

KCC Councillor Mark Mulvihill

Parish Council Report — May 2026

1. Reform UK — First Year Delivering for Kent

As we reach the first anniversary of Reform UK Administration taking control of Kent County Council in May 2025, I am proud to report on the genuine progress our administration has delivered. We came into office with a promise to do things differently — to put Kent's residents first, deliver better value for money, and protect the services that matter most. After twelve months in office, we are delivering on that promise.

Strong Financial Management — In our first year we inherited the existing debt of £732 million in May 2025. I'm delighted to tell you that we have, in the course of our first year in charge, reduced KCC's debt by £142 million to £590 million, saving over £1 million in debt interest payments in revenue every year. We cancelled £39.5 million of future spend associated with Net Zero whilst setting a balanced budget with no extra borrowing and increased investment in Adult Social Care, Children's Services, and Highways. Our Council Tax increase of just 3.99% was lower than 86% of comparable councils across England.

Protecting Community Services — A third of our libraries were threatened with closure under the previous Conservative administration. We have saved every single one of them. Country Parks, Community Wardens and School Crossing Staff have equally been protected. These services were under genuine threat before Reform UK took control.

Education Excellence — 98% of Early Years settings in Kent are rated Good or Outstanding by Ofsted. 96% of pupils secured a place at one of their preferred schools. 48,000+ children with SEND are receiving support across the county.

Supporting Kent Business — We produced Kent's first ever Commercial Strategy, directed £55 million more in contracts to Kent companies, and provided enhanced support to 500 local supplier businesses. This is about keeping Kent's money working in Kent's economy.

2. Local Government Reorganisation

The Government's public consultation on LGR in Kent and Medway closed on 26th March 2026, with a decision expected during summer 2026 and new unitary authorities anticipated from April 2028. KCC's preferred option remains **Option 1A — a single unitary 'Kent Council'**, supported by three area assemblies. This delivers the fastest financial payback (3.3 years), annual savings of £69m, and cumulative savings of £457m over 10 years. It keeps Kent together and supports the less wealthy areas. There is a real risk with all the other options on the table that the east Kent coast will be split off from the rest of Kent and could face huge council tax rises to pay for the core services that residents depend on. I will keep all parish / town councils fully informed as the Government's response becomes clear.

3. Primary School Offers — Excellent News

Excellent news for Kent families — 98% of pupils have been offered one of their preferred primary schools for September 2026. This tremendous achievement reflects the hard work of KCC's Education team and the quality of our excellent Kent schools. Families who were not offered their first choice can join waiting lists by 30th April 2026, with appeals lodged by 18th May 2026. KCC will hold a second round of offers on 21st May 2026 for any spaces that become available.

4. Highways — New Contractor from 1st May

A significant milestone for Kent's highways took place on Thursday 1st May 2026, when Ringway Infrastructure Services officially began its role as KCC's principal highways contractor under a new Highways Term Maintenance Contract. This marks the start of a new era for Kent's roads and represents a major long-term investment in the quality, reliability and resilience of our highways infrastructure.

Ringway, a Kent-based business, replaces Amey, who have delivered highways services in Kent for over the past 12 years. Following a rigorous and competitive procurement process, Ringway was selected to deliver better workmanship, enhanced accountability, and improved value for money for Kent's council taxpayers. The new contract covers the full range of highways services including winter gritting, pothole repairs, bridge maintenance, drainage works, road markings, street lighting, and vegetation management across Kent's extensive 5,400-mile highway network.

Key improvements residents can expect include:

Faster repairs — Streamlined processes mean potholes, drainage faults and other highway defects will be fixed more quickly, reducing disruption to road users and improving road quality across the county.

Clear performance targets — Ringway will be held to account against measurable performance standards, ensuring consistently reliable service delivery and genuine accountability to Kent residents.

Better value for money — Transparent pricing structures mean every pound spent on highways is tracked and focused on delivering visible results that residents will see and benefit from in their daily lives.

24/7 emergency coverage — Round-the-clock response capability for emergencies, severe weather events and urgent highway safety issues, ensuring Kent's roads remain safe and accessible at all times.

As we have Ringway as our new principle highways contactor, better weather for works to be carried out also funds available in our budget for highway repairs I urge you to report potholes and defects that require attention, to report highway defects at <https://www.kent.gov.uk/roads-and-travel/report-or-track-a-problem-on-the-road-or-pavement>

If any issue you have reported in our division is not being progressed promptly under the new contractor, please contact me directly with the relevant reference number at linden.kemkaran@kent.gov.uk and I will ensure it receives the attention it deserves.

5. KCC Services & Campaigns

Forever Active Kent — Launched 1st April 2026, helping residents aged 50+ stay mobile and independent. Community groups can apply for grant funding for activity sessions.

Mental Health Grants — The 2026 Kent & Medway Better Mental Health Fund offers grants from £500 to £10,000. Email suicideprevention@kent.gov.uk. **Family Hubs** — Free courses at <https://loom.ly/Kyd-Wbw>. **Mental Health Support (24/7)** — Text SHOUT to 85258 or call 0800 107 0160.

6. Canterbury Stroke relocation

I have been working hard with our public health teams and the HOSC committee members regarding the relocation of the stroke services at Kent and Canterbury being moved to William Harvey Hospital. Having gathered all the information that had been supplied most of which was outdated I worked with the HOSC team to produce a list of recommendations that they could use to put forward a motion. This motion was put forward and passed unanimously.

The HOSC committee has agreed that:

- Canterbury should be retained as the permanent East Kent HASU.
- NHS Kent and Medway and NHS England should publish clear evidence justifying any alternative model.
- A full equality impact assessment should be completed, with specific focus on Thanet, coastal East Kent, deprivation, and transport access.
- Side-by-side modelling should be published comparing Canterbury retention with the proposed alternative, including the impact on Ashford and Thanet.
- Independent assessment should be provided on travel time, ambulance resilience, and access to family support, rehabilitation, and discharge planning.
- The ICB should explain why an existing award-winning service in Canterbury cannot be retained as the permanent East Kent HASU.

Both I, the other East Kent Reform UK members, HOSC will continue applying pressure on the ICB on this issue and working cross parties with our local MPs. The full meeting is available to view on the KCC website.

7. A299 Thanet Way

The A299 Thanet Way will start having resurfacing works commencing on the 1st June through till the 21st July 2026, this will enable the 50mph to be dropped once the works are complete. This will involve road closures but this will be over night to minimise disruption.

7. Shalloak Rd / Roadworks

Prior to the roadworks / road closure at Shalloak Road I was informed by highways that there were no “planned” roadworks due to take place, including the removal of the temporary traffic lights on the A28 Sturry Link Rd project. However, there is still a number of urgent works which have been taking place. I totally understand resident’s frustrations, but urgent works are outside of KCCs control. This does not mean the issues being created are being ignored and I am regularly highlighting the issues caused to the Highways team. Yesterday I had another meeting with the highways engagement team, and have been assured that these concerns have been raised with the operations team. I am awaiting their response and will share with all Parish / Town Councils once I hear back.

Mark Mulvihill

Deputy Cabinet Member for Environment, Coastal Regeneration and Public Health.

County Councillor for Herne Villages and Sturry.