Kent County Council prides itself on making a difference.

We are ambitious when it comes to providing services to the public in Kent and aim to keep at the cutting edge of service development.

We strive to innovate while remaining true to our core values. The people of Kent expect us to deliver the best quality services at the best possible cost.

We prioritise to spend wisely but ensure we are able to provide over and above the core services expected of a county council.

As an ambitious authority we continually seek to challenge and improve the services we deliver as our contribution to the mixed economy of public, private and voluntary partnerships. Whilst well aware of the unique challenges Kent faces, we make conscious choices about investing for present and future needs.

Despite our size, we ensure close contact with local people. We rely on first-class staff and strong working relationships with partners.

As a result we gain national recognition for our work. Our education sector is leading nationally in its approach to transforming secondary education and our social care services have achieved a top rating for the last six years.

The strategic significance of KCC, with nearly a £2 billion budget, makes a very significant contribution to the economy of the county and our strategic approach to London, the region and the European gateway. We continue to be an outward-looking authority using research, creative thinking and best practice examples from across the world to help us create new and innovative value for money services.

This publication is a collection of case studies which show how we are making a difference to Kent.

Paul Carter  
Leader  
Kent County Council

Peter Gilroy  
Chief Executive  
Kent County Council
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Making a difference

1 Gateways

‘Your council and community services under one roof’

The Gateway offers a convenient public service point in a retail-based location using the latest innovative technologies and working with borough and district councils across Kent, and wider partners including Kent Police, Voluntary Sector and Health. The initial Gateway pilot opened in Ashford in October 2005.

Ashford Gateway attracts in excess of 5000 customers per month, with more than 60 per cent of the visitors regularly using one or more services. Expansion of Ashford Gateway into a new, larger multi-agency site is being planned for 2010. Mobile Gateway launched in July 2007 - this will develop and deliver multi-agency outreach services across rural/urban mid Kent, targeting known ‘hard to reach’ groups.

The focus is on shaping services to fit around customer need and with a successful Gateway thriving in Ashford, the model is now being rolled out across Kent.

Gateway has attracted a lot of international and national interest. Gateway was one of the 16 front-office innovations showcased nationally at the FOSS Event in May 2007 by the Cabinet Office, the Improvement and Development Agency (IDeA) and Local Government Association (LGA), who continue to review development and progress. IDeA has also short-listed Gateway for the 2007 Innovation Competition.

Further Gateways are being rolled out across Kent throughout Phase one – Thanet’s Gateway opens in January 2008; a brand new site is under construction for the Maidstone Gateway. A prime town centre location has been acquired to deliver the Tunbridge Wells Gateway and discussions around a joint development with library services in Deal and options for Dover town centre are under discussion with Dover District Council.

Pre-planning for phase two has highlighted keen interest in Canterbury, Gravesend, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling and Shepway, with the planned redevelopment of Dartford town centre, and new community hubs in Thames Gateway presenting strong opportunities for the Gateway service model.

Swale is also working in partnership with KCC, Gravesham and Tunbridge Wells and Pas de Nord de Calais to develop a joint Interreg bid to explore ‘customer profiling’ and how a better understanding of our customer will inform joint service delivery planning.

Phase one Gateway roll-out anticipates annual footfall of more than one million people.

The use of Kent TV, and a shared Gateway web portal will increase transparency and immediacy. Webcam, video link, and interactive digital feedback will facilitate increased engagement with the public, and enable local people to influence service delivery in the place where they live.
Making a difference

KCC is helping people in the county’s most deprived areas live more fulfilling lives with a number of initiatives.

The Supporting Independence Programme aims to help people living in Kent’s most deprived communities lift themselves out of dependency and into independence and employment and in so doing, help them enjoy life more.

Working with the public and voluntary sectors, the programme focuses on helping those groups of people who are most in danger of becoming trapped in the spiral of deprivation and who need assistance if they are to be helped back to fulfilling lives.

Within the programme are a number of key projects such as:

- Kent NOW (New Opportunities for Work), which aims to help 250 long-term Incapacity Benefit claimants into sustained work by 2008;
- Kent Success, an apprenticeship programme aimed at providing work and training for school leavers;
- Kent Community Programme, an eight week intensive vocational, life skills and employability skills programme for young people aged 16 to 18.
- Skills Force, an innovative personal development curriculum for young people.

The programme helps KCC work towards reducing the number of people dependent on welfare benefits – a target in its Towards 2010 document. It also links in with the Kent Agreement which aims to reduce unemployment among those who are able to work.

It involves working with Jobcentre Plus and voluntary organisations, helping to turn people’s lives around.

The effectiveness of the programme is measured in a variety of ways and evidence shows the positive effect it is having, including reducing teenage pregnancies.
TeleHealth and Telecare are two new technologies which have been piloted in Kent. They assist people in need of care in their own homes and aim to help people retain their independence.

TeleHealth is targeted at people with long term chronic conditions, specifically Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, Chronic Heart Disease and Type 2 Diabetes.

The pilot, which is currently being trialled by 250 people across Kent uses tried and tested equipment designed for this purpose which has an emphasis on ease of use. This enables people to measure their vital signs in their own home and send these through their home telephone to a community based clinician who then monitors them much more frequently.

This reduces frequent trips to clinicians in both the community and acute sectors, whilst helping people to better understand their condition and its impact on their daily living. Through doing this, the TeleHealth pilot appears to be reducing hospital admissions by increasing early interventions.

By improving confidence and reducing anxiety, as well as freeing them from the need to access particularly hospital based care, service users live more independent lives.

This pilot is now the largest of its kind in Europe, and it is planned to have 1000 people using TeleHealth by April 2009. It will be fully evaluated as part of the Whole Systems Demonstrator Programme, led by Professor Chris Ham from Birmingham University.

Telecare uses environmental monitors to alert trained operators within seconds of an accident or an emergency (such as a fall, a gas leak, flood, or fire).

Telecare has already brought reassurance to more than 860 people from across six Kent districts (Ashford, Dover, Swale, Tonbridge and Malling, Gravesham and Maidstone) who wish to remain in their own homes for as long as possible, whilst enabling them to retain their privacy and control over their individual lifestyles.

