisions and practices. We continue to build on our promise in our previous statements that all of our Tier 1 suppliers will need to sign up to the [Modern Slavery Assessment Tool](#). We have made great progress in this area. Over £30m worth of contracts with suppliers across all categories (fleet, information communications technology, facilities management and construction, operational equipment, clothing/personal protective equipment and professional services) are now working with us to publish their performance against key measures on the tool. The level of information shared with us is proportionate to the critical nature of the goods and services that each supplier gives us, and the level of risk of modern slavery associated with the specific markets they work within.

We work with our Tier 1 suppliers to make sure that they are committed to training workers and their local suppliers on modern slavery risks and compliance.

It certainly cannot be underestimated how complex the audit and traceability processes are when dealing with multi-tier supply chains. This must absolutely be done collaboratively with our Tier 1 suppliers, which will take time, not least because of the dynamic nature of global markets. However, the progress that we are making by working closely together with our suppliers with a shared

purpose and values will continue to ensure that we do right by everyone that engages with our organisation.

Our suppliers are taking positive steps to help make sure that their supply chains and every individual that works within the chain is free of any risk of modern slavery. Action such as on-site pre-enrolment systems and anonymized call cycles to check directly with workers regarding their human rights and their personal experiences of the employment processes to ensure that they are ethical, and every individual is aware of their rights. We also have suppliers who are signed up to and follow the Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority protocols; and suppliers who are in collaboration with the UK Construction Industry to address slavery and forced labour risks in the industry.

Supplier code of conduct

The authority works in a responsible, ethical and open way and we expect the same from our suppliers. We have set out the standards, values and behaviours we expect from our suppliers in our [Supplier Code of Conduct](#). We ask suppliers to confirm that they will work with us to protect and respect human rights.

Policies and controls

We are committed to the highest standards of openness, honesty and accountability. As such, policies have been developed or updated to reduce slavery and human trafficking:

- [Modern Slavery Policy](#)
- Speak Up Policy
- Transparency Policy
- Safeguarding Policy:
 - Guidance Document G27 – How to raise a safeguarding concern.
 - Guidance Document G28 – Safeguarding Terms and Definitions.
- Recruitment and Selection Policy
- Managing Safeguarding Allegations Guidance

If a modern slavery risk is identified, our Modern Slavery Policy provides links to comprehensive legal guidance.

We keep our policies under regular review, ensuring that we have the right guidance, processes and controls in place to detect modern slavery-related offences.

We work closely with external agencies and law enforcement, as well as attending industry meetings to stay on top of emerging modern slavery trends. The intelligence we get from this helps us strengthen our capabilities to recognise red flags in customers' transactional behaviours.

Looking after our people

Our internal policies encourage a culture of supporting and empowering our people, recognising that we must ensure that modern slavery is considered at every significant decision gateway internally, as well as externally.

In March 2023 we adopted an updated flexible working policy, which means that from day one of joining our organisation, colleagues can request flexible working to enable greater opportunities for work-life balance. The policy reflects our proactive approach to introducing measures that give our people freedom of choice, long before any legislation changes. It is quite simply the right thing to do.

We make sure that any recruitment services that we engage - apply the same high standards that we do. Verifying ID, the right to work in the UK along with Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) checks helps us learn who we are employing to identify whether someone is connected to modern slavery-related activities, as perpetrator or victim. We also have an Employee Assistance Programme (EAP) in place for 24/7 support.

Process and risk

We have developed a safeguarding concern referral form. We signpost our people to the process of raising concern through guidance published on our intranet, safeguarding training is mandatory. We have widely distributed posters, some of which have been developed with our external EAP provider, that signpost colleagues on whistleblowing. or show a process flow diagram for raising a concern. We continually look at the referral process to make sure that first accounts are recorded by the person identifying the concern. The information asked for on our referral form is consistent with other partners. We make sure the concerns and feelings and wishes of the person are documented at the earliest opportunity.

Working with our legal advisers, we have developed improved obligations on our suppliers by introducing modern slavery compliance clauses which we are including in procurement projects. As a result, our suppliers are obligated to take steps to investigate and identify issues relating to the Modern Slavery Act and to tell us at once if they become aware of any issues within their supply chains. We want to make sure that the rights of everyone working on our contracts are protected and have therefore also included provision for income security and working hours. Our future contracts will also include details of the Modern Slavery Helpline and link to the online reporting facility.

Training and awareness

All of our teams:

Safeguarding training is mandatory and face to face refreshers are every three years. Modern slavery and human trafficking e-learning is mandatory for all new and existing colleagues. In line with NFCC guidance for checks, vetting and training specific roles receive Enhanced level 2, or level 3/ 4 training in house. Safeguarding managers complete level 5 with an external provider.. This is evidenced in our Safeguarding Policy and Safeguarding Guidance for checks, vetting and training.

The training plan is reviewed on an annual basis.

Commercial and Procurement:

The Commercial and Procurement team, whilst going through a continued period of change, has continued its good progress with its commitment to Chartered Institute of Procurement and Supply (CIPS) Ethical Procurement and Supply E-Learning. All team members that have responsibility for sourcing or supplier relationship management have now completed the training and are certified.

The team is also committed to their ongoing contract management with existing strategic suppliers to ensure their commitment to working within the requirements of the Modern Slavery Regulations – taking extra note of the new UK Public Procurement Regulations in this area which came into effect in early 2025, and specifically PPN009 which details What actions do in-scope organisations need to take in regards to Modern Slavery.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/ppn-009-tackling-modern-slavery-in-government-supply-chains/ppn-009-guidance-on-tackling-modern-slavery-in-government-supply-chains-html>

The team will always maintain their continued professional development and regularly participate in webinars to expand their learning and exposure to actions taken and lessons learned from real-life cases found within supply chains.

Collaboration and stakeholder engagement

Compliance and positive steps towards change relies on teamwork. Our partnerships are integral for the Authority in addressing modern slavery risks, helping us to stay on top of emerging modern slavery trends and strengthen our detection capabilities.

We have had many intervention successes resulting from multi-agency collaboration, like the number of safeguarding cases we have identified. Key

organisations and initiatives we continue to partner with are:

Partner	Who	Issues/Area of work	Working together
Stop the Traffik	Registered Charity building a global picture of human trafficking hotspots and trends through information sharing and collaboration.	To build resilience into communities, and to encourage appropriate response and reporting.	Providing training and support to KMFRSA Safeguarding managers
The Salvation Army	24/7 support	Modern Slavery Helpline available 24/7	Support provided via the helpline if concerns are identified, and further advice needed.
Gangmasters and Labour Abuse Authority	Non-Departmental Public Body set up to protect vulnerable and exploited workers.	Investigate reports of worker exploitation and illegal activity such as human trafficking, forced labour and illegal labour provision, as well as offences under the National Minimum Wage	Point of reference for knowledge, skills, and experience in terms of all aspects of human rights abuse. Presented at senior managers forum to build on knowledge and

		and Employment Agencies Acts.	awareness across our organisation.
Police	Emergency services partner	First responders for modern slavery issues	<p>Sharing of information if detected to help trace individuals.</p> <p>Modern Day Slavery and Human Trafficking Co-Ordinator provided training to our Designated Safeguarding Officers and Head of Commercial and Procurement</p>
UK Fire and Rescue Services	Fire and Rescue Sector	Sharing of information and learning	Sharing of model template for Modern Slavery Policy for adoption sector wide.

Looking ahead

We are proud to report that we are responding to modern slavery in a way that reflects our Customer Promise, with safety being our primary focus.

Modern slavery is a complex, multi-layered issue. We are committed to our responsibility to regularly review our policies, due diligence, and risk assessment processes to strengthen our approach to modern slavery. This allows us to identify, assess, and address risks, tackle modern slavery from its root causes and protect the human rights of the people in our business and supply chains.

We will continue to widen the scope of our due diligence to engage and share our ambitions with our suppliers and train everyone within our organisation to spot the signs of modern slavery.

Over the reporting period that this statement covers, we have increased our knowledge of our supply chains by growing the number of suppliers that are working with us to mitigate modern slavery risks in our supply base.

We recognise that there is still progress to be made across our supply chains. We are committed to reviewing and improving our practices and collaborating with others to ensure that we continually improve within an ever-changing world.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our partners, including our customers and suppliers, without whom our work to protect the rights of individuals in our supply chains and address the risk of modern slavery wouldn't be possible.

Signed

TBC

Chair, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Millington', written over a horizontal line.

Ann Millington

Chief Executive, Kent Fire and Rescue Service



Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority (KMFRA) PROCUREMENT REGULATIONS

June 2025 v1

Foreword

By Ann Millington, Chief Executive

I am delighted to introduce this revised and renamed KMFRA Procurement Regulations document to you.

This is an important and relevant document for our entire organisation, and I would like all colleagues, irrespective of where in the organisation you work and whatever your core responsibilities, to ensure you are familiar with its content.

Within this document - and its related Policies and Guidance available on the Service's Intranet - you will find a wealth of invaluable information to help you to procure goods and services in a way that maximises our budget and demonstrates value for money. This is intended not just as a reference document to keep us on the right side of the current UK Procurement Regulations, but also as a proactive and helpful guide to achieving good commercial outcomes.

We must always remember that our budgets and resources are limited, and that it is incumbent on us all to ensure that we use those scarce public resources to the greatest possible effect. Procurement is not just a process designed to evidence compliance (as important as that is), but it can and must also add wider value to this organisation and beyond. We have a duty to collaborate with other FRS' and blue light agencies with the aim of securing the very best value for money for ourselves and other organisations across the sector. Efficient and effective procurement will allow us to support all our customers to the very best degree possible.

Good procurement looks to deliver our requirements to the right quality, at the right time and at the right price but that relies on shared understandings. We all need to understand the right way to meet the procurement objectives and Procurement colleagues need our help to understand our needs.

I want us all to think of Procurement more broadly than just a process, so that we all think and act commercially to ensure we get the best possible commercial outcomes and value for money.

When considering what you need to procure, I have five simple requests of all colleagues:

- Ensure that you answer all the Pre-Procurement Checklist items detailed in the Tier 2 Procurement Policy before deciding to go ahead and source / procure an item or service.
- Engage with the Commercial and Procurement Team as soon as you are aware of a potential requirement. Late engagement severely limits the degree of professional assistance that can be offered, with a consequential impact on the quality, cost and/or timeliness of the delivery of your requirements.
- Remain open to constructive challenge on what is to be procured and the process that will be used to deliver your requirements and avoid any temptation to over specify or restrict choice to a single product or supplier.
- Where our processes allow you to make procurement decisions independently (of Procurement) you should feel empowered and trusted to do so, but please

also recognise that good financial management requires us to check your records from time to time to ensure that our defined processes are being followed properly.

- Spend our precious budget wisely, using the same care and diligence that you would show with your own money.

By following those simple requests, you will be helping to make an important corporate contribution, whether that it is helping to ensure the right equipment is delivered to the front line or the ongoing delivery of our vital administrative support. Good procurement will also help to demonstrate good financial management and budget responsibility to our stakeholders, which is rightfully a priority for any public service.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'A Millington', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ann Millington – CEO KFRS

Introduction

Procurement is the act of acquiring goods (e.g. fire appliances, work wear and tools), services (e.g. Training Providers and consultants) and works (e.g. Buildings such as Ashford Live Fire Training Centre) from third parties. Procurement is a much broader term than simply 'purchasing'. The procurement process spans the whole cycle from the initial identification of needs through to managing the end of a contract (or the end of the useful life of an asset), and all stages in between these ends of the spectrum. Procurement is sometimes viewed as being just a process, but this is not the case. To truly maximize the value that procurement brings, it's essential that we all, both within and outside the procurement team, develop a shared understanding of its full value chain activities

Purpose of this Document

This KMFA Procurement Regulations (PRs) formal document sets out the legislative framework, by which the Authority and therefore Kent Fire and Rescue (KFRS) conducts and authorises the procurement of goods, works and services. These PRs and the associated policy and guidance documents, support the organisational aim of "Customer - Saving lives and reducing harm" by ensuring that all goods, services, and contracts are procured efficiently, cost-effectively, and in compliance with legal and regulatory requirements

Legislation and Standards

The PRs are drafted in accordance with legislative framework and procurement best practice and is approved by KMFA. Public sector procurement in the UK is subject to a legal framework which encourages free and open competition and value for money, in line with internationally and nationally agreed obligations and regulations. The regulations which govern public procurement were passed into national law by

- The Procurement Act of 2023 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2023/54/contents>) and enacted by
- The Procurement Regulations 2024 (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukdsi/2024/9780348259728/contents>) and
- the National Procurement Policy Statement (NPPS) of 2025 ([National Procurement Policy Statement - GOV.UK](#)) as the guidance.

KFRS maintains its commitment to the elimination of Modern Slavery within its supply chain and publishes an annual Modern Slavery and Transparency in Supply Chains Statement, which goes alongside its own Modern Slavery Policy. Furthermore, KFRS is dedicated to ensuring that Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) considerations are integrated into all applicable stages of its procurement activities. As a public sector body KFRS is subject to the terms of these Regulations and must undertake procurement in accordance with them.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Commercial and Procurement Team contribute to the Community Risk Management Plan (CRMP) and support our customers by:

- Ensuring KFRS obtains the best value for money on all goods, services, and works.
- Supporting KFRS in achieving its strategic objectives in the CRMP through effective and efficient procurement processes.
- Providing professional procurement and commercial advice to all departments within the FRS.
- Ensuring compliance with all relevant legislation, regulations, and best practice guidelines.

The team is organised according to categories of supply, meaning that sub-teams within the team specialise on the procurement and commercial management of specific goods, services and works. Organising along category lines allows Category Managers to focus deeply on their specialist areas, gaining insight and expertise from colleagues across the organisation and reflecting that in procurement activities. There are category teams within KFRS which specialise in:

- Facilities and Property Services
- Fleet
- Professional Services
- PPE and Clothing
- Operational Equipment
- IT and related services

The current team structure is detailed below in Appendix 1.

The KFRS's Tier 2 Procurement Policy, Tier 2 Purchasing Card Policy and Tier 3 Procedures for each route to market (dependant on spend level) describe in detail the processes for each level of procurement activity and spend in the organisation.

The Commercial and Procurement Team ensure that all contracts awarded with a value above the required legislative threshold of £25,000 (ex VAT) or £30,000 (inc VAT), are published on the Government's Find a Tender website - <https://www.find-tender.service.gov.uk/Search>

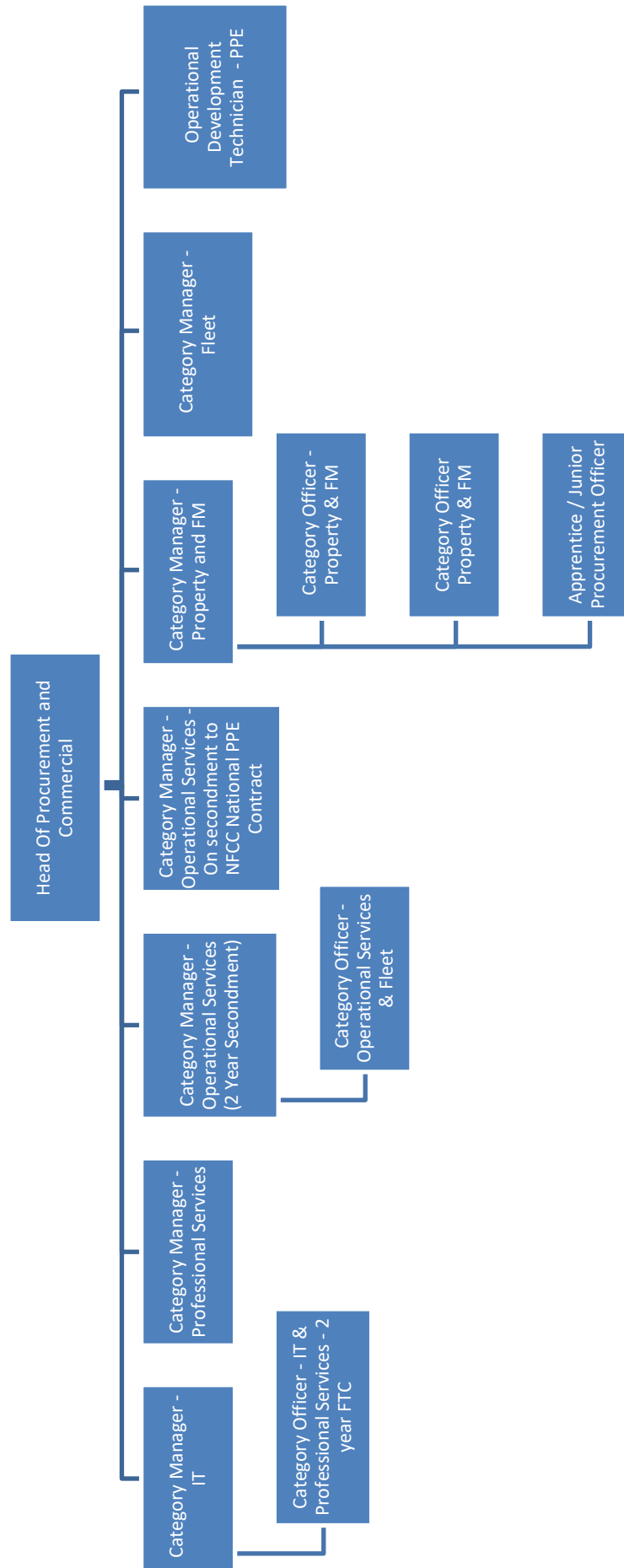
Transparency and reporting

Transparency in procurement, particularly within the context of the legislative framework KMFA operates in, e.g. The Procurement Act 2023, means sharing information about the procurement process, enabling understanding of decision-making, and acting with integrity, from planning to contract termination, through the publication of notices. It's via the publication of our notices – from conception to award of a contract and beyond – that we prove our adherence to the national processes. It is also incumbent on us, as evidence of best practice, that we publish our procurement pipeline and our contracts over a certain value. All of which feed into the requirements of the Service's obligation to be transparent in our procurement activities.

Conclusion

These Procurement Regulations form a vital foundation for how Kent Fire and Rescue Service delivers value, ensures compliance, and upholds transparency in all procurement activities. By aligning with legislative requirements and best practice standards, and by embedding principles such as value for money, ethical sourcing, and inclusion throughout the procurement lifecycle, KFRS ensures that every contract contributes meaningfully to the safety and wellbeing of our communities. Through clear roles, robust processes, and a commitment to continuous improvement, these regulations and their associated internal policies support the Authority's mission of saving lives and reducing harm - ensuring that public funds are used responsibly, efficiently, and in the public interest.

Appendix 1 – Procurement & Commercial Team



By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: AMENDMENT OF CARBON NEUTRAL TARGET

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

1. This report seeks Members' approval to amend the Authority's target to become carbon neutral to 2050 from the previous self-imposed target date of 2030.
2. The UK government pledged to reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to net zero by 2050, and many local authorities across Kent and Medway have aligned their targets with this.
3. A considerable amount of work has been undertaken to understand the scope of and scale of the work and investment needed to reduce our carbon impact, including a 'carbon roadmap report'. From this it has now become evident that the scale of this issue and spending required makes it unrealistic to meet our initial target of 2030.
4. We are committed to achieving carbon neutrality and will continue to make improvements as part of our planned maintenance programme, this includes ongoing upgrades to LED lighting during refurbishments and upgrading our estate infrastructure to support a future electric vehicle fleet. Our attached plan outlines targets and actions to continually reduce carbon emissions towards 2050.

RECOMMENDATION

5. Members are requested to:

Approve the proposal to amend the Authority's target to become carbon neutral from 2030 to 2050, which will align us with the UK Government and the majority of local authorities in Kent and Medway.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Head of Property - Kirstie Loft / Head of Fleet and Equipment Services - Susan Carte

TELEPHONE NUMBER: 01622 692121

EMAIL: kmfraclerk@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS: None

BACKGROUND

6. The Fire and Rescue Sector, alongside all public sector organisations, has a legal duty to act to reduce carbon emissions. The Climate Change Act 2008 commits the UK government to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by at least 100% of 1990 levels (net zero) by 2050. This includes reducing emissions from the devolved administrations (Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland), which account for about 20% of the UK's emissions.
7. For Fire and Rescue Services the challenges presented by climate change and the need for environmental sustainability fall into two parts: -
 - Our actions as responders to help those impacted by climate change.
 - Our actions to reduce the impact of our organisations on the climate and environment.
8. This report examines the challenges faced by all Fire and Rescue Services on their journey to net zero and the actions we will take in the next five-year period and beyond. No single item above will provide a 'silver bullet' in reducing KFRS carbon emissions. It is a combination of all approaches that will assist the Service in achieving carbon reductions more quickly.
9. In conjunction with other local authorities across Kent and Medway, in 2020 we declared a climate emergency. We also set ourselves a goal to become carbon neutral and developed a Climate Action Plan to achieve this. At this time, we set ourselves the ambitious target date of 2030, however, this does not align us with most of our partners who are working to 2050 (see table 1).

Table 1. Target dates for local authorities across Kent and Medway

Organisation	Target date
Kent County Council	2050
Medway Council	2050 (net zero)
Ashford Borough Council	2050
Canterbury City Council	2050
Dartford Borough Council	2050
Dover District Council	2050
Folkestone and Hythe District Council	2030
Gravesham Borough Council	2050
Maidstone Borough Council	2041
Sevenoaks District Council	2050 (net zero)
Swale Borough Council	2030
Thanet District Council	2030
Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council	2030

Tunbridge Wells Borough Council	2030 (net zero)
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10. 'Carbon neutral' means that all the carbon emissions generated are offset, either by reducing carbon emissions, or by counteracting emissions through carbon absorbing projects such as sustainable reforestation.
11. To be carbon neutral, an organisation should be considering their own direct emissions, as well as those that their suppliers create in relation to their business and their customers create by using their products. Consequently, this requires a wide range of measures that are co-ordinated and implemented across several areas of investment, spending and activity.
12. To achieve carbon neutrality, we need to reduce emissions to as low as possible and then offset any remaining emissions that cannot be reduced. We have considered the option of investing in carbon offsetting, but at over £7m this is not a realistic or not a viable option at this time.
13. There are two main areas we can impact to achieve carbon reduction - estates and fleet along with the behaviour change needed to embed new ways of working. We will now outline the main challenges for both estates and fleet in reducing carbon and then outline actions we will be taking to continually reduce carbon emissions.

Understanding our Challenges - Estates

14. The challenges for all Fire and Rescue Services including KFRS in transitioning its estate include the age and number of its buildings, including stations, e.g. Kent Fire and Rescue Service has estimated the average build year of its 61 sites, including its five newest builds, to be 1968 - nearly 60 years ago.
15. Costs for the work needed to reduce carbon emissions can include:
 - Alternative heating systems.
 - Building fabric upgrades.
 - Heating control upgrades.
 - Additional Solar PV installations.
 - Ventilation upgrades.
 - Cooling upgrades.
 - Additional LED installations.
16. The costs above would be in addition to planned and / or routine refurbishment or maintenance work. They would also be a further call on the resources within Property Services and Procurement teams.
17. The estimated cost to upgrade building fabric and services to meet the 2030 target are approximately £19m, a figure that the Authority would not be able to fund, and which would significantly impair the delivery of our statutory duties and core services, including recruitment, operational equipment and training.

Understanding Our Challenges - Fleet

18. Carbon reductions in fleet are achieved through a multi-pronged approach.
 - Reducing demand
 - Improving efficiency
 - Alternative fuels
19. Our Fleet makes up 50% of our carbon emissions. Our move to carbon neutrality will be assisted through the continued investment in our fleet, where as part of scheduled cycles of upgrades we will be acquiring ever more fuel efficient and reduced emissions vehicles.

Baseline Data

20. A review undertaken by Laser for the Service in 2022 highlighted that fleet was the largest producer of carbon emissions for the Service in the 2018/19 financial year representing 53% (1,663 tonnes CO₂ equivalent) of the total emissions.
21. The most accurate method of determining CO₂ emissions is through calculating the actual fuel used. Fuel usage and the resultant CO₂ emissions calculations for the past five years is shown on the table below.

Financial Year	2020/2021	2021/2022	2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025
Diesel litres	489,280	569,619	657,168	609,399	562,244
Unleaded petrol litres	8,111	14,814	43,284	39,370	40,618
Total	497,391	584,433	700,452	648,770	602,862
<i>CO₂ produced (tonnes)</i>	<i>1330</i>	<i>1561</i>	<i>1861</i>	<i>1724</i>	<i>1601</i>

Reducing Demand

22. The greenest mile is the mile not travelled. COVID restrictions in 2020/21 led to a 20% decrease in fleet emissions from that calculated in the Laser report for the previous year. 2022/23, a year of particularly high demand in response to wildfires saw a 14% increase over the 2019/20 year.
23. Operational demand for our services can only be reduced by upstream measures. There are many contributors to this across the Service including installation of smoke alarms, education and Safe and Well visits to name a few.
24. The Services' introduction of meetings held over conferencing calls, expedited by the need to work from home during COVID, is an essential part of the toolkit in reducing carbon emissions. There is a balance to be struck here as there are also benefits to meeting on a face-to-face basis, especially around mental health and wellbeing.

25. An area often overlooked in reducing carbon emissions are business journeys undertaken in personally owned vehicles. These vehicles are termed grey fleet. Short of ensuring our Health and Safety duties to make sure that these vehicles are legally compliant (MOT, insurance), organisations have fewer levers to pull to assist in delivering carbon emissions in these vehicles which tend to be older. It is rare that any organisation can afford to have enough vehicles to undertake 100% of business journeys as this will create redundancy in fleet usage.
26. The ability to allow colleagues to undertake hybrid working also supports the ambition to reduce carbon emissions. Whilst these are not included in the figures above, it can be generalised that for a significant number of our colleagues, hybrid working reduces the carbon emissions produced by commuting by around 40%.

Alternative Fuels

27. The main alternative fuels available for vehicles in the United Kingdom currently are electric and Hydrogenated Vegetable Oil (HVO). The other fuel type on the horizon is hydrogen, which is seen as a more sustainable long-term alternative, but infrastructure is lacking.
28. Natural Gas Vehicles (NGV) are being explored by some fire services, but because there are still carbon emissions from this as a fuel type it lessens the reductions that could be made through other means.