These people now have help available at a touch of a button, 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The Telecare project aims to improve people's quality of life by helping vulnerable people manage the risks of living in their own homes. It enables people to retain their privacy and control over their individual lifestyles.
The groundbreaking Kent Freedom Pass was launched by KCC in June 2007 and has been a runaway success. Already, in the three district pilot phase, around 5000 young people have taken advantage of the scheme which aims to tackle congestion on the school run, enable young people to participate in out of school activities and improve social mobility by enhancing school choice.

The Freedom Pass allows students aged between 11 and 16 years old to purchase a pass for a one-off fee of £50 and then travel when and where they want on scheduled bus services in Kent. The pass can be used for travel to school, for leisure activities or simply meeting up with friends. The initiative is being trialled at secondary schools in Canterbury, Tonbridge and Tunbridge Wells.

The scheme means more freedom for young people to access schools of their choice, to attend out of school activities and to have an independent social life without relying on parents to drive them around. Freedom is great news for motorists too, especially at peak times, helping to tackle traffic congestion and pollution.

Around 100,000 trips are made each month using Freedom Passes, with some 75 per cent at peak time. Recent surveys suggest as many as 27 per cent of students in the pilot areas are choosing to use buses for travelling to school, for clubs and other activities. The scheme was devised after discussion with the Kent Youth County Council who raised concerns about the lack of affordable transport.

A great deal of credit should be given to bus operators in the pilot areas. Through their efforts, Freedom was introduced very efficiently in June 2007 with no additional capacity issues or complaints despite an uplift of around 100,000 trips per month. This is a tribute to partnership working between the county council and bus operators which made this scheme such a success.

The Kent Freedom Pass has proved to be a hugely popular scheme and will be extended further in June 2008 with a full countywide roll out in 2009.

Paul Carter, Leader KCC: “This is a radical attempt to do something positive about congestion and at the same time open up the travel possibilities for young people.”
Preparing young people for employment is such an important priority for Kent that five 2010 targets have been developed to ensure that school leavers are instilled with the right skills to access jobs and opportunities. Kent wants every young person excited about learning and able to follow a pathway that meets their individual needs and interests, giving them the basic skills and more to prepare them for employment or higher education.

As the government works on transforming education for 14 to 19 year olds, Kent County Council has gone one stage further with the creation of the 14-24 Innovation unit to respond to the rapidly changing education and skills legislation and welfare reforms.

The unit has responsibility for professional skills and training, Educational Business Partnerships, careers guidance and vocational programmes to ensure that our young people become the workforce of tomorrow bringing economic success to Kent. Extending the age range to 24 will support the county’s young people through crucial times of transition, leaving school, college or university and ensure extra help for more vulnerable young people by assisting them to find alternatives to welfare dependency. The activity of the unit will also help to address the needs of the labour market and economic regeneration – essential with two major growth areas at Ashford and the Thames Gateway.

Key aims include:

- Identify and review provision to ensure that appropriate links are made across Kent County Council and with key partners and providers of 14-24 training and skills opportunities.
- Support the development of the nine 14-19 Planning Forums to deliver learner led programmes which meet all young people’s needs by 2010. Commission new provision where appropriate and provide opportunities to develop innovative approaches to meet the specific needs of vulnerable or marginalised groups.
- Work in partnership with schools, colleges and other providers to encourage the optimal use of resources, revenue and capital.
- Identify sources of external funding to support the delivery of 14-24 programmes in particular Learning Skills Council (LSC) funding for apprenticeship programmes, post 16 provision, and funding for vulnerable groups.
- Develop a core team of 14-24 specialist officers and advisers to implement the business plan’s priorities, supported by consultants and employers.
- Co-ordinate the delivery of apprenticeship programmes at all levels from 14+ onwards.
- In partnership with Connexions, develop innovative approaches to information, advice and guidance and Careers Education in schools for all young people by 2010, with a particular focus on transition points at 14, 16 & 19+.
- Commission Kent Works to deliver new approaches to work experience, and employer engagement by 2010.
- Provide the critical links and brokerage between labour market intelligence, identified skills shortage areas and 14-24 programme providers.
- The core aim of the unit is to maximise the learning potential of 14 – 24 year olds in Kent.
Making a difference

One size does not fit all when it comes to education and Kent County Council is pioneering new and stimulating ways of providing vocational opportunities.

KCC is developing exciting and innovative vocational training programmes for 14 to 16-year-olds which tailor training courses to the job market and employers.

Over the past four years the county council has committed significant capital resources to develop new high quality state of the art specialist work shops and facilities. The total capital contribution is currently £13.1 million from KCC, DCLG and LSC. Twenty one capital programmes have been delivered over the past two years.

There are 4,000 students are on vocational 14–16 programmes and 90 per cent of those young people stated that they enjoy or find helpful the vocational training they are getting.

One excellent example is the flagship £1.5million Thanet Skills Studio that offers training in the construction, engineering, motor vehicle, retail sectors and hospitality and catering. It aims to inspire and motivate students, prepare them for the world of work and enable them to progress to further training opportunities and employment. High quality careers education and guidance is an important part of the programme.

Around 400 students in years nine to 11 from 14 Thanet secondary schools attend the skills studio one day a week as part of their GCSE option or vocational training. The centre will be able to cater for 500 at maximum capacity. They are working with a range of employers such as Peugeot, Carter & Carter and the Fifteen Foundation (Jamie Oliver) investing in the future of Kent’s young people.

The centre is located in a modern industrial building on the Westwood Industrial Estate; it has attracted interest from other councils because of its innovative look and location.

Paul Carter said: “The vocational programmes on offer at the studio allow learners access to a range of applied learning options in state-of-the-art workshops and studios. This will not only help them in their career development but it will support business and commerce and sustain the regeneration of east Kent.”

Skills studio manager Julie Field said: “It is a fantastic environment with state-of-the-art resources and equipment. We are preparing students with appropriate employability skills to meet the demands and challenges of employers and the world of work.”

Student one said: “I have enjoyed being at the Thanet Skills Studio, it has a better understanding of what it would be like in real life.”

Student two said: “I think the Skills Studio is good because it helps us get what we want in life.”

Student three said: “I like TSS because I have learnt a lot since I have been here and they treat you like adults and I am glad I came here.”

Student four said: “It’s better than school, however we would really like an outside area for break times.”
Inspirational leaders and excellent managers are critical to KCC’s ongoing success. Our Strategy for Staff recognises these crucial roles. It aims to deliver excellent people management across the organisation and ensure that KCC has the right people, with the right skills, to deliver the best services to the people of Kent.

Learning and Development is delivered through a combination of inductions for new staff, shadowing, mentoring, buddyng, essential skills training for new managers and enhanced Leadership Programmes as well as formal courses, qualifications and external seminars.

All management programmes are designed around operational and strategic management and focus on quality, customer satisfaction and the competence and motivation of the whole team.

KCC offers eight management qualifications, through which delegates are required to apply the learning from the course to real workplace situations. Projects completed by delegates over a one year period were calculated to have benefited KCC to the value of £1,400,000. Each project is assessed and marked by an external consultant with feedback given to managers in every case.

The suite of development programmes for managers start with a management induction which clearly outlines their responsibilities and signposts a variety of modular and short courses to enhance their skills and knowledge. Over the past two years 2,500 delegates took part in essential skills programmes. Equality, diversity and health and safety are an integral part of every programme as is the ethos of value for money, environmental issues and measurement of customer satisfaction.

For senior management KCC offers an MPA or MBA programme in partnership with the Open University and supported internally. Several leadership programmes have been delivered over the last year, including the Power to Lead programme delivered in partnership with the Police. These programmes encourage participation from the private and public sector partners.

The KCC Centre for Qualifications has been recognised by the Chartered Management Institute as a centre of excellence and the range and quality of the programmes was commended by the recent IiP assessment.

Shuna Body took a Certificate in Management in 2006, she said:

“By applying the theory to work situations, made me critically analyse my past actions and reflect on my mistakes. I now find I am automatically assessing my actions, so not only applying what I have learnt but continuing the learning process.

“The great benefit of knowing some theory of management is that it has given me confidence. When dealing with more emotional and complicated situations that may arise this has kept me focused to study the facts and act appropriately with the same degree of fairness and respect.”
A dynamic leadership programme is transforming the way leaders across the county are able to manage and is a key investment in the future of Kent.

The Kent Leadership programme was the brainwave of KCC’s Chief Executive Peter Gilroy, aimed at enabling high powered leaders across the county to deal with the complexities of managing.

It is a change programme that provides a unique set of opportunities for senior leaders from all sectors to work together to design and deliver sustainable solutions to the benefit of the organisations, stakeholders and the wider communities they serve.

The 18-month programme sets a new benchmark in modern day management thinking. It is an exciting solution to the complexities and challenges facing the public, private and voluntary sectors.

Board members include partners from across the public, private, voluntary sector and KCC elected cabinet members.

Evaluation is yet to take place as the programme is ongoing but it is expected that the leaders taking part will be able to lead any organisation in Kent once they have completed the modules. The way they deal with daily issues will change and the Kent Leadership programme can only improve the way the board members do business.

Members study modules and do project work as part of the learning process, engaging commercial academic partners who have international recognition. This helps the board members, including KCC Chief Executive Peter Gilroy, look at local issues from a global perspective.

The programme is designed to help the board work with current issues, developing and progressing by connecting people, resources, technology and learning in a manner that is both credible and cutting-edge.

Kent Leadership programme is delivered by KCC’s Strategic Development Unit on behalf of the Kent Public Service Boards which include KCC, district councils, Kent and Medway NHS services, SEEDA, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, University of Kent, Job Centre Plus and the Learning and Skills Council.

Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive, Kent County Council:
“Those charged with setting strategic direction need to negotiate successful pathways through the complex and fluid landscape of ethical, environmental, social, technological, political and legal challenges to succeed. These fresh challenges demand leaders who are able to think and do things differently. Kent thrives in this reality and this programme is a central means of driving forward our shared successes in delivering excellence and innovation. As such, the Kent Leadership programme should be seen in terms of investment in the future of building strong businesses, communities and neighbourhoods.”
Kent TV is the UK’s first county council funded on-demand broadband television channel. It was launched on 21 September 2007 by Bob Geldof and by early December there had been more than 100,000 visits to the website.

This new website is a community channel for Kent, covering tourism, education, sports, history and many other areas and will strengthen the way KCC communicates with residents. It is aimed at everyone living and working in Kent and will also encourage tourists and businesses to visit and invest in Kent.

The new service is available 24 hours a day, seven days a week at www.KentTV.com and by December there were more than 300 films online and eight local production companies had been commissioned to help produce films.

There’s an area-based Kent Video Map and programmes about the county’s major tourist attractions, business news, and community events. It also features information about local public services, as well as covering issues such as bullying, social exclusion and health.

It has an independent news service and has the facility for the public to submit their own short films and have a say on issues that concern them.

An independent Kent TV Board of Governors has been appointed to monitor the channel’s performance, editorial content and ensure it represents good value for money for the people of Kent.

Bob Geldof, who has lived in Kent for more than 20 years, is co-founder of Ten Alps plc, the media company which won the contract to operate Kent TV on behalf of KCC.

Bob said: “It’s pretty cool; it’s very experimental and potentially very interesting.

“I think it’s very smart for whoever came up with this on the council and it’s fairly brave of the council to go ahead and give this the thumbs up.”

Kent Police Temporary Assistant Chief Constable Steve Harris said:
“The exciting opportunity that Kent TV represents for the county of Kent cannot be underestimated, this is a real innovation. I was pleased to be invited to attend the inaugural board meeting to be a part of this development. As the range of material develops on the site I think more and more people will be interested and see the number of users grow - I would urge people to use the site and recommend it to others.”
Kent is at the forefront of local authorities developing academies in order to increase the range and choice of schools across the county that meet local needs. Kent was the first local authority to act as a co-sponsor of many of its academies.

Kent County Council (KCC) first engaged with the Academies programme back in 2002 in the search for a range of school improvement tools to fundamentally transform teaching and learning in the secondary schools that were experiencing sustained underachievement. Since then Kent has led the way with its ground breaking Academies programme. The nine academies now open or being developed across the county, are supporting local communities with a massive capital investment that has thus far generated in excess of £250m to modernise school buildings and facilities for 21st Century learning needs. This investment is working to ensure that the academies transform the school experience, increase student motivation and performance and act as a catalyst for social and economic regeneration in disadvantaged Kent communities. More academies are currently being brokered with potential sponsors and discussed with the Department for Children, Schools and Families (DCSF).