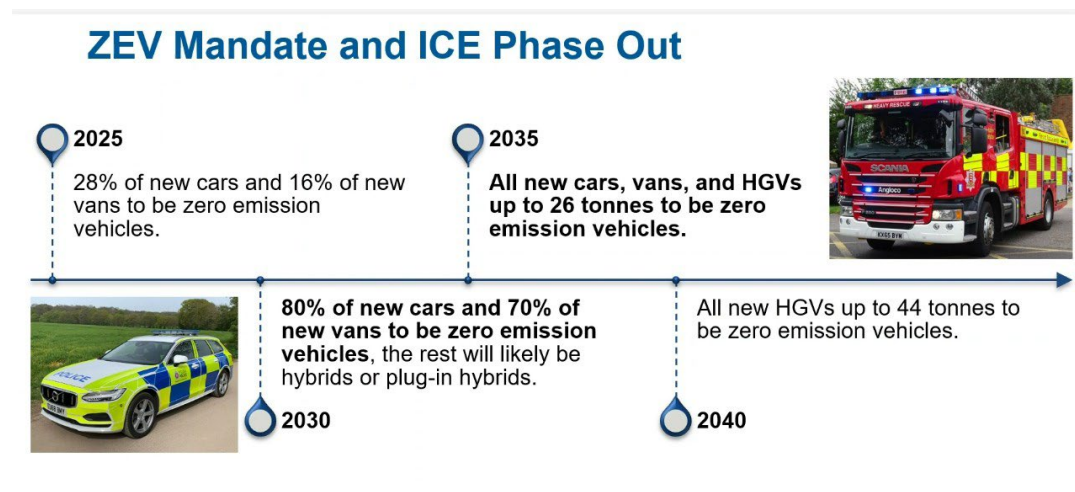
HVO

29. HVO can only be used in vehicles that meet Euro 6 standard or above. It is a replacement for diesel so is not suitable for our vehicles that are petrol hybrid. If these hybrid vehicles are removed from the total fleet number 30% of the remaining fleet is not suitable for use with HVO as they pre-date Euro 6. Given that any diesel vehicle can fill up from any of the seventeen KFRS fuel sites within the county, it would be difficult to manage the unsuitable vehicles across the organisation.
30. An investigation into the introduction of HVO at one site was conducted in November 2024. This discovered that our vehicle manufacturers did not support the use of HVO in the fleet. Further work was conducted on the response vehicle fleet that are the majority users of the fuel tank at Service Headquarters (SHQ). The response vehicle make and model is approved by the manufacturer for use with HVO, but specifically our warranty contract excludes the use of this fuel type.
31. The last of the warranties for these vehicles will expire in 2026. After that date the SHQ site will be converted to dispense HVO. In the financial year 2024/25 the SHQ site dispensed 14k litres of diesel. This created 38 tonnes of CO₂. Assuming the same usage from 2026, this carbon emission figure will be eliminated from the Service by using HVO.

32. HVO does not come without downsides. At the point of writing, HVO is 10-15% more expensive than diesel. This is before the anticipated reduction in the cost of a barrel of oil that is predicted to occur due to tariffs and the anticipated downturn in the world economy reducing demand for production of goods. It also burns less efficiently, typically about 3%. So, for every 100 litres of diesel, 103 litres of HVO are needed.
33. In addition, HVO is mainly manufactured from palm oil. Whilst this is largely marketed to be from waste sludge from palm oil production, recent concerns have been raised over the legitimacy of these claims. Palm oil production itself is controversial having a negative impact on the rain forest and biodiversity.

Electric Vehicles

34. For cars and vans the Government has set targets for manufacturers to meet in terms of new sales and the percentage of these that must be zero emissions. The industry is interpreting that currently to be a move towards electric.
35. Whilst the Government has reduced the fines of missing these targets from £15k to £12k per vehicle in response to tariffs, it is likely that manufacturers will pass these on to customers.
36. For every vehicle that the Service purchases that takes manufacturers over their prescribed limits it is probable that a £12k fine will be added. Similar fines have not yet been placed on HGV vehicles. A timeline is set out below.



37. This timeline will require all new KFRS vehicles to be zero emissions by 2035 as we have no plans to purchase any vehicles over 26 tonnes.
38. Electric vehicles (EV) are more expensive to purchase. With the introduction of tariffs, especially on vehicles, the cost of an EV is likely to rise well above previously predicted inflation rates. This, combined with a lower cost of oil will

possibly mean that individuals are likely to hang on to ICE vehicles longer and this will increase demand.

39. They may be a resultant incidental benefit to the Service as it is likely that pre-owned ICE vehicles will achieve higher income values on disposal as individual buyers balk at the cost of a new EV, combined with the potential for an economic downturn reducing demand for this vehicle type but an increased demand for ICE.
40. EVs require changes in behaviour with charging needing to be a planned activity. Public charging infrastructure is improving, but the fire service nationally needs to invest in a suggested £500-750bn in private estate infrastructure to meet needs.
41. The National Police Chiefs' Council (NPCC) is seeking funding from the Government for a figure roughly double this magnitude. The fire service national Transport Operators Group (TOG) is seeking support from the National Fire Chiefs' Council (NFCC) in the same way.
42. The move of the HGV fleet to electric/ hybrid also has the following considerations.

Power management

43. The range of electric vehicles is less than that for diesel. In addition, the equipment fitted to vehicles will be a draw on the battery. This would mean that there may be a need to fit auxiliary batteries or generators. The re-charge time for batteries is also a consideration: fast charging will be necessary for the vehicles to enable a quick turnaround to support operations, as downtime for charging will mean the vehicles are unavailable.

Operations

44. A change of the configuration of the fire appliance may need some minor changes to the Standard Operating Procedures of the crew using the vehicle. This should form part of the handover of the vehicle to the station and be managed along with the Service Training Department.

Technician skills

45. The skills of the vehicle technicians will need to be addressed. The techniques used to maintain electric and hybrid vehicles are different to those for combustion engines. Staff will need further training to be able to support these vehicles.

Workshop equipment / IT

46. Diagnostic equipment and tooling in the workshops will need to be updated to reflect the new fleet.

47. Changes will be needed to the fleet management system to account for the fuel type and allow pence per mile, and whole life cost, comparisons to be made and managed.

Lead times

48. Lead times for new fire appliances are significant. To convert a production line HGV into a fire engine takes a lot of time. In addition, a new configuration created by the need to manage power, could increase this period. Unique to this moment is the geo-political environment that envelops the world.
49. There are significant lead times for items such as semi-conductors, created by conflicts and the industry has not fully recovered from the disruption caused by the Covid pandemic.
50. Hybrid/ electric vehicle production is heavily dependent on these components; with a general increase in demand of this vehicle type at a time of reduced supply, lead times from order to delivery can be over a year. This is before any vehicle conversion. This means that Fire and Rescue Services may need to bring forward the ordering of these vehicle types to meet any planned dates for transition to an alternatively fuelled fleet.

Cost

51. The cost of fuel when running a vehicle fleet, while not insignificant, may not be the biggest cost. While there is likely to be a saving on fuel, there will still be a cost for electric, unless generated by wind or solar.
52. The main whole life cost for vehicles is depreciation. The cost of the new vehicle type could be more than the £300,000 currently paid. As the residual value will not be known for some time, the depreciation cost will increase the whole life cost. This may decrease any benefits derived from fuel savings.

Procurement / Supply Chain

53. Within the Procurement and Supply Chain in general, the push and difficulties faced in moving towards net zero by 2050, and any earlier local targets, are numerous.
54. From an emissions perspective, scope 3 emissions (emissions that occur within the value chain) are often the highest contributor to the total carbon footprint of any organisation, including fire and rescue services. Typically, scope 3 emissions can account for over 70% of an organisations or company's total carbon footprint, with procured goods and services typically being the source for most scope 3 emissions.

- 55. Challenges do arise regarding scope 3 emissions. Measuring scope 3 emissions is difficult and requires an in-depth knowledge of carbon footprinting methodologies. Equally, access to data to work out scope 3 emissions can be challenging with data accuracy often leading to less mature calculation methodologies being used in the first instance.
- 56. The government deadline to eliminate the purchase of new petrol/diesel vehicles has been moved from 2030 to 2035 (at the time of writing, although the new Labour Government has indicated that it will bring that date forward to 2030 again). However, there are benefits to moving to alternative fuels, or at least planning to, earlier than this date.
- 57. There will be a significant cost in transitioning fleet to an alternative fuel, and any subsequent financial benefits may not be immediately apparent due to the up-front investment that is needed.
- 58. However, with the Fire and Rescue Service being a first responder to events created by climate change, reducing the fleet carbon footprint could contribute towards a reduction in the frequency of these events and demands on the Service. Reducing demand reduces cost.
- 59. While hydrogen is considered in some areas to be the best long-term solution as an alternative fuel, the industry is not well-developed in production of hydrogen-based vehicles. For both hydrogen and bio-fuelled vehicles there is very little infrastructure in place to support re-fuelling.
- 60. Fuel storage at KFRS sites would need to be installed and managed, with little to no support in public infrastructure. Due to the lack of public infrastructure and the slower development of these vehicle types, these methods of alternative fuels are not discussed in detail within this paper. However, they should be continuously assessed as developments are made.

BEHAVIOUR CHANGE

- 61. We will continue to make marginal gains through education and behavioural change work among all our colleagues as well as encouraging environmentally sustainable practices by our suppliers.
- 62. Through aligning our target date with our partners, there is greater scope for co-ordinated action, which through increased scale can be more efficient and have greater impact to benefit of all.

BENCHMARKING PROGRESS

- 63. We appointed a firm of energy management consultants (LASER), who carried out a project to calculate KFRS' carbon footprint and to identify and model specific ways in which this could be reduced
- 64. We will use consultants in to re-measure our emissions level every five years.

GRANT FUNDING

- 65. Access to grant funding has continually been a challenge. The National Fire Chiefs Council's Environment Sustainability and Climate Change Toolkit gives an overview of the range of grants that might be available to the Fire sector. However, as grant windows open and close, the market can become confusing.
- 66. In addition, some funding had previously been allocated on a 'first past the post' basis. While there has been a move away from this, challenges still exist in terms of eligibility, complexity, and competition. Alongside this, external support from consultants or specialists to assist with grant applications can come at a cost.

ACTIONS WE WILL TAKE 2025 - 2050

Estates

- 67. We will continue running biodiversity initiatives at a station level, including the introduction of wellbeing gardens, which also contribute to colleague welfare.
- 68. We maintain a subscription to an energy monitoring portal to allow us to interrogate energy usage data.
- 69. We have procured consultancy services to provide specialist advice to deliver an electric vehicle installation project for KFRS fleet.
- 70. The Authority recently secured grant funding for decarbonisation specialists to complete decarbonisation plans for all sites within our estate, which has identified areas for improvement and associated costs.
- 71. We will continue to work with decarbonisation specialists to develop an affordable and realistic long-term strategy to move towards achieving carbon neutrality in line with our revised target. However, this must be done in a way that does not compromise the essential investment that is continually needed in our frontline services.
- 72. Any futures strategy will need to identify and utilise grant funding to reduce the very large (approximately £26m at current prices) budgetary impact of these investments.

Fleet

73. We will be renewing all our heavy fleet (fire engines) over the next fifteen years. This will allow for use of other fuels and meeting Euro 7 standards which have less emissions.
74. Improving the fuel efficiency of vehicles is threefold. Vehicle type, fleet management and driving behaviours.
75. For new Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles, manufacturers are consistently being required to improve fuel efficiency. ICE vehicles will be around for a while longer, especially in the HGV world.
76. Euro 6 is the current emissions standard and was introduced in the United Kingdom on new registrations from September 2015. Any vehicles registered before this date do not meet the current standard for new vehicles. Given the planned life of KFRS vehicles, particularly fire appliances, it is inevitable that a proportion of the vehicles on the fleet are not as fuel efficient as a more recent vehicle.
77. Currently 27% of the fleet (104 vehicles) was registered before September 2015. Not all the pre-Euro 6 vehicles are appliances. 32 vehicles are other vehicle types.
78. Euro 7 is planned to be introduced in late 2026. The current activities working towards the purchase of new appliances will include the requirement to meet Euro 6 for now and Euro 7 when it is introduced. The older appliances will then be removed from the fleet. The plan is to introduce ten new appliances on a rolling programme for the next five years.
79. The improved fuel efficiency of the new (mainly) Euro 7 vehicles over pre-Euro 6 vehicles will see a natural improvement in the reduction of carbon emissions from the fleet.
80. For the last financial year, our oldest HGVs each produced an average of three tonnes of CO₂. If these were replaced with Euro 7 compliant vehicles, this will have reduced to an average of two tonnes of CO₂ per vehicle.
81. The replacement programme of ten HGVs for the next five years, with the first delivery being in 2026, will see an average reduction of 50 tonnes per annum by the end of that period. This will be through a cumulative build to that figure.
82. If you add in the minimum saving of 38 tonnes from the SHQ fuel site conversion to HVO, that will see a reduction of 88 tonnes, 5% of the average figure.
83. The Service believes that the reduction will be greater than this as the aim would be for as many of the 50 HGVs to use HVO, but that is dependent on where they are going to be located and what other vehicles are based there. If the Service can get all 50 new appliances using HVO, that will be an additional saving of 100

tonnes of CO2 (total 188 tonnes; 11% of the average).

84. Until the last planned ICE vehicle comes off the fleet, the Service will be producing tailpipe CO2 for a while to come. Assuming electric HGVs are available for the next round of replacements in 2030, there could be appliances using diesel from 2029 + 15 years (2044).
85. Of the vehicles that are not appliances, 20 are planned to be replaced in the Vehicle and Equipment Replacement Programme (VERP) in the current and next financial year with the remaining under review.

EV Charging

86. KFRS has a planned project to start to introduce EV charging points between 2028 and 2031 of £1.8m.
87. The leader in EV technology is China. BYD, a Chinese manufacturer, has just introduced an EV that can fully charge in five minutes. The NPCC is currently investigating the risks and impacts of using Chinese manufactured vehicles in emergency service fleets that are currently not available for us to purchase.
88. KFRS has 50 self-charging hybrid vehicles and will continue to introduce hybrid as a minimum for cars and vans as they are purchased.
89. London Fire Brigade (LFB) has developed a concept electric fire pumping appliance. It is on its' fifth iteration and will be operational at Hammersmith Fire Station from the Autumn of 2025. This has been in receipt of grant funding from central government.
90. For LFB the challenge has been pumping times rather than miles driven and they are currently reviewing pump to pump charging (similar to the concept of in-flight re-fuelling). The estimate for an electric fire appliance in the future is roughly double the cost of an existing appliance. KFRS will keep a watchful eye on the capability of this vehicle.
91. Training for EV maintenance for our vehicle technicians will be started in the 2025/26 financial year. This is to ensure safety but also support the move to be able to maintain these vehicle types in house to reduce costs and the impact of the predicted EV technician shortage in industry, (16,000 nationally by 2032).
92. Zero emissions vehicles (ZEV) only measure emissions at the tailpipe. A consequence of the introduction of ZEVs will be a commensurate increase in electricity consumption. Unless this is from renewable sources such as wind or solar, the Service needs to consider that there may be a point in the future when it considers the sources of electricity when setting up these purchase contracts.