Kent Academies represent a true partnership with pupils, the wider community, other public and charitable agencies and the business sector. KCC has developed partnerships with business, higher education and the charitable sectors, churches and prestigious independent schools to establish a number of state of the art, fit for purpose, all-ability, all-faith, secondary academies. Partners include Microsoft (UK) Ltd, Pfizer Pharmaceuticals, Roger de Haan Charitable Trust, Holidayextras, Hewlett Packard, Independent Schools including Dulwich College, Kings School Canterbury, Tonbridge School, The Diocese of Canterbury and University of Kent.

Ramsgate’s Marlowe Academy opened two years ago and passes in grades A*-C at GCSE level have more than doubled when compared with the performance in 2005 at the school it replaced. The release of grades for the latest academic year show that 40 per cent of pupils have achieved five grades A*-C. Just 10 years ago equivalent figures for The Ramsgate School stood at only one per cent, and even five years ago only four per cent.

Six academies opened in September 2007 and it is expected that they will emulate the Marlowe’s success.

Marlowe Academy Principal Ian Johnson said:

“I believe these results show that we have transformed our students’ attitude towards learning, and that we are now able to give them the life chances that they never previously had.”
Making a difference

Supporting People

The Kent Supporting People Programme funds providers who support people to keep a roof over their heads.

This support is provided in a variety of ways and has helped more than 20,000 people a year since its launch four years ago. The programme assists by helping with tenancy or occupancy agreements, managing debt, budgeting and applying for benefits. The support can help people to get on with their neighbours, develop life and social skills or set up home. Vulnerable people are enabled to resettle, stay safe at home, deal with agencies and take up education, training or employment.

Following a recent inspection the Audit Commission rated the programme in Kent as ‘Good’ with ‘Promising Prospects for Improvement’. The Supporting People Programme is monitored by the Communities and Local Government Department.

Service user involvement is a crucial element of the way Supporting People operates in Kent. A key Kent innovation has been to develop a syllabus (now nationally available and externally accredited) to equip service users with the skills to get involved in governance. Two of the service users who have taken this course are now indirectly employed by the Supporting People team as Service User Involvement Workers. They have been greeted very positively by service users who greatly appreciate being supported by their peers, who understand the experiences they have had and can relate directly to them.

The service user involvement workers are part of the Supporting People Programme’s ‘Expert Through Experience’ service user involvement and consultation programme. The objective is to actively involve and consult with service users on strategic and policy issues within the programme via a range of mechanisms.

“The response from people so far has been fantastic, and I look forward to meeting as many people as possible over the coming year.”
Tristan Hodson, Service User Involvement Worker.

“This type of work is a big change to what I am used to and I am enjoying making a real and positive difference to people’s lives.”
Will Myers, Service User Involvement Worker
Kent Adult Social Services (KASS) has developed a software platform that enables assessments for social care to be carried out online via the KCC website.

This service enables people to complete an assessment of their needs and find out immediately if they may be eligible for support from social services. It is aimed at adults who are finding it difficult to manage every day activities or for people who care for someone on a regular basis and want to find out what support KCC can provide for them as a carer.

By offering a self-assessment KCC is giving people the choice to assess their own needs or carry out an assessment on behalf of someone else. Some services that may be offered are equipment to help in the home, further assessment and support for carers.

KASS is currently working with Care Managers, Occupational Therapy staff, Sensory Disability staff, users and carers to create either a new or revised online assessment which covers more services and equipment and offers additional signposting to other organisations. This forms part of the ‘Active Lives for Adults’ programme, the modernisation program that will help KASS change the way services are provided, placing greater choice and control in the hands of the people who use them.

The ease of use and flexibility of Citizen Self Assessment Website (CSAW) allows KCC to make changes very quickly, without the need for a costly or lengthy development cycle. Whilst KCC may not change the actual services on the self assessment form very frequently, it can quickly add, delete or modify questions or answers. KCC has also been able to include extensive signposting to other services. For example, if someone is ineligible for a service, the website is able to point them towards alternatives or encourage them to call KCC for further assistance.

Standard web statistics are used to monitor site usage; the website has received an average of 1,497 page views per month during the last six months. The website has also been used by people living in Israel and Australia to refer relatives living in Kent.

The website runs an online survey to gather feedback from customers. When asked why they used the website, quotes received from customers include:

“I am on a lot of medication and can find when talking to someone difficult to remember. I could take my time online.”

“I use the internet regularly and find it efficient and speedy.”

“Time convenience - fitting in with caring, working etc.”

“Excellent website.”
KCC Legal Services has thrown off the traditional mantle of public sector lawyers. While faithful to the needs of its core corporate client, it has undergone one of the most dynamic and significant transformations within local authority legal circles by engineering major changes to the way it does business.

KCC Legal Services now operates as an in-house private practice, combining the efficiency and dynamism of the private sector with the service ethos of the public sector, focusing on outputs and outcomes that benefit the communities it serves. The number of lawyers within Legal Services has trebled in the past 10 years (from 22 to 65), and this has seen increasing levels of income generated year on year. For 2006/07 a new record sum of nearly £700k was achieved and income this year is set to exceed £800k.

KCC’s legal team played a pivotal role in supporting the service delivery of the largest local authority in the country; now it leads the field in terms of quality, customer service and marketing initiatives. Not only does it provide legal advice to a wide range of public sector organisations, but it goes well beyond the traditional remit of a local government legal team, acting as a consultant to numerous other local authorities in redesigning and modernising their legal departments, using the ‘Kent’ model as a guide. It was one of the first local authority legal teams to sell advice to outsiders and now has a turnover of £6m and more than 150 public sector clients, leaving it well placed to match and often exceed whatever the private sector can offer.

Increasingly, the role of KCC Legal Services is not just to give advice but to help shape and deliver some of the most radical and visionary projects in the history of Kent County Council.

A combination of innovation, determination and a willingness to work in partnership has allowed KCC to deliver real and lasting benefits to the communities it serves.

KCC Legal Services is driven by an unstoppable desire to use those abilities to make a real difference to the lives of the people of Kent.

“Kent County Council has demonstrated how legal advice played a crucial part in political decisions.”
‘The Lawyer’ publication
The Kent Card is an innovative new payment method from KCC, which enables service users to have greater control over their own lives and make their own lifestyle choices.

Following a social services assessment, service users will be offered cash, known as a Direct Payment, as an alternative to having services provided for them. This allows them to determine for themselves when they get assistance, how and from whom.

It gives users increased flexibility when they need support at short notice – they can call several agencies and get the help they need. If they are not satisfied with an agency they can arrange an alternative independently of Kent Adult Social Services.

KCC has introduced the Kent Card to enable payments to be made directly to individuals without the need for a bank account or complicated record keeping. KCC load the card regularly with the amount agreed to meet the service user’s need. The service user’s assessed contribution or any money they may wish to use to pay for help and support can also be loaded onto the card.

Set-up of the card is easier than Direct Payments, as there is no need for new accounts to be opened and paperwork is minimal. Once ongoing, auditing of expenditure is much less complicated than with Direct Payments.

There are currently 60 people using the Kent Card.

KCC recognise that a dedicated resource is needed to help achieve the target figure of 400 by end of March 2008. Four project officers have therefore been recruited to work with providers, KCC officers and Direct Payment users over a six month period to increase uptake. As with any new product buy in from staff and users is slow, it takes time for people to embrace a new initiative and see the real benefits a product can bring. KCC is confident that when the project officers take up their posts in January numbers of cardholders will increase significantly.
“Don’t be Harmed, Be Alarmed” promotes personal safety awareness by circulating information and making personal attack alarms readily available to young people, along with printed information identifying websites offering safety advice on various aspects of young people’s lives.

The idea for this campaign originated from a Kent Youth County Council (KYCC) member sharing with her fellow youth county councillors her feelings about safety issues in her area and proposing that young people could be equipped with personal safety alarms to increase feelings of personal safety. With the KYCC’s full support, she conducted research and found that personal attack alarms cost at least £10 each and were beyond the reach of many young people.

After investigation, they found they could be bought much cheaper in bulk and sold on to young people for as little as £2.50. A survey about young people’s feelings on safety was undertaken at the Kent County Show and the results presented to KCC Cabinet Members and the Chief Constable of Kent in October 2004. A KCC Cabinet Member consequently offered £2,000 to pilot the scheme which bought a supply of alarms for schools in the Swale area. To date over 25,000 alarms have been distributed throughout the county.

The alarms themselves are only part of the story. KYCC members joined with Medway Youth Parliament and Kent Safe Schools to form the Kent and Medway Young People’s Safety Forum, supported and funded by Kent Youth Service, Medway Youth Service, Kent Police and Kent Fire and Rescue Service. The group has developed an information leaflet with advice and guidance on how to stay safe in many different arenas that young people find themselves in. A website for the Kent and Medway Young People’s Safety Forum has also been developed.

In May 2006, KYCC became one of only five winners of the coveted Deutsche Bank Spotlight National Awards, designed to recognise young campaigners who have spoken up and taken constructive action about something they feel should be improved, changed or created in their communities.

While the majority of alarms have gone to young people, people of all ages have benefited from the campaign including elderly residents of sheltered housing projects.
Contact Kent really does put customers first.

It’s not only a contact centre for KCC – a place for the public to access information about its services – but also works in partnership to provide other top quality contact services throughout the South East.

Its primary objective is to enable KCC to make its services more accessible, convenient, responsive and cost effective for the people of Kent. It provides round the clock information from ‘real’ people and is the first point of contact to KCC services. Whether a caller needs to register a birth or death, enrol for Adult Education or report a pot hole, Contact Kent can help.

Since April 2004, Contact Kent has ensured that KCC’s customers have access to its services when it is convenient for them by operating a 24/7 service from a state-of-the-art, 150 seat contact centre based in central Maidstone.

KCC believes each call is unique and, therefore, requires a unique response. In order to meet customers’ needs, contacts are handled not only by telephone but also by post and increasingly via e-mail and SMS text.

In the future, Contact Kent will continue to strengthen its links with service units across KCC, providing valuable support and enhancing the customer experience. This more joined up approach to service delivery will result in efficient and cost effective service delivery, realising savings through economies of scale.

Contact Kent works in partnership with service units across KCC and provides an out of hours service for some local district and borough councils. It also runs Consumer Direct South East in partnership with the 19 Trading Standards authorities in the Government Office for the South East (GOSE) area and the Office of Fair Trading - supporting eight million consumers.

In September 2006 Contact Kent was benchmarked against other council contact centres in Kent and Medway and it achieved the highest score for the quality of its call handling. It’s a busy place - in 2006, the centre handled over 1.3 million calls, 84 per cent of them answered within 20 seconds. It also handled 95,000 emails. It is anticipated that Contact Kent will receive and deal with nearly two million calls in 2007.
Active Lives is KCC’s 10 year vision for Adult Social Care in Kent. Kent Social Services was one of the first to set out a vision in this way, in 2000, and the latest version (2007) has been endorsed by the Kent Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), the 12 district councils, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and the voluntary sector.

In developing the original Active Lives, KCC had consulted service users and now wanted to take this a step further and fully involve the public. KCC organised a major campaign to engage people through a range of activities, which included:

- Workshops with over 200 disabled people.
- A major survey at the Kent County Show – over 300 people participated in this. The survey was also available online and received a further 200 responses. At one point the Active Lives web page was the second most popular one within Kent Adult Social Services (KASS).
- Presentations to numerous local groups including District Partnership Groups for people with learning disabilities and District Older People Forums. These groups ranged from 20 to 50 people.
- Workshops involving partners (PCT, Maidstone Health Trust) across Kent and with specific client groups (people with learning disabilities, mental health problems, etc). At each of these workshops there were at least 50 people who were users of KCC services.
- Workshops with carers – carers were part of many of the other groups mentioned however a specific workshop reached about 35 carers.

- Drafted and finalised by an Editorial Board of members of the public. Self selected – if anyone was interested they were part of the Editorial Board.

There were a small group of 10 people who met physically – as well as virtual input from other people and comments from user/disabled organisations such as Centre for Independent Living Kent.

The final version was agreed and approved by the Editorial Board before being presented to management team and Members.

KCC had numerous comments from people and the one below is typical of these:

“We would like to record our appreciation of your efforts to collect the views of those affected by Active Lives and who rely on the services provided by KCC. Thank you for conducting the review as an effective consultation and reflecting our views and needs in the finished document.

“This is especially rewarding in these days when ‘consultation’ often means just rubber stamping a decision already taken.”
Qualifications and skills are very important for effective care and support of vulnerable residents. KCC also recognises that the relationships that staff have with clients and their carers can be equally as important.

KCC seeks to involve clients and carers in their recruitment of new staff to get their perspective on candidates and for them to test for themselves that the candidates have the necessary qualities of care, empathy and understanding.