Driving Behaviour

- 93. The way that vehicles are driven has a big impact on fuel efficiency. Harsh acceleration, braking and idling all contribute towards reduced fuel efficiency.
- 94. Whilst, through the nature of fire service operations, there is additional inefficiency baked into fuel consumption through carried equipment and the addition of items that derogate the aerodynamics of a vehicle (light bars and roof ladders), two individuals driving the same vehicle can achieve markedly different fuel consumption based on their driving behaviours. This applies to all fuel types.
- 95. The re-introduction of telematics later in 2025, will start to publish driving behaviours to colleagues and provide information to line managers, Driver Training and key individuals. The system will register when drivers are responding on blue lights, recognising that there are likely to be greater speeds involved. The system will then allow Driver Training and managers to address driving behaviour using data from the system.
- 96. It should be noted that 46% (180) of vehicles on the fleet do not have any response capability and these should always be driven within the law and as efficiently as possible. Poor driving behaviour can be identified and improvements tracked over time.

Fleet Maintenance

- 97. Regular maintenance of vehicles including weekly checks on tyre pressures, all assist in improving fuel efficiency.
- 98. Annual servicing ensures that vehicles are operating at maximum efficiency. Currently Service vans and cars are maintained by external dealerships. This means that as a Service we are beholden to a variety of standards, and we do have to actively manage some suppliers who do not meet our requirements. With the proposal to bring the servicing of these vehicles in house with a new Asset Resource Centre (ARC), we can ensure that all of our vehicles are maintained to the highest of standards set by us.
- 99. A new fleet management system, also to be implemented in 2025, will allow driving checks for vehicles before travelling to be recorded digitally remotely and will update the central system. This will include tyre checks, including pressures. This will enable the Service to follow up where checks have been missed and engage with users to ensure that these are completed.
- 100. Fleet and Equipment Services (FES) is currently sourcing tyre pressure gauges to be placed in every vehicle, not just in a select few as is currently the case. FES will also look to extend the fuel card purchase capability to include the ability to pay for tyre pressure machines on fuel forecourts when the current fuel card contract comes to an end in 2026.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

101. Under current plans, there is a neutral environmental impact on estate decarbonisation as we are not making a positive impact through investment at this time, other than that secured through grant funding.
102. The current investment plan in fleet decarbonisation will have a positive impact on the environment, and funding has been ringfenced to invest in upgrading the estate infrastructure, to include electric vehicle charging points. In the meantime, we will continue to move towards an increasingly electrified fleet of vehicles as we move forward, but it is likely to be some considerable time before the vehicle fleet is fully electric.
103. If, however, we were to consider borrowing externally to finance investments which would help contribute to the target of carbon neutrality by 2050, each £10m of investment could cost in the region of £450k per annum in interest alone, plus whatever amount was needed to be set aside for the repayment of the debt over the required timeframe.
104. As the financial outlay required to deliver carbon neutrality is prohibitive now, it is highly likely that any significant investment will only be achieved if external grants are available. The Authority, will however, continue to consider the viability of options that may arise, when the infrastructure plan is reviewed on an annual basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

105. Members are requested to:

Approve the proposal to amend the Authority's target to become carbon neutral from 2030 to 2050, which will align us with the UK Government and most local authorities in Kent and Medway.

By: Director of Finance

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: PROVISIONAL REVENUE AND CAPITAL BUDGET
OUTTURN FOR 2024/25

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

This report presents the provisional outturn position against the 2024/25 Revenue and Capital budgets and includes details of the proposed resultant year-end balances held in Earmarked Reserves.

The provisional outturn on revenue expenditure is £93.951m which represents an underspend of £762k against the revenue budget of £94.713m. The provisional outturn on capital spend is £5.852m against the revised capital budget of £7.712m. There may be minor variations to these figures during the final stages of the year-end process and the external audit of the Authority's 2024/25 Financial Statements.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Note the position on both the revenue and capital budget outturns for 2024/25.
2. Agree that £500k of the final revenue budget underspend is transferred to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve (paragraphs 6 and 6(a) refer).
3. Agree that the remaining revenue budget underspend (provisionally £262k) is transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve (paragraphs 6 and 6(b) refer).
4. Note the remaining contents of the report.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Director of Finance – Barrie Fullbrook

CONTACT DETAILS: T: 01622 692121 / E: kmfracclerk@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Financial Update for 2024/25 – 18 February 2025 and 17 October 2024

Financial Summary Update for 2024/25 – 5 July 2024

Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024/25 and MTFP 2024-28 – 20 February 2024

COMMENTS

Provisional Revenue Budget Outturn for 2024/25

1. The provisional outturn on revenue expenditure is £93.951 which represents an underspend of £762k against the 2024/25 Revenue budget of £94.713m. This is a £293k increase in the underspend since the last forecast reported to the Authority in February 2025.
2. The primary cause for this increased underspend is additional investment income. Against an investment income budget of £1.694m, the provisional outturn is £3.138m, an increase of £288k since the £2.850m forecast reported to Members in February. The provisional outturn reported in this paper includes a statutory year end accounting adjustment (£86k) to reflect the fair value of treasury bills held by the Authority as at 31 March 2025.
3. Investment income for the financial year is significantly higher than budgeted, primarily due to an unexpected government pensions grant (£14.480m), received in July 2024, remaining available for investment throughout the financial year. Complications with the new pensions legislation related to the Matthews legal case caused delays in updating the pension administrator's system, consequently delaying the processing of the pension payments due to be funded by this grant. In addition, slippage in planned capital expenditure and the slower-than-anticipated reduction in the Bank of England Base Rate has contributed to further unexpected investment income for the Authority.
4. Additional details concerning the provisional revenue budget outturn and explanations for the most significant variances are attached at **Appendices 1 and 2**. The Authority manages its large one-off revenue spend on property, IT and operational equipment through its Infrastructure Plan, so variances in relation to these budgets and any offsetting Infrastructure Reserve transfers are presented separately from the day-to-day budget variances. Further details concerning the Infrastructure Plan, including explanations for the most significant variances are attached at **Appendices 3 and 4**.

External Audit of the Authority's 2024/25 Financial Statements

5. The Authority's Financial Statements are subject to review by External Audit (Grant Thornton UK LLP); hence it is only a provisional final outturn position that is presented in this report. The External Auditor presented their Indicative Audit Plan for 2024/25 to the Audit and Governance Committee in April 2025, setting out their intention for the audit of the Authority's 2024/25 Financial Statements to start in September 2025 and likely to conclude in early December 2025.

Proposed Allocation of the Revenue Budget Underspend

6. At the February 2025 Authority meeting Members agreed, in principle, to transfer the final revenue budget underspend to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve. As the provisional underspend has increased by £293k, it is now proposed that £500k of the final revenue budget underspend is transferred to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve and the remaining balance (provisionally £262k) is transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve. Further details regarding this proposal are provided below:
 - a) **Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve** - There remains significant uncertainty over the Authority's funding position beyond 2025/26. It would therefore seem prudent to set aside £500k of the underspend for future transformation and/or spend-to-save projects that would require a one-off injection of funding to deliver longer-term financial savings for the Authority. For example, when redesigning and implementing new business processes to streamline and improve efficiency, teams may require the expertise of a specialist, such as a Business Analyst. These specialists will be recruited on fixed-term assignments to work with the team and stakeholders to explore innovative approaches, technologies, and best practices.
 - b) **Infrastructure Reserve** - This reserve supports the funding of capital and large one-off revenue spend in relation to the Authority's key assets (vehicles, IT, and buildings). In doing so, it has mitigated the need to externally borrow and hence avoid interest charges that are incurred when taking out a loan. It is proposed that the balance of the underspend (provisionally £262k) is transferred to this reserve to provide funding towards the replacement of two fire appliances that have been written off by the Authority's insurers during the year. These vehicles now need to be replaced sooner than originally planned in the capital programme and any insurance payout will not fully cover the cost of the new fire appliances.

Provisional Capital Budget Outturn for 2024/25 and the Infrastructure Plan

7. The provisional outturn on capital spend is £5.852m against the revised 2024/25 Capital budget of £7.712m (reported to the Authority in February 2025). This reduction in spend is primarily due to additional delays with the Ashford Live Fire Training Facility project whereby £1.599m of the budget earmarked for this project has now slipped to 2025/26. Further details concerning the Infrastructure Plan (and Capital budget) are attached at **Appendices 3 and 4**.

General and Earmarked Reserves as at 31 March 2025

8. Details of the provisional final year-end balances held in each reserve are attached at **Appendix 5**.

Firefighters' Pension Fund Account 2024/25

9. Details of the provisional final outturn on the Firefighters' Pension Fund Account for 2024/25 are attached at **Appendix 6**.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

10. Of the final underspend on the revenue budget; it is proposed that £500k will be transferred to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve to pump-prime transformation or spend-to-save projects and the balance (provisionally £262k) will be transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve to provide funding towards the cost of replacing two fire appliances that were written off during the financial year.
11. Resources have been rolled forward to fund any revenue commitments and capital expenditure that has slipped from 2024/25 to later years.

RECOMMENDATIONS

12. Members are requested to:
 - 12.1 Note the position on both the revenue and capital budget outturns for 2024/25.
 - 12.2 Agree that £500k of the final revenue budget underspend is transferred to the Service Transformation and Productivity Reserve (paragraphs 6 and 6(a) refer).
 - 12.3 Agree that the remaining revenue budget underspend (provisionally £262k) is transferred to the Infrastructure Reserve (paragraphs 6 and 6(b) refer).
 - 12.4 Note the remaining contents of the report.

2024/25 Revenue Budget Outturn

1. FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS

1. FUNCTIONAL ANALYSIS		Variances		
	Revised Budget	Infrastructure Var.	-Under / Over spend	Prov. Outturn
Figures shown are in £'000				
Operational Response and Resilience (R&R)	58,254	-1,180	217	57,291
Prevention and Protection (P&P)	8,057	0	-290	7,767
Customer Services (CS)	26,291	-1,020	101	25,372
Pensions, Financing and Other Costs (PF)	2,111	2,200	-790	3,521
Net Revenue Budget	94.713	0	-762	93.951

2. SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS

2. SUBJECTIVE ANALYSIS		Infrastr ucture Var.	-Underspend / Overspend				Prov. Outturn
	Revised Budget		R&R	P&P	CS	PF	
Figures shown are in £'000							
Salaries and on-costs	78,237	11	-633	-345	-776	0	76,494
Training expenses	643	0	7	110	-43	0	717
Other employee costs	747	0	402	0	6	0	1,155
Direct pension costs	2,222	0	0	0	-6	550	2,766
Total Employee Costs	81,849	11	-224	-235	-819	550	81,132
Repairs and maintenance	3,141	-192	20	-3	-410	0	2,556
Utility costs	3,074	0	0	0	-131	0	2,943
Total Premises Costs	6,215	-192	20	-3	-541	0	5,499
Vehicle running costs	2,440	0	-208	0	-48	0	2,184
Travel expenses	95	0	5	-17	5	0	88
Total Transport Costs	2,535	0	-203	-17	-43	0	2,272
Equipment and supplies	4,684	-1,078	140	-38	73	0	3,781
Fees and services	1,656	-16	-56	-26	57	0	1,615
Comms and computing	5,005	-864	-13	-19	-621	0	3,488
Other supplies and services	1,319	-61	19	13	337	16	1,643
Total Supplies and Services	12,664	-2,019	90	-70	-154	16	10,527
Capital financing costs	1,320	0	0	0	0	2	1,322
Contributions to Capital	2,635	-916	0	0	0	0	1,719
Total Capital Financing	3,955	-916	0	0	0	2	3,041
Grants and contributions	-7,473	0	-153	-78	-56	-157	-7,917
Investment income	-1,694	0	0	0	0	-1,444	-3,138
Other income	-199	0	-45	-1	-137	0	-382
Transfers to/-from reserves	-3,139	3,116	732	114	1,851	243	2,917
Total Income	-12,505	3,116	534	35	1,658	-1,358	-8,520
Net Revenue Budget	94,713	0	217	-290	101	-790	93,951

2024/25 Revenue Budget Outturn – Underspend / Overspend Explanations

The provisional net underspend of £762k includes a variety of underspends and overspends, and the reasons for the most significant (5% of Revised Budget for non-pay lines) are commented on below:-

a) Salaries and on-costs (£1.754m underspend) -

- i) **Operational Response and Resilience (R&R)** - The £633k underspend primarily relates to vacancies at on-call fire stations (£344k / 5% of budget) and vacancies within the Control Room (£325k / 15% of budget). This was partially offset by an overspend of £36k on overtime payments for additional activity undertaken by the Technical Rescue team. While the recruitment and retention of on-call firefighters is a national issue, a project to review how the on-call duty system operates in Kent is now underway and, as this work is carried out, the budget for next financial year (2025/26) has been temporarily reduced. Additionally, some former Control Room colleagues, who now occupy other roles within the organisation, have been temporarily utilised to fill team shortfalls in Control during the year but 8 new trainees began their 8-week training course in the Major Incident Room in May 2025 and a further 5 new trainees are due to start in July 2025 .
- ii) **Prevention and Protection (P&P)** - The £345k underspend primarily relates to vacancies within Building Safety (£204k / 5% of budget) and Customer Safety (£119k / 4% of budget). The current budgeted FTE for Building Safety is 65.39 and at the time of writing vacancies sit at 5.78 FTE. The current budgeted FTE for Customer Safety is 64.97 FTE and at the time of writing the level of vacancies within the team was 2.90 FTE. Vacancy rates were increased as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26.
- iii) **Customer Services (CS)** - The £776k (6% of budget) underspend is primarily in relation to the underspent budget for firefighter trainee and support team apprenticeships, vacancies in HR following an in-year restructure of the team, and in-year vacancies across various other support teams. The firefighter trainee budget has been reduced for 2025/26 whilst colleagues from the Channel Tunnel are absorbed back into the station establishment. Vacancy rates against support teams were increased as part of the budget setting process for 2025/26. This underspend is partially offset by an overspend on Direct Pension costs (see (e)).

- b) Training expenses (£74k overspend)** - The Authority has incurred additional training expenses (£93k) related to the upskilling of new colleagues in Building Safety

(P&P). This overspend has been offset by a transfer from the Government Grant Reserve. Other minor net underspends against this heading total £19k.

- c) **Other employee costs (£408k overspend)** - This overspend primarily relates to costs charged to the Operational Response and Resilience (R&R) heading in relation to 'compensation payments' (e.g. refunds of pension contributions) for the McCloud age discrimination pensions remedy (£402k). These additional costs are offset by a corresponding increase in Grants and contributions as these additional costs are funded by government grant.
- d) **Direct pension costs (£544k overspend)** - This overspend primarily relates to the Local Government Pension Scheme (LGPS) pension strain costs incurred following the in-year restructure of HR (£405k) and other redundancies (£59k). It should be noted that, as well as an underspend on salaries from the vacancy savings in 2024/25, the new HR structure has generated a base budget saving of £166k from 2025/26. In addition, there was a net overspend of £80k due to additional contributions made to the Firefighters' Pension Fund Account as there was a higher-than-expected number of ill health retirements during the year.
- e) **Repairs and maintenance (£393k underspend)** - Of this underspend, £104k has been rolled in the Rolling Budget Reserve for various non-urgent remedial works that have slipped to 2025/26. There was a £73k underspend against the cleaning and waste contract because of bringing this function back inhouse during the year. In addition, there were underspends on the general refurbishment (£99k) and reactive maintenance (£117k) budgets where non-urgent works have slipped to 2025/26 and will now be funded from the 2025/26 budget.
- f) **Vehicle running costs (£256k underspend)** - The underspend against Operational Response and Resilience (R&R) primarily relates to the vehicle fuel budget that was £181k underspent, partly due to a reduction in usage - which can be affected by several variables including the length and type of incidents attended by operational crews, and average prices were also lower than anticipated during the year. The underspend against Customer Services (CS) relates to vehicle insurance excess payments that were £48k lower than budgeted - as these can also vary depending on the nature of the claims made during the year. Other minor net underspends totalled £27k.
- g) **Communications and computing (£653k underspend)** - This underspend primarily relates to a refund of £547k on the Airwaves contract (plus £18k interest). On 7 March 2025, the Home Office confirmed that Motorola's attempt to appeal the charge control mechanism imposed by the Competition and Market Authority was unsuccessful. As a result, the Home Office, confirmed the Authority's refund for historical overcharging. This is offset by a transfer to the Rolling Budget Reserve as it is anticipated that the Authority will incur additional costs when the Government's

Emergency Services Network project is implemented, although the timing and cost implications are currently unconfirmed. Other individually minor net underspends total £106k.

- h) **Other supplies and services (£385k overspend)** - The overspend reported against Customer Services (CS) is offset by a transfer from the Government Grant Reserve as it relates to a previously received government grant (£347k) for the Emergency Services Mobile Communications Programme (ESCMP) which has now been paid over to another Fire Authority that will be leading on this project nationally. Other minor net overspends total £38k.
- i) **Investment income (£1.444m additional income)** - See paragraphs 2 and 3 in the main report.
- j) **Other income (£183k additional income)** - This extra income is primarily attributed to additional insurance recoveries (£132k) and additional proceeds from vehicle sales (£40k) and is offset by a transfer to the Infrastructure Reserve. Other minor net increases to income total £11k.
- k) **Transfers to/-from reserves (£2.940m Additional net transfer to reserves)** - At the October 2024 Authority meeting, Members agreed to transfer £1.3m to the Insurance and Resource Reserve, given the current uncertainties around future funding in all aspects of local government. Also, see (e) regarding premises Rolling Budget Reserve transfers (£104k), (g) regarding the Airwave refund (£565k), and (j) regarding Infrastructure Reserve transfers (£172k). In addition a stock adjustment for inventory of smoke alarms and operational equipment held at year end has resulted in a transfer of £182k to the Rolling Budget Reserve. Other adjustments include transfers to the Rolling Budget Reserve for; outstanding water hydrant repair work (£215k), the Reducing Exposure to Operational Contaminants project (£200k), and the On-call Review project (£85k). Other minor adjustments total a net £117k.

2024/25 Infrastructure Plan (including Capital budget) Outturn

Figures shown are in £'000	Revised Budget	Prov. Outturn	Variance
Infrastructure Revenue Budget			
Premises projects	514	308	-206
Information and Comms Systems projects	2,036	1,095	-941
Operational Equipment projects	1,392	339	-1,053
Total Infrastructure Revenue Budget	3,942	1,742	-2,200
Capital Budget			
Ashford Fire Station Redevelopment	4,725	3,126	-1,599
Control – lease for Coldharbour	161	161	0
Vehicle maintenance – Unit lease	202	239	37
Estate changes and development	984	677	-307
Total Estate Development	6,072	4,203	-1,869
Roofing works	355	190	-165
Boilers and heating systems	103	51	-52
Bay doors	13	13	0
Total Other Premises	471	254	-217
Mobile Data Terminals	95	50	-45
Total Information and Comms Systems	95	50	-45
Appliances	59	47	-12
Specialist units and vehicles	991	1,214	223
Cars and vans	24	84	60
Total Vehicles and Equipment	1,074	1,345	271
Total Capital Budget	7,712	5,852	-1,860
Total Infrastructure Revenue and Capital Budgets	11,654	7,594	-4,060
Funded from: -			
Base Revenue Contributions	-3,844	-3,844	0
Internal Borrowing	-4,927	-3,376	1,551
Infrastructure Reserve	-2,680	436	3,116
One-off Funding & Grants	-203	-810	-607
Total Funding	-11,654	-7,594	4,060

2024/25 Infrastructure Plan (including Capital budget) Outturn – Variance Explanations

The provisional outturn on the Infrastructure Plan is a variance of -£4.060m (-£2.200m against the Infrastructure Revenue budget and -£1.860m against the Capital budget). Explanations for the most significant variances are provided below:-

Infrastructure Revenue Budget

- a) **Premises projects (-£206k)** - This variance relates to premises related projects that have slipped to 2025/26 including; estate change works (£60k), additional security works (£51k) and UPS battery replacements (£63k). Other minor budget slippages total £32k. The budgets for estate changes and security works have been slipped pending a review of the works to be undertaken and the budget for UPS battery replacements has slipped as the contract was only finalised at the end of the financial year.
- b) **Information and Comms Systems projects (-£941k)** - This variance relates to IT related projects that have slipped to 2025/26 including; Mobile Device Replacements (£220k); the Control Programme (£128k); Audio-Visual Equipment Upgrade (£105k); Online Training Platform (£100k); Microsoft Teams (£80k) and; Network Refresh (£75k). Other project budgets that have slipped to 2025/26 total £233k. Although most of these projects are now underway there is an element of uncertainty in the profiling of the project budgets so where some spend was initially anticipated to fall in 2024/25 this will now fall in 2025/26.
- c) **Operational Equipment projects (-£1.053m)** - This variance relates to several equipment purchases that have slipped to 2025/26 including; Thermal Imaging Cameras (£333k), Battery Operated Tools (£162k); Stabilisation Jacks and Airbags (£149k); Lightweight PPE (£117k); Ladders (£83k) and; PPV Fans (£82k). Other equipment purchases that have slipped to 2025/26 total £127k. This slippage on operational equipment purchases is primarily due to the rescoping of requirements.

Capital Budget

- d) **Ashford Fire Station Redevelopment (-£1.599m)** - The previous forecast represented a back-to-back programme for the enabling and main building works but as the contract award was delayed until January 2025 the main building works started later than previously expected. This has resulted in the slippage of £1.599m of construction expenditure into 2025/26.

- e) **Estate changes and development (-£307k)** - This underspend has been released back to the Infrastructure Reserve because of estate related cyclical capital enhancements for 2024/25 being lower than previously anticipated.
- f) **Roofing works (-£165k)** - The roofing replacements at Faversham and Ashford fire stations have been delayed whilst the Property team reassess the requirements for the work being completed, so the budgets have been slipped to 2025/26.
- g) **Boilers and heating systems (-£52k)** - This budget funds the replacement of boilers as they become uneconomic to repair but as there was only one replacement required this year this underspend has been released back to the Infrastructure Reserve.
- h) **Mobile Data Terminals (-£45k)** - The final hardware installations on the Aerial Ladder Platforms and the software installation on the training centre pumps have now been completed so this project underspend has been released back to the Infrastructure Reserve.
- i) **Specialist units and vehicles (£223k)** - Two new specialist vehicles were given to the Authority during the year as part of the National Resilience programme. In compliance with accounting directives their values (£607k) have been recognised as notional capital expenditure and the assets have been recognised on the Authority's balance sheet. Planned spend (£298k) on other specialist vehicles (e.g. fire launch boats, animal rescue unit) has been slipped to 2025/26 due to delays in delivery. Various underspends against estimated budgets for vehicle replacements (totalling £86k) have been returned to the Infrastructure Reserve.
- j) **Cars and vans (£60k)** - Cleaning of the Authority's estate was brought back inhouse during the year requiring the purchase of three additional vans for the cleaning team resulting in this overspend against the capital budget.

2024/25 General and Earmarked Reserves Balances

Figures shown are in £'000		Opening Balance 01-Apr-24	Net Transfers 2024/25	Closing Balance 31-Mar-25
General Reserve	(A)	4,260	420	4,680
<i>Earmarked Reserves:</i>				
Government Grants	(B)	904	-456	448
Infrastructure*	(C)	26,751	870	27,621
Insurance and Resource	(C)	4,580	1,308	5,888
Rolling Budgets	(C)	761	1,037	1,798
Service Transformation and Productivity**	(C)	400	500	900
Total Earmarked Reserves		33,396	3,259	36,655
Total Revenue Reserves		37,656	3,679	41,335
Capital Receipts	(D)	8,554	93	8,647
Total Usable Reserves		46,210	3,772	49,982

* Includes a transfer of £262k from the 2024/25 Revenue budget underspend (plus an in-year transfer of £172k from the revenue budget – See Appendix 2 (j)).

** Includes a transfer of £500k from the 2024/25 Revenue budget underspend.

Notes:

- A. Reserve held to provide a contingency to cushion the impact of unexpected costs.
- B. Resource provided by Government with any unspent amounts rolled forward.
- C. Reserve held to smooth the impact of expenditure on the revenue budget.
- D. Reserve available to fund capital expenditure.

Breakdown of Government Grants and Rolling Budgets Reserve Balances	£'000
New Dimensions and New Threats	240
Pensions Administration for McCloud and Matthews remedies	123
Building Risk Review and Protection Uplift	85
Total Government Grants Reserve	448
Airwave credit – Government legal case	565
Outstanding water hydrant repairs	215
Reducing exposure to operational contaminant project	200
Operational equipment – year end stock adjustment	182
Other (training, property works, PPE, on-call review project)	636
Total Rolling Budgets Reserve	1,798

2024/25 Firefighters' Pension Fund Account

	Original Budget Estimate (Aug 2023)	Home Office Return (Sept 2024)	Prov. Outturn	Variance (Home Office Return)
Figures shown are in £'000				
Pensions Outgoings:				
Pension payments	31,048	33,027	46,787	13,760
Total Pension Fund Expenditure	31,048	33,027	46,787	13,760
Pension Income:				
Employee contributions	-4,341	-4,349	-8,505	-4,156
Employer contributions	-9,360	-12,019	-12,052	-33
In-year ill-health charge income	-253	-300	-456	-156
Income for pensions not abated	-110	-223	-96	127
Transfer values received	0	-68	-211	-143
*McCloud Grant	-	-	-2,394	-2,394
*Matthews Grant	-	-	-14,480	-14,480
*Government top-up grant	-16,984	-16,068	-8,593	7,745
Total Pension Fund Income	-31,048	-33,027	-46,787	-13,760
Pension Fund Account Balance	0	0	0	0

2024/25 Top-up grant	£'000
*Government grant requirement – 2024/25 outturn	25,467
Top-up grant received July 2024 (80% of Aug 2023 estimate)	-13,587
: Less adjustment for increase in employer contribution rate	2,288
McCloud Grant received July 2024	-2,394
Matthews Grant received July 2024	-14,480
Top-up grant surplus for 2024/25	2,706

Explanation for the significant increase in Expenditure and Income:

In comparison to the Home Office returns submitted in August 2023 and September 2024, the Provisional Outturn for the Authority's Pension Fund Account shows a significant increase in expenditure and income. The primary reason for this is the inclusion of the backdated pension payments (and associated grant income) relating to the Matthews legal case in the Provisional Outturn - whereas the Home Office had requested the exclusion of these costs from previous returns.

By: Director of Finance

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: TREASURY MANAGEMENT YEAR END REPORT FOR 2024/25

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

The Authority is required by the Local Government Act 2003 to review treasury management activities and the estimated / actual prudential and treasury indicators for the year. This report meets the requirements of both the CIPFA Code of Practice on Treasury Management and the CIPFA Prudential Code for Capital Finance in Local Authorities.

This report confirms the final 2024/25 outturn position, reflecting some minor updates since the indicative outturn was presented to the Audit and Governance Committee in April 2025.

The Authority continued to prioritise security and liquidity over potential yield in line with CIPFA guidance. Interest rates on deposits have gradually fallen throughout the year, with the Bank of England Monetary Policy Committee voting to reduce the Bank Rate by 0.25%, to 4.5% in February 2025. The Authority received a total investment income of £3.052m on an average cash balance of £61m compared to budgeted investment income of £1.694m. The additional income is primarily due to the Authority receiving a government grant for the Matthews pension case but as the pension costs have not yet been incurred the amount received has been available for deposit. The average rate of interest on balances for the year was 4.99%, which is above the Bank of England base rate and is above the 12-month SONIA (Sterling Overnight Index Average Term rate) rate of 4.54% (March 2025).