Staff are encouraged to create a bank of clients and carers who can be called upon as required. It is the responsibility of the recruiting manager to ensure that the service users and carers involved understand what is expected of them. An information pack has been developed and covers the key elements of KCC’s recruitment and selection processes.

When recruiting for a new post, KCC staff can then ask users if they would like to be involved. If they agree they are involved throughout the recruitment process, including short-listing candidates, writing interview questions and sitting on the interview panel.

This increases the involvement of people and empowers them to participate in local decision making and the delivery of services, which make a difference to their lives. Many of the those who have been involved have commented on how it has made them feel ‘valued by’ and ‘involved in’ the work of the directorate.

Questionnaires have been developed to gather feedback on the process from all parties involved. Those involved in these processes to date have given positive feedback on their experience.

Many teams now involve service users and carers in their recruitment processes and this is expected to increase once the information pack is finalised and made available. Users, carers and the public have been involved in the recruitment of a wide range of posts from care workers and care managers through to directors. For example last year three director posts and the head of policy all had user and public involved in the recruitment.

A comment from a District Manager who involved carers:

“They felt it was crucial to involve them in such processes …For our part it was very useful to hear from the horse’s mouth what the key concerns were of carers in such a situation.”
SMILE Centres aim to support schools that teach pupils with special needs within the mainstream setting by offering advice, resources and training. The National Strategies Team has identified Kent as a Local Authority Hub of Effective Practice – one of only 18 nationally, which includes acknowledgement of provision for SEN via Smile Centres.

The current SMILE centre attached to the Ifield school in Gravesend, provides outreach for 40 Gravesham schools. It is committed to supporting the inclusion process in Gravesham schools and being a place where there can be a two-way flow of knowledge and expertise between special and mainstream schools. Smile aims to be a welcoming centre where schools can be helped to explore, discover and develop their role as providers of high quality education for all children, regardless of their need.

The centre focuses on:
- Raising awareness of the status of Special Educational Needs in schools and among staff
- Providing a professional environment where staff from mainstream and special schools can network
- Offering advice, training and high quality resources to schools
- Sharing good practice with schools by example

A wide range of training is available including an extensive training programme for continuing professional development in Additional Educational Needs (AEN) by experienced staff who work collaboratively with local schools. Joint training with other professionals is undertaken including Specialist Teaching Service, Speech and Language Therapies and Educational Psychology. The centre can also offer bespoke training for individuals, small groups and the whole school to address the specific needs of pupils and challenging behaviour.

Resources include a lending library, SMILEY boxes – resource packs to support a particular subject of the curriculum, family support, conference and meeting facilities and a training centre for Continuing Professional Development (CPD) for teachers and teacher assistants.

The SMILE Centre at Ifield reports that requests are made almost on a daily basis from local schools for help, advice and assistance for various needs. It is apparent that many schools have limited multi-sensory resources; these are often expensive, and may only be useful to a small number of children. The SMILE Centre is able to lend these to schools and due to demand, further programmes and games to promote good behaviour and other social skills are being purchased.

KCC aims to support special schools to provide outreach programmes and is committed to implementing SMILE Centres across the county attached to district special schools.
The Kent Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme is the largest in the UK, with an anticipated capital value of £1.8bn. Its main aim is to deepen and broaden school engagement in the BSF design process and to design transformational learning environments.

The scale and complexity of the Kent programme requires innovative management solutions to ensure that sufficient pace is maintained and that sensible commercial positions are established.

At the strategic level, Kent was the first authority nationally to establish a multi Local Education Partnership (LEP) procurement solution. Breaking the programme down into three sub-procurements mitigates the risk associated with partnering with a single contractor on such a large transaction, whilst also maintaining the competitive advantages that flow from going to market with a comparatively larger lot size.

Kent is also the first wave three authority to successfully complete a BSF procurement having completed the competitive dialogue process in 15 months – considerably faster than any other authority to date.

Finally, Kent successfully enlarged the scope of its wave three project from eight schools to 12 – effectively delivering more new schools faster than the national programme had anticipated.

All of the above led Andrew Robertson, former Deputy Chief Executive of Partnerships for Schools to publicly claim that “Kent is the first true BSF scheme”.

The preferred bidder on Kent LEP1 programme has been announced as Land Securities Trillium / Northgate Information Solutions.

Up to 18 months before they are due to go into construction the BSF team facilitate Secondary Transformation Team engagement with BSF schools. This ensures that adequate time is spent developing plans and clear briefs for designers to work to and provides adequate time for schools to involve their own wider stakeholder groups. The team has been recognized as providing best practice by Partnerships for Schools.

The team has also developed a new vocabulary to support the design and development of transformational learning environments. The traditional school design vocabulary is limiting because it is based on classrooms, corridors, staff rooms, science labs, subjects, room sizes etc. These concepts are disconnected from Kent’s educational vision which emphasizes highly personalised, flexible approaches to learning.

The Kent BSF Team has therefore focused on identifying “learning patterns” in schools. This approach allows for a high degree of personalization to occur within schools and also allows for real flexibility.

In addition to school specific education visions, Kent schools also collaborate to produce area-wide visions that demonstrate how all schools in an area will use their BSF investment to secure improved outcomes for all learners and families. Again this was a national first and has been commended by Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF).
21 Parish Portal

More than 240 parish and town councils in Kent have taken up the county council’s offer of a free website to support their valuable work.

The scheme was introduced to help local communities get more involved in grass roots democracy. The website, domain name, email and technical support is provided free of charge and the package also includes free training for parish and town councils in how to update the site and keep it running smoothly.

They feature local news and information and enable parishes to gather the opinions of local residents on important issues.

The portal was designed by the county council in partnership with the Kent Association of Parish Councils and parish representatives. The facility is being continually developed, with new features added on a regular basis.

With more than 60 per cent of the UK now internet users, online services are an essential part of what KCC has to offer.

Webmaster for Linton Parish Council, near Maidstone, Jerry Whitmarsh said:

“This website is managed and run directly by a Linton Parish Councillor, as a resource for Linton residents, visitors and all others with an interest in our beautiful village. However the server it runs on, as well as the ‘framework’, the layout, the look and feel of the site, the way the pages interconnect, how the new pages are loaded and so forth are provided by Kent County Council.

“They make no charge for this service, which is offered to all the parishes in Kent. We are grateful to them for it and it is likely that Linton would not have a website without their assistance. Certainly, not one that is free to operate!”
Delivering better public services to Kent residents increasingly relies upon the public authorities in the county working in partnership and making the best use of technology.