RECOMMENDATION

Members are requested to:

1. Approve this year-end report on Treasury Management activity for 2024/25.

LEAD/CONTACT OFFICER: Head of Finance, Treasury and Pensions - Nicola Walker

CONTACT DETAILS: T: 01622 692121 / E: kmfraclerk@kent.fire-uk.org

BACKGROUND PAPERS:

Treasury Management Indicative Outturn for 2024/25 – 24 April 2025

Mid-Year Treasury Management and Investment Update for 2024/25 – 6 November 2024

Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2024/25 and MTFP 2024-28 – 20 February 2024

Appendix 1: Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy 2024/25

COMMENTS

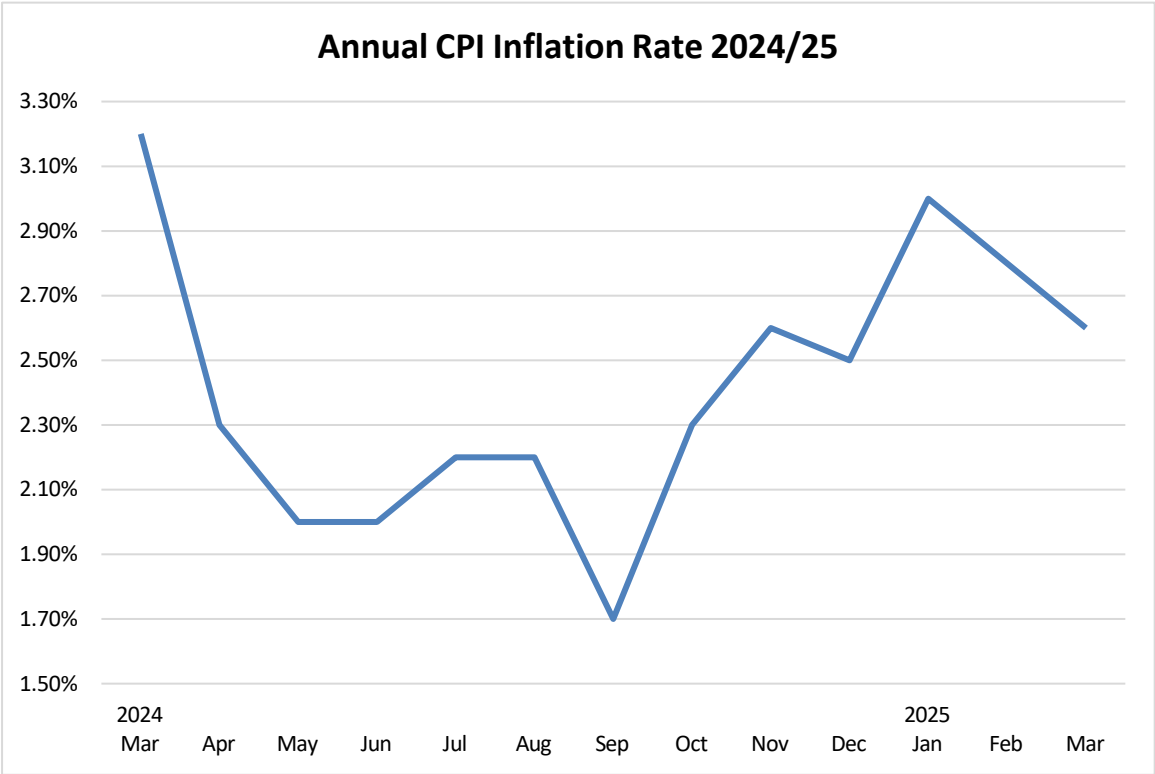
Introduction

- 1. The Authority approved the Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2024/25 at its meeting on 20 February 2024 and the Audit and Governance Committee received a mid-year update at its meeting on 6 November 2024. The report reviewed the main aspects of the Authority’s Treasury Management activities up to the end of August 2024 (mid-year), as required by the Local Government Act 2003 and the CIPFA Code on Treasury Management and Capital Finance. Throughout the year the Authority has received regular updates on treasury performance.
- 2. The regulatory environment places a responsibility on Members for the review and scrutiny of the Treasury Management Policy and related activities. This report, is therefore, important in providing details of the 2024/25 outturn position (as at the 31 March 2025) for treasury activities undertaken during the year and highlights compliance with the Authority’s policies previously approved by Members.

Annual Treasury Management Review 2024/25

- 3. **Inflation** – UK inflation has proved somewhat stubborn throughout 2024/25. Having started the financial year at 2.3% (April 2024), the CPI measure of inflation briefly dipped to 1.7% (September 2024) before picking up pace again in the latter months.

Graph 1 shows the Annual CPI inflation rate by month for 2024/25:

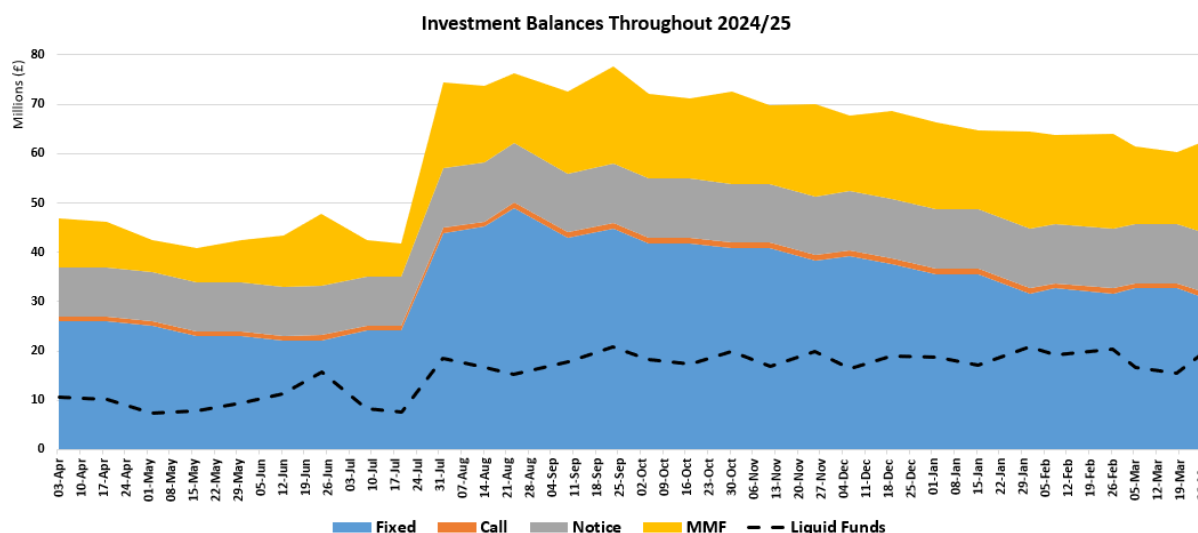


4. **Economy and Interest Rates** – against the backdrop of inflation, the continued conflict in Ukraine and the implementation of US tariff policies, reductions to the Bank of England Base Rate (Bank Rate) have been limited throughout 2024/25. As such, the Bank Rate stood at 4.5% and the end of the financial year.
5. **Treasury Position as at 31 March 2025** - The Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) at 31 March 2025 represents the net amount of capital expenditure incurred by the Authority that has not yet been fully funded. The difference between the CFR and the amount of external borrowing (loans) outstanding represents the of amount of capital expenditure that is temporarily being funded from internal cash balances (under-borrowing). **Table 1** shows this comparison to the previous year.

Table 1			
Treasury Position Compared to Previous Year	31-Mar-24	31-Mar-25	
	£'000	£'000	
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR)	1,878	3,961	
External PWLB Borrowing	-400	0	
Internal Borrowing (Under-borrowing)	1,478	3,961	
Total Deposits	43,189	66,189	
Less PWLB Borrowing	-400	0	
Net Deposits	42,789	66,189	

6. **Strategy for 2024/25** - The Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2024/25, agreed at the February 2024 Authority meeting, saw no changes from the 2023/24 Strategy.
7. The Authority deposits surplus cash balances in several different bank deposit and call accounts, money market funds and makes use of the Debt Management Office Treasury Bills. This provides a spread of risk across the accounts and enables the Authority to make the best use of the available rates whilst still prioritising security and liquidity over yield.

Graph 2 shows the daily investment balances along with the total liquid funds throughout 2024/25:



8. **Borrowing in 2024/25** - The Annual Treasury Management and Investment Strategy for 2024/25 identified that some borrowing may be required from 2025. Expenditure has been incurred in this financial year in relation to the Ashford Live Fire development and it was agreed this project will be funded from internal borrowing whilst interest rates remained high. During 2024/25, the Authority maintained an under-borrowed position. This meant that the capital borrowing need (the Capital Financing Requirement), was not fully funded with loan debt as cash supporting the Authority's reserves, balances and cashflow was used as an interim measure.
9. **Borrowing Outturn for 2024/25** - During 2024/25 the Authority repaid one loan totalling £400k, which had an interest rate of 4.63%. There are no outstanding loans as at 31 March 2025.
10. **Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream** - This indicator shows the impact of the capital plans on the Authority's overall finances (borrowing costs net of investment income), as shown in **Table 2**. Details of how the net borrowing figure is calculated is shown in **Table 3**.

Table 2
Borrowing Costs net of Investment Income

	2024/25 Outturn
	£'000
Net Revenue Provisional Outturn	93,951
Net Borrowing *see Table 3 below for calculation	1,322
Ratio	1.41%

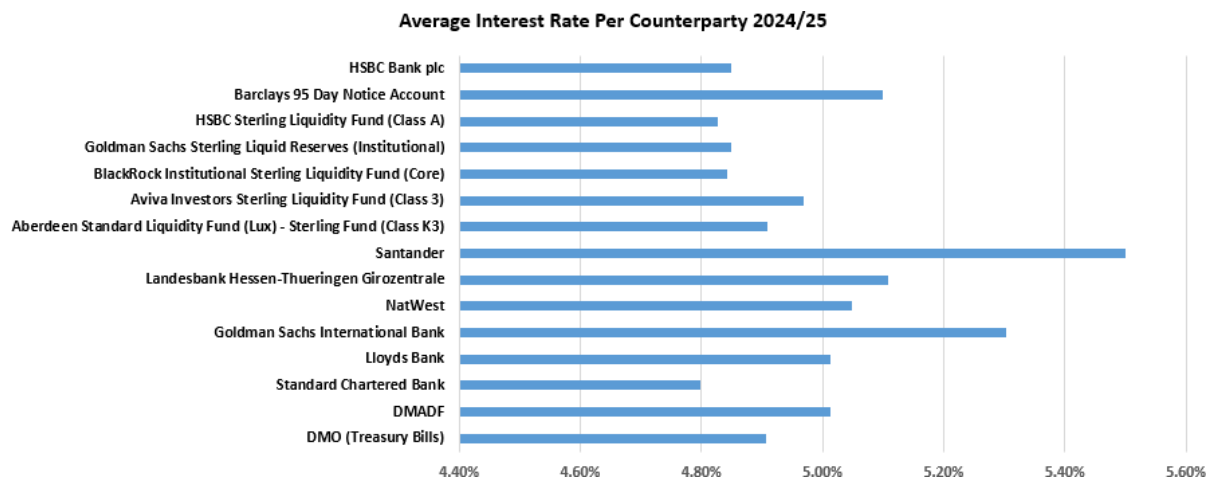
Table 3
Calculation of Net Borrowing Figure

	2024/25 Outturn
	£'000
Minimum Revenue Provision and Voluntary Revenue Provision*	1,295
Interest paid for borrowing	27
Net Borrowing	1,322

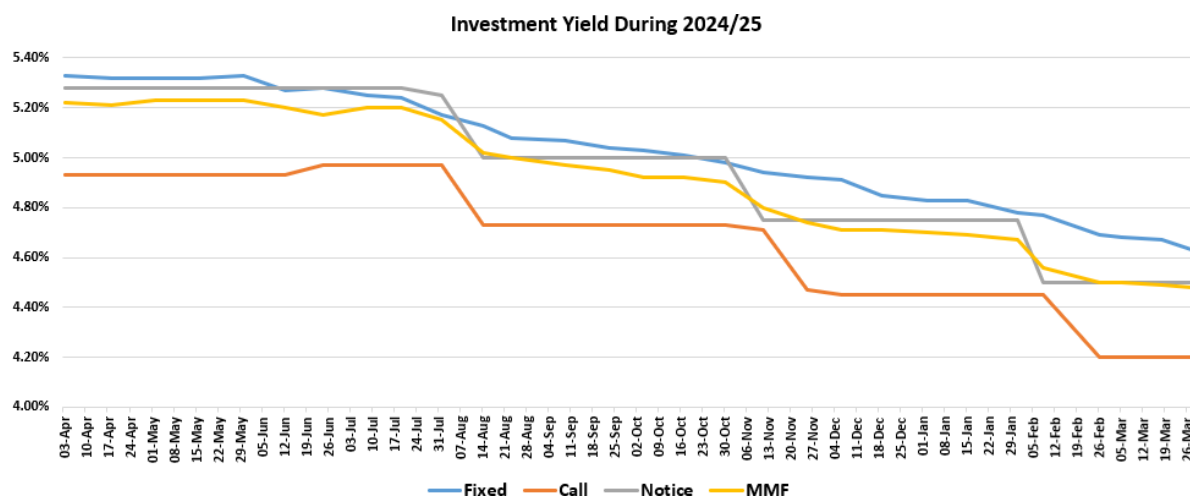
*The provision made by the Authority to finance its CFR.

11. **Investment Rates in 2024/25** - The Authority maintained an average cash balance of £61m which when deposited earned an average annual rate of return of 4.99%.

Graph 3 shows the average annual rate of interest earned per counterparty on deposits during 2024/25:

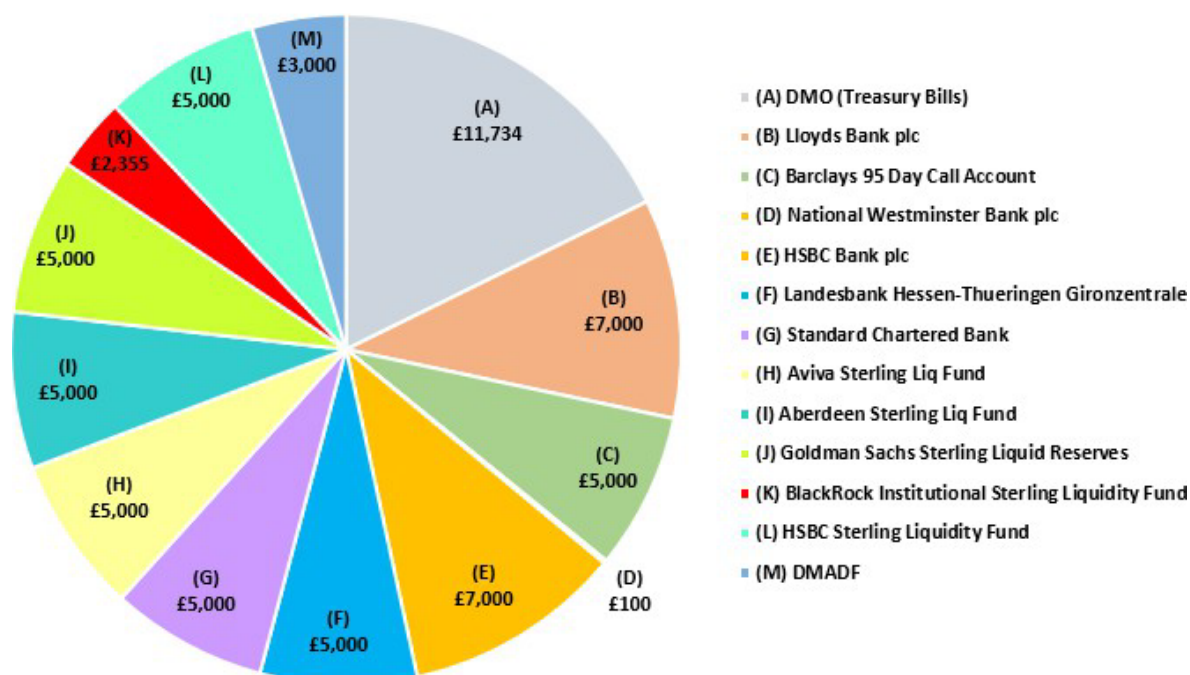


Graph 4 shows the investment yield on deposits for 2024/25 per type of investment:



Graph 5 shows the cash invested per counterparty as at 31 March 2025:

Investments held as at 31 March 2025 (£000's)



12. **Prudential and Treasury Indicators** - The Table at **Appendix 1** shows the original Prudential and Treasury indicators for 2024/25 together with the actuals for 2023/24 and outturn for 2024/25. There were no breaches of limits in 2024/25.
13. **Markets In Financial Instruments Directive II (MIFID II) Regulations** - These regulations govern the relationship that financial institutions conducting lending and borrowing transactions have with local authorities from 2018. The Authority previously 'opted up' to become a professional client to ensure that it continued to receive the same level of advice on investments and borrowing, and access to the same instruments. All institutions have been notified of the change of Director of Finance as part of the compliance requirements.
14. **Treasury Management Training** - The Treasury Code of Practice states that authorities should ensure that the appropriate level of training is delivered to both Members and colleagues who participate in the delivery and scrutiny of the Treasury Management function. A training session on the latest economic forecast and Treasury Management practices was provided by MUFG Pension & Market Services to Audit and Governance committee members at the January 2025 meeting. The Finance team with direct responsibility, regularly attend seminars and conferences to ensure specialist Treasury and Investment knowledge is kept up to date and some team members have also completed the CIPFA Treasury e-learning modules. One team member is currently studying towards the Association of Corporate Treasurers

qualification and Finance colleagues that oversee treasury activity are CIPFA qualified accountants.

15. All financial implications associated with servicing the Treasury Management functions can be contained within the overall budget.

RECOMMENDATION

16. Members are requested to:

- 16.1 Approve this year-end report on Treasury Management activity for 2024/25.

Prudential and Treasury Indicators

	2023/24	2024/25	2024/25
	Outturn	Original Forecast	Prov. Outturn
Prudential Indicators for affordability, prudence and capital expenditure			
	£'000	£'000	£'000
Revenue Expenditure	82,370	94,730	93,951
Revenue Provision for debt repayment	573	1,295	1,295
Capital expenditure	4,719	12,752	5,852
Capital Financing Requirement (CFR) as at 31 March	1,878	12,034	3,961
Total loans outstanding as at 31 March	400	0	0
Ratio of Financing Costs to Net Revenue Stream	0.72%	1.38%	1.41%
Treasury Indicators			
Assumed Operational Boundary for external debt	13,000	23,500	23,500
Assumed Authorised Limit for external debt	17,000	27,500	27,500
Interest rate exposure for borrowing at fixed rates	100%	100%	100%
Interest rate exposure for borrowing at variable rates	20%	20%	20%
Interest rate exposure for investing at fixed rates	100%	100%	100%
Interest rate exposure for investing at variable rates	100%	100%	100%

By: Director of Finance

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: FINANCIAL SUMMARY UPDATE FOR 2025/26

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

At the February 2025 meeting of the Authority, Members approved a net revenue budget totalling £98.232m and a capital budget of £13.677m for the 2025/26 financial year.

This report presents the first financial update for 2025/26, including a summary update on the key issues in relation to the revenue and capital budgets and an update on the Authority's treasury management activities.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve, in principle, to the proposed drawdown from the Insurance and Resource Reserve to fund the additional cost of the nationally agreed pay awards for 2025/26, should there be a requirement to balance the budget from reserves at the end of the financial year (paragraph's 6 and 7 refer).
2. Note the remaining contents of the report.

COMMENTS

Budgets for 2025/26

1. **Revenue Budget** - On 18 February 2025, Members approved a net revenue budget of £98.232m for 2025/26. This report provides an early summary of the key issues, with a more detailed financial update to be presented to the next Authority meeting.
2. **Pay Awards for 2025/26** - Colleagues receive an annual uplift in pay based on national negotiations. On 24 April 2025, the National Employers Side of the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Authority Fire and Rescue Services offered a 3.2% pay increase for operational colleagues, effective from 1 July 2025. This offer was accepted by the Fire Brigades Union on 21 May 2025 after member consultation. The 2025/26 Revenue budget only included provision for a 2% pay award, meaning the Authority faces an additional, unbudgeted cost of approximately £550k for 2025/26.
3. On 22 April 2025, the National Employers Side of the National Joint Council (NJC) for Local Government Services proposed a final pay offer of 3.2% for corporate colleagues, effective from 1 April 2025. Trade Unions are currently consulting their members on this offer, with Unison recommending a rejection of the offer. If this 3.2% offer is accepted, the Authority faces an additional, unbudgeted cost of around £270k in 2025/26, as the 2025/26 budget only included provision for a 2% pay award.
4. **Grants Update** - When the 2025/26 Revenue budget was set, several assumptions were made regarding specific government grant funding that sits outside of the Core Funding Settlement, as the Authority's 2025/26 allocations had not been confirmed at the time of setting the budget. Since then, it been confirmed that the remaining Firelink grant (£118k) has been removed a year earlier than expected, and the New Fire Pensions grant has been reduced by £38k. Additionally, only 50% of the Protection Uplift grant has been confirmed, leaving the remaining amount (£161k) uncertain. When specific grant funding comes in lower than budgeted, it creates a pressure on the revenue budget.
5. **Airwaves Contract** - On 7 March 2025, the Home Office confirmed that Motorola's attempt to appeal the charge control mechanism imposed by the Competition and Market Authority was unsuccessful. As a result, the Home Office, from April 2025 to December 2025 will invoice Fire and Rescue Authorities at the reduced rate of 51.34% in relation to the Airwave contract; the reduction between January 2026 and March 2026 is expected to be in this ballpark, resulting in a forecast underspend of around £520k against the budget allocated for 2025/26.
6. **Revenue Forecast Outturn** - While the revenue budget faces pressures from higher-than-anticipated pay awards (see paragraph's 2 and 3) and reduced government grant income (see paragraph 4), no overall variance is currently forecast at this early stage of the financial year. This is because additional investment income is now anticipated due to

delays in processing backdated pension benefits (Matthew's case) and significantly reduced IT costs related to the Airwave contract (see paragraph 5).

7. Whilst every effort will be made to manage cost pressures within the existing budget, Members are asked to agree in principle to drawdown from the Insurance and Resource Reserve if needed to bridge any resulting funding shortfall due to the higher-than-budgeted pay awards. This approach is consistent with the reserves designed purpose as outlined in the 2025/26 Reserve Strategy, which Members approved in February 2025.
8. As it is still very early in the 2025/26 financial year, a detailed forecast position is not presented in this report. However, several areas that will be monitored closely over the coming months are highlighted below:
 - a) **Operational colleagues pay costs** - A proportion of pay for operational colleagues is based on activity levels, particularly in relation to colleagues at on-call fire stations. As reported in prior financial years, this pay is subjected to significant fluctuations year-to-year, and although an appropriate budget has been set based on historic spend patterns, if the number of incidents or average time spent at incidents varies significantly this could have an impact on the outturn. Additionally, assumptions have been made regarding the number of in-year retirements and recruitment into vacancies.
 - b) **Corporate colleagues pay costs** - Although a final pay offer has been proposed by the Employers Side of the National Joint Council (NJC) this has not been agreed by the Trade Unions Side, so this position will be monitored closely so that potential budget implications are promptly identified. Additionally, assumptions have been made regarding vacancy rates and the timing of recruitment into vacancies that existed at the beginning of the financial year, so any variance against these assumptions could have an impact on the outturn.
 - c) **Interest Rates** - On 8 May 2025, the Bank of England Base Rate was cut to 4.25% and is forecast to fall to 3.5% by the middle of 2026. Assumptions around the speed and size of future Base Rate cuts were used when setting the budget for investment income for 2025/26 so any variation from these assumptions will impact on the Authority's expected investment returns. The Treasury team will be closely monitoring interest rate forecasts throughout the year.
 - d) **Vehicle Running Costs** - Whilst global fuel prices have reduced following recent global trade activity, prices remain volatile and subject to economic shocks. A particularly dry summer period increases the risk of wildfire and could lead to a spike in activity periods potentially resulting in higher running costs and routine maintenance costs.

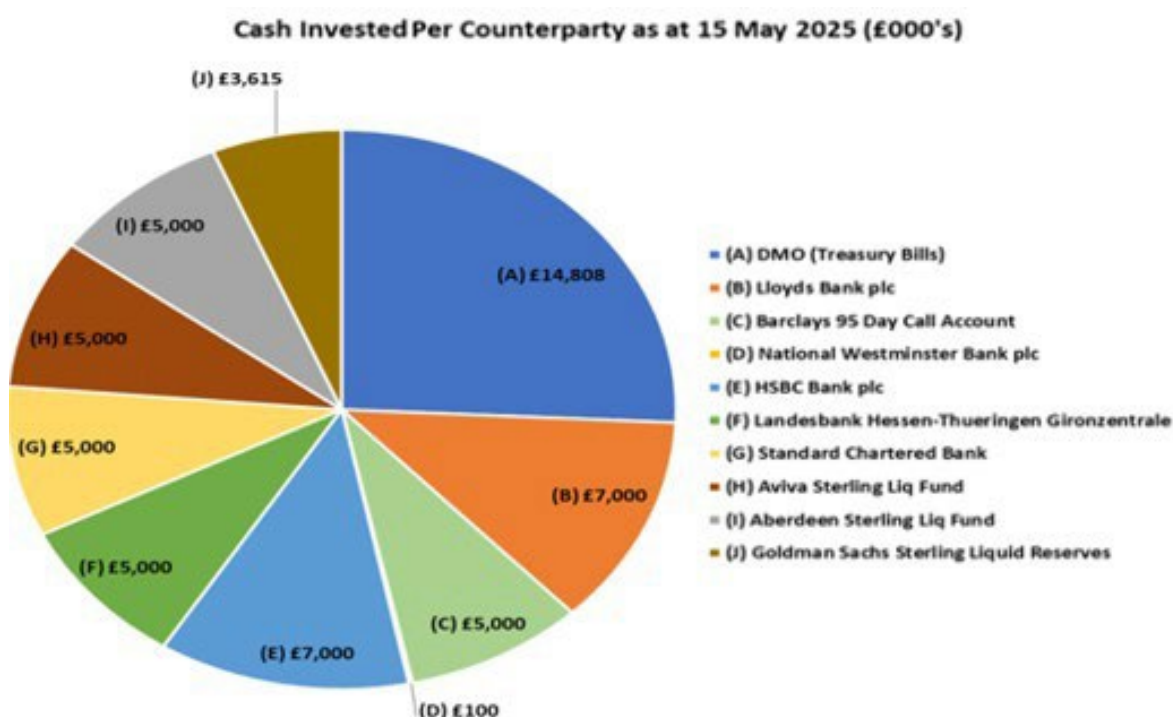
9. **Capital Budget** - In February 2025, Members approved a capital budget of £13.677m for 2025/26. Most of this budget, £9.281m, relates to the Ashford Live Fire Training Facility project. An additional £1.107m is provided to cover various other estate works, including roof replacements, bay door replacements, and new fuel tanks. Furthermore, £2.689m has been allocated for replacing rescue pumps and a range of specialist vehicles, such as driver training appliances, bulk water carriers and incident command units. Finally, £600k has been allocated for planned hardware upgrades to Mobile Data Terminals (MDTs) tablets for operational colleagues. At this early stage no variance is reported against the capital budget.