Kent Connects – the lead technology partnership for Kent and Medway, set up in 2002 – aims to enable the transformation of public services through technology.

Its partners include KCC, Medway Council, district councils, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent Police. It is funded by its partner authorities and other sources such as Interreg.

Kent Connects offers its partners a single, countywide IT infrastructure (both technology and people) to enable them to join up and share their service delivery mechanisms securely and cost effectively.

They also provide a secure website where partners can hold online discussions and share documents.

With IT as the backbone of most public services, KCC recognises that technology is one of the keys to successful and efficient public services. KCC is leading on a project with Kent Connects to provide a single public service network for Kent. Significant service improvements are expected once the network is in place from March 2009.

KCC is involved in many Kent Connects projects, including:

**Collaborative call centre** – Kent Connects commissioned a feasibility study looking at customer services issues, technology and telephony and data exchange and integration that will inform the Pan Kent Contact Centre Programme.

**Voice Over IP (VOIP)** – Kent Connects is undertaking research into technology issues with VOIP, instead of each authority undertaking their own.

**National Land and Property Gazetteer** – Kent Connects is leading on a project to give partner authorities access to a single database of National Land and Property Gazetteer data. The project has attracted the attention of the IDeA (Improvement and Development Agency) which could mean the project expands to include more than 500 authorities.
A NEW visual arts centre, Turner Contemporary, will open in Margate in 2010.

Turner Contemporary is central to the plans to regenerate Margate and Thanet, which contain amongst the highest levels of social deprivation in the South East. Working in partnership with Thanet District Council, Arts Council England and South East England Development Agency, this model of culture-led regeneration will lead to the transformation of the entire eastern seafront of Margate, in addition to providing a gallery of international standing.

The regeneration impacts will include a major private sector led development on an adjoining site, a revitalised Cultural Quarter in the Old Town, significant redesign of the public realm, major job creation and stronger confidence to invest. The overall effect is expected to enable Margate to redefine its role and cultural activities, contribute to the regeneration of the local economy, open up the waterfront area from the Harbour Arm to the Lido and strengthen Kent’s cultural offer.

Designed by David Chipperfield Architects Limited, the gallery celebrates the area’s close connection with the artist, JMW Turner, a regular visitor to Margate and the north Kent coast. Turner was drawn to Margate by the unique quality of light, leading him to remark that “the skies over Thanet are the loveliest in all Europe”. David Chipperfield, winner of the 2007 RIBA Stirling Prize for Architecture, has a prestigious track record and Turner Contemporary will be one of only a handful of his public buildings in the UK.

The two-storey building will have a series of naturally lit, beautifully proportioned galleries, an education suite, café and shop. It will offer visitors unsurpassed opportunities to see first class exhibitions of historical and contemporary art and to spend time in a contemporary building in which light and space play an important role. A balcony overlooking the ground floor gallery will provide stunning views out to sea.

A studio will be available for a wide range of educational purposes and will complement a range of activities that take place in the multifunctional space. The inclusion of a young person’s gallery curated by a group of young people will demonstrate Turner Contemporary’s commitment to developing skills and training.

David Chipperfield, Architect:
“We have developed the design following the public meeting in June to take maximum advantage of such a dramatic setting with its extraordinary views. Our building will look out to the sea, connect itself to the town and capture the same unique light that inspired Turner.”
The Better Homes Active Lives Housing Private Finance Initiative is a multi-million pound project which will be one of the largest of its type in the country.

The contract was signed in October 2007 for a £72 million project to build stunning modern apartments for older and disabled people in Kent.

After 12 months of negotiations, Housing 21, a major national provider of housing, care and support services for older people signed a deal for a partnership between Kent County Council and 10 district and borough councils in the county to build and run a total of 340 apartments. Work will start on 275 extra care apartments for older people with support available 24 hours a day if necessary, 58 supported flats for people with a learning disability and seven for people with mental health problems.

The extra care apartments will provide a genuine alternative to residential care, giving older people access to as much support as if they were in a care home so that they can remain independent, even if they become frail, disabled or confused. Support for people with a learning disability or for people with mental health needs will focus on assisting them to live as independently as possible.

The entire £72 million building costs will be met by PFI credits from central Government. It is anticipated that all the apartments will be finished and ready to move into, or already in use, by 2010.

Brendan Ryan, Head of Community Services, Thanet District Council said:

“Thanet is one of the most disadvantaged areas in the South East with a disproportionate number of vulnerable and elderly residents requiring specialist housing. We desperately need more specialist accommodation for a whole range of client groups.

“However developing new supported housing for vulnerable people has become increasingly difficult in recent years with the need to align site acquisition, capital funding with a commitment to future revenue funding.

“The Better Homes Active Lives Project has delivered new supported housing on a scale that a district council working alone could never achieve. Undertaking PFI schemes of this complexity is beyond the capacity and resources of councils like Thanet.

“KCC are to be commended for having the vision for a project on this scale and making it happen. The expertise and professionalism of the KCC team has made the process relatively straightforward for smaller councils like Thanet and while there have been some very difficult points in the project, the spirit of true partnership has prevailed to ensure that solutions have been found.

“Everyone involved in Better Homes Active Lives has learnt a lot about partnership working in complex projects. We have transferred this learning to other partnership projects including the Kent wide choice based lettings project that is being led by Thanet.”
Within Kent there are an estimated 60,341 long-term empty properties.

In a bid to get these properties back in the market as homes, KCC has developed the East Kent Empty Property Initiative, together with partners including district councils.

Vacant commercial properties add to these empty homes, discouraging investment in the immediate neighbourhood, and acting as a magnet for crime including arson and vandalism.

The East Kent Empty Property Initiative aims to reduce the number of long term empty properties in East Kent. Launched in April 2005, the project runs for three years.

The main target for the East Kent Empty Property Initiative (EKEPI) has been to return to use 372 long-term vacant properties, which would represent a doubling in numbers previously achieved by the partner district councils. Although the three years is not yet completed, the 372 target has already been reached.

The EKEPI involves close partnership working between the county and the districts with a number of different approaches to increase the return to use of empty properties. Much of the work to identify and negotiate with owners, and if necessary proceed with enforcement action, is undertaken at the district level. However, the county provides financial support, including loans for owners and developers to renovate their properties, and in-kind support, for example legal expertise for the district if they are involved in enforcement action. The county also has employed a communications company to raise the profile of the initiative with owners of empty homes. Kent County Council originally committed £5 million to support this range of approaches, however this has been revised downwards to reflect the actual expenditure requirements.