Medium Term Financial Plan 2026/27 – 2029/30

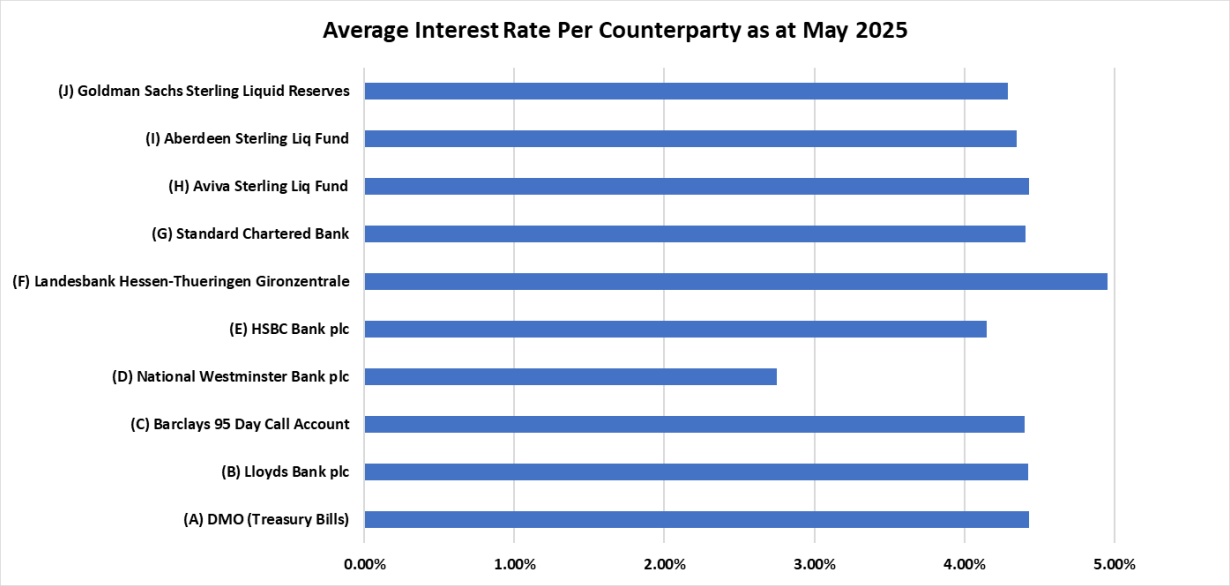
10. **Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP)** - At this time of the year the Authority's MTFP is rolled forward with work on updating spending plans and the modelling of various funding scenarios progressing over the coming months. Proposed assumptions in the development of the MTFP will be presented to Members at the October Authority meeting.

Treasury Update 2025/26

11. **Treasury Management** - As at 15 May 2025, the Authority has a cash balance of £57.523m invested. This balance is higher than usual due to a one-off government grant (£14.480m) relating to the Matthew's pensions case. Complications with the new pensions legislation has caused delays in updating the pension administrator's system, consequently delaying the processing of the pension payments due to be funded by this grant. The pie chart below shows the cash invested per counterparty as at 15 May 2025:



12. The Bank of England’s Monetary Policy Committee voted to reduce the Bank Rate in May by 0.25%, to 4.25%. As a result, the Authority’s average rate earned on cash balances has reduced, currently sitting at an average of 4.41%. The bar chart below details the interest rate levels paid on these deposits as at 15 May 2025:



IMPACT ASSESSMENT

13. The 2025/26 nationally agreed pay awards will be higher than anticipated, resulting in an unavoidable in-year budget pressure. Whilst every effort will be made to contain this cost pressure within the existing revenue budget, Members are asked to agree, in principle, to a drawdown from the Insurance and Resource Reserve should there be a requirement to balance the budget from reserves at year end.

RECOMMENDATION

14. Members are requested to:

14.1 Approve, in principle, to the proposed drawdown from the Insurance and Resource Reserve to fund the additional cost of the nationally agreed pay awards for 2025/26, should there be a requirement to balance the budget from reserves at the end of the financial year (paragraph’s 6 and 7 refer).

14.2 Note the remaining contents of the report.

By: Chief Executive

To: Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority – 7 July 2025

Subject: APPOINTMENT OF MONITORING OFFICER

Classification: Unrestricted

FOR DECISION

SUMMARY

It is a statutory requirement for Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority (the Authority) to appoint a Monitoring Officer to carry out the responsibilities set out under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989.

At the Authority meeting in July 2024, Members approved the appointment of Claudette Valmond of Mid Kent Legal Services as the Monitoring Officer to the Authority.

Claudette Valmond is the Head of Mid Kent Legal Services and the Monitoring Officer for one of the Authorities within the Mid Kent Services Partnership and is stepping down from her role as the Authority's Monitoring Officer and proposing that the current Deputy Monitoring Officer Helen Ward be appointed in her place as the Authority's Monitoring Officer.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Members are requested to:

1. Approve the appointment of Helen Ward, a Senior Lawyer at Mid Kent Legal Services as the Authority's Monitoring Officer under the conditions defined within the Service Level Agreement, attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

COMMENTS

Background

1. It is a statutory requirement for the Authority to appoint a Monitoring Officer to carry out the responsibilities set out under the Local Government and Housing Act 1989. The Monitoring Officer's responsibility is to ensure that the Authority, its officers and elected Members maintain the highest standards of conduct in all that they do.

2. The Current Monitoring Officer Claudette Valmond agreed to take on the role in 2024 for a limited period when the previous Monitoring Officer stepped down to ensure that the Authority met its statutory requirement to have a Monitoring Officer. This was on the basis that Claudette Valmond would later recommend that the current Deputy Monitoring Officer Helen Ward be appointed as the Authority's Monitoring Officer.
3. It is therefore recommended to Members, in consultation with the Vice Chair of the Authority, that Helen Ward, a Senior Lawyer of Mid Kent Legal Services is appointed as the Authority's Monitoring Officer for the remainder of the term of the Service Level Agreement. Should there be any decision to continue the collaboration between the Authority and Mid Kent Legal Services by extending the contract beyond the two year term, then this will come back to Members for prior agreement.

IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4. The fee for the Monitoring Officer provision with Mid Kent Legal Services is £8.5k per annum. A provision already exists within budget for the services of a Monitoring Officer. No payments are made directly to the appointee in respect of this work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

5. Members are requested to

Approve the appointment of Helen Ward, Senior Lawyer, as the Authority's Monitoring Officer under the conditions defined within the Service Level Agreement, attached at Appendix 1 to this report.

DATED ~~2024~~
4th June 2024

Service Level Agreement

Between

Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority

and

Swale Borough Council

for the provision of a Monitoring Officer Service

THIS AGREEMENT is made on the 16th day of June 2024

BETWEEN:

- (1) **Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority** (the "**Authority**") of The Godlands, Straw Mill Hill, Maidstone ME15 6XB (KMFRA); and
- (2) **Swale Borough Council** of Swale House, East Street, Sittingbourne. Kent ME10 3HT (the "**Service Provider**") (together the "**Parties**").

WHEREAS:

- (A) The Authority has selected the Service Provider to provide a Monitoring Officer Role and the Service Provider is willing and able to provide such services in accordance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement.

DEFINITIONS:

Authority and any of its Sub Committees - means full Authority, Audit and Governance Committee and Senior Officer Appointments Conditions and Conduct Committee

Authority's Code of Conduct for Members – means the model behaviour that is expected of the Authority's Members

Authority's Standing Orders, Regulations, Codes and procedures – means a set of procedural documents that govern the Authority

Chief Executive - means Chief Executive of Kent Fire and Rescue Service or Head of Paid Service

Clerk – means Clerk to the Authority

Director, Finance and Corporate Services – means the Chief Financial Officer/Section 151 Officer responsible for making arrangements for the proper administration of the Authority's financial affairs

Kent Combination Scheme Order 1997 – means the Order made by Parliament which first established the Authority

Member – means a Councillor appointed from either Kent County Council or Medway Council and is a Member of the Authority or one of its sub committees

Monitoring Officer Role – means the Statutory Officer as set out under Section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and is the Monitoring Officer for the Authority

Officer – means any officer who provides regular reports to the Authority or its sub committees

Publication and Retention Scheme – means the information held or published by the Authority and its required retention period which meets the requirement under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to have a publication scheme and the requirement under the UK GDPR to have a record of processing activity

Investigations by other agencies (published privacy notice 17) –

means any data collected as part of the Authority's activities and including information held by its employees which, upon receipt of a lawful request, may be shared with the police or other enforcing agencies.

Register of Interests – means a record of any financial interests or benefits received which might be reasonably considered to influence the actions of any Member of the Authority

1. Definition of Service Requirement

- 1.1 Every Local Authority has a legal duty to appoint a Monitoring Officer. The duties of this post are set out under section 5 of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989, and amended by schedule 5, paragraph 24 of the Local Government Act 2000.
- 1.2 This role is an appointment of the Authority and has the specific duty to ensure that the Authority, its Officers and elected Members maintain the highest standards of conduct in all that they do. The Monitoring Officer will be able to advise and support on conflict of interest issues, support in difficult circumstances and investigate any formal complaints. The Monitoring Officer should also have the appropriate skills to mediate, counsel and in addition to the formal grievance processes, can intervene on an informal basis which can have a positive impact on the culture of the Authority. This Agreement sets out the provision for the requirement of this service.
- 1.3 The term shall be two years from 25 April 2024 (the Commencement Date), to be reviewed annually to ensure that performance is being met by both Parties. The Parties agree that the term will be extended by a further two years if both Parties agree. It will be procured under the provisions set out in the Kent Combination Scheme Order 1997.

2. Specification of Service Provider Responsibilities

- 2.1 The Service Provider shall provide a Monitoring Officer Role to the Authority as specified below:
 - i) To report to the Authority in any case where they believe any proposal, decision or omission by the Authority may constitute a reportable incident (being any matter which, in their opinion, has given rise to or is likely to or would give rise to any illegality, maladministration or breach of statutory code under Sections 5 and 5A of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989);
 - ii) To investigate any matter which they have reason to believe may constitute, or where they have received an allegation that a matter may constitute, a reportable conduct issue in relation to a Member;
 - iii) To advise on any changes which may be needed to the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members; to advise Members on interests and conduct; and to advise on the grant of non-pecuniary dispensations;
 - iv) To exercise the Authority's powers to grant dispensations to Members under section 33 of the Localism Act 2011;
 - v) To maintain the Register of Interest of all Members from Constituent Authorities under the Kent Combination Scheme Order 1997;
 - vi) To help ensure that Members and officers of the Authority are fully aware of their obligations in relation to probity;
 - vii) To regularly review the Authority's Standing Orders, Regulations, Codes and procedures to ensure they are up-to-date and comply with statutory and best⁷⁷

practice requirements;

- viii) To review all reports submitted to the Authority and respond back to the Clerk to the Authority, in a timely manner, confirming that no proposals or decisions detailed within those reports breach the law or amount to maladministration;
- ix) To provide an annual monitoring report to the Authority on any activities undertaken in line with this Agreement as well as attend at least one Authority meeting per municipal calendar year;
- x) To hold regular review meetings with either the Chief Executive or the Director, Finance and Corporate Services, and the Clerk to the Authority to identify areas where the Authority can be improved or better protected and to review best practice between both Parties;
- xi) To respond to any correspondence sent by the Authority within five working days unless that correspondence is marked as urgent and the response is required within 24 hours;
- xii) To provide advice to Members and Officers, in a timely manner, as required in pursuit of a legal decision. This will include timely responses to a request for specific information in relation to the statutory requirements of formally closing the financial accounts each year.

3. Service Purchasers Responsibilities

3.1 The Authority shall provide/undertake the following:

- i) The right of access to all relevant documents and information held by or on behalf of the Authority, including documents and information held by any Officer or Member of the Authority as set out in its Publication and Retention Scheme, and the published privacy notice on Investigations by other agencies;
- ii) The right of access to any meetings of Officers or Members (or both) of the Authority, whether or not such meetings include any other persons;
- iii) The right to require any Officer or Member of the Authority, or any contractor of the Authority, to provide an explanation of any matter under investigation;
- iv) A right to report to the Authority, including a right to present a written report and to attend and advise orally;
- v) The right to require the assistance of any Officer of the Authority in carrying out an investigation;
- vi) A power to agree a local resolution to any complaint of maladministration or of breach of the Authority's Code of Conduct for Members, in consultation with the Chief Executive, subject to subsequent report to the Authority;
- vii) The right of access to the Chief Executive and to the Director, Finance and Corporate Services;
- viii) The right, after consultation with the Chief Executive, to notify the Police, the Authority's auditors and other regulatory agencies of their concerns in respect of

any matter and to provide those agencies with information and documents to assist them with their statutory functions;

- ix) The right to obtain, at the Authority's expense, legal advice on any matter which they believe may be a reportable incident, and sufficient financial resource for this.

4. Fees

4.1 The Authority agrees to;

- i) Pay the annual fee of £8,500.00 for the services of the Monitoring Officer (for the first two year term) on 25 October each year. If the contract is extended beyond the 2 year agreement, then the fee will be renegotiated.
- ii) Agree in advance with the Monitoring Officer any work that is deemed to be outside this Agreement at a cost of an agreed hourly rate and prior to any work being undertaken.

5. Sub-contracting

5.1 The Service Provider shall not assign, sub-contract or in any other way dispose of the agreement or any part of it without prior approval from the Authority.

6. Termination

6.1 Either Party may terminate this agreement at any time by giving three months prior written notice.

IN WITNESS whereof this Agreement has been executed by the Parties in accordance with their respective constitutions:

Signed for and on behalf of
Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority


.....
Authorised Signatory


.....
Print Name of Authorised Signatory

Signed for and on behalf of
Swale Borough Council


.....
Authorised Signatory


.....
Print Name of Authorised Signatory