Ambitious but achievable targets have been set to extend the initiative and by 2009/10, it is anticipated that a further 650 homes are to have been targeted.

Whilst the primary aim for the EKEPI has been to increase the number of empty properties returned to use, the following additional benefits have also been identified: -

- Regeneration of run-down urban areas.
- Support for Planning Policy Statement 3.
- Decent (quality) homes.
- Stimulate housing markets.
Making a difference

26 Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope

The Sevenoaks Kaleidoscope project transformed the town’s 1960s library, museum and art gallery, into a modern, vibrant facility for the 21st Century.

The plans for the refurbishment of the old building into the new Kaleidoscope were developed by Clay Architects Ltd. Their challenge was to create a seamless and welcoming community space. Customers are encouraged into the Kaleidoscope by the striking new entrances, highly visible art works and the modern and attractive interior. An activity space which doubles as a café, complements the library, museum and gallery spaces, allowing customers to do all the things that they want to do in the building. Events and activities like the recent Beatles programme, combine music, art, author talks, and opportunities to handle museums artefacts, to help increase understanding of Sevenoaks’ place in the story of Kent.

A key feature of the Kaleidoscope is the integration of library, art and museum content throughout the building. The core museum collection is housed on the second floor but museum objects and art installations are displayed throughout the library to emphasise a shared mission to bring quality of life and sense of place to Sevenoaks residents through the services on offer. The layout is supported by the determination of staff to encourage customers to experience all that the building has to offer, making using the Kaleidoscope a journey of discovery.

Funded by a grant of £995,000 from the Heritage Lottery Fund (HLF), the total cost of the work was around £2.26 million.

KCC secured a range of partners for the project including Arts Council England, Sevenoaks District and Sevenoaks Town Councils. The Kaleidoscope reopened its doors in December 2006 stocked with more than £160,000 worth of new books, DVDs and CDs. Now the third busiest library in the county, more than 4,500 new borrowers registered at the library this year.

Staff at Kaleidoscope were presented with the Lloyds TSB Inclusion Award for Sevenoaks District for their partnership work with a local community group for people with disabilities.

The building recently was awarded a runner’s up prize at the Kent Design Awards held in November in the Renovated Buildings category.

Increased usage is already being demonstrated:-
Book issues increased by 17 per cent for the first six months of operation
Children’s book issues up 47.8 per cent for the same period.
Kent Thameside is one of the two principal hubs for development identified for the Thames Gateway area, the largest housing development in Europe, which includes the Dartford East and West Clusters. The scale of these major housing developments will provide a unique opportunity to introduce a pattern of higher density living, changing the profile of intakes within secondary schools. This will mean developing schools in the appropriate locations using the best urban design principles to create learning communities, integrated with other facilities such as youth centres, libraries, children’s centres, sports facilities, health and social services provision.

The Dartford campus sited within this development began as an urgent need to provide new classroom facilities for a girls secondary school. The examination of options identified that KCC needed to produce and implement a complete campus master plan to meet the needs of the bigger strategic community development. Whilst this slowed down the initial delivery of the benefits to the identified school it has now become a hugely ambitious, innovative project.

The development will transform a 264 acre brownfield site into a dynamic new community for the information age.

The new campus will provide: one new secondary school and one with greatly improved facilities, a new privately managed nursery, a new primary school, new Adult Education facilities, plans for improved youth service provision and greatly improved sporting facilities available to both the schools and the community including an artificial pitch.

The scheme has been successful in bringing together a number of funding schemes including a strong working relationship with a house-builder who has worked with KCC to maximise both the benefit to the campus whilst at the same time meeting the needs of the district council.

The current users in the new facilities are extremely pleased with the results to date and believe that it has led to and will continue to lead to an enhanced improvement in teaching and learning. Reaction from the pupils has been very favourable.

The project began in 2004 and is on track to be completed by November 2008.

The head of the girls secondary which started off the project said:
“… whilst there were times when I thought the scheme was too ambitious I am so pleased that the authority persevered as the end result is going to exceed our expectations.”
Kent County Council has taken a close look at the money it has spent on capital school projects to help it spend its money better in the future.

KCC’s Property Group has carried out a value-for-money appraisal on all significant new build and refurbished projects undertaken over the last four years in a bid to ensure budgeting and forecasting for building or refurbishing school projects will be more accurate in the future.

A database system has been created which identifies projects, the consultants and contractors and a simple analysis of cost per square metre. This is a simple analysis and can be skewed by external work elements, exceptional costs associated with individual projects and quality standards therefore it cannot be relied upon as being totally subjective.

However, by looking at the costs involved in existing projects, it will be easier to plan future developments.

Property Group is seeking to drive a best value benchmarking initiative in partnership with the South East Centre of Excellence that will provide some definitive benchmarks and performance indicators. These will be used to demonstrate that KCC is achieving good value for money and best value on its capital works programme.

This will need to be a very detailed investigation in order to be subjective and will need to take account of local variations, external works, sustainability and quality standards. KCC is seeking funding from the South East Centre for Excellence to support this initiative and it is anticipated KCC will be the lead authority in the South East.

Between 2003 and 2007 there have been a total of 70 new build projects completed. The average cost was £1,595 per square metre.

Between 2003 and 2007 there were 35 major refurbishment projects at schools. The average cost was £1,425 per square metre.
Kent County Council is a significant force in the property market of Kent, owning as it does a large and complex portfolio of 1,200 properties with an existing use value of £1.4bn and annual running costs of over £40m.

The portfolio includes several hundred schools, libraries, care homes, highways land etc. as well as an office estate comprising over half a million square feet of mixed tenure accommodation in 28 buildings throughout the county.

Property Group sits within the Chief Executive’s department and is responsible for the efficient management of KCC’s property assets across Kent and for delivering an extensive range of property related professional services.

Property Group created the Property Enterprise Fund in 2006 as an acquisitions and investment vehicle designed to facilitate the switching out of under-performing property assets into better performing, wealth creating property assets, thus following best asset management principles, optimising revenue expenditure on property.

The current principal focus is on identifying and disposing of land and property assets which the council no longer needs for efficient operational purposes. The proceeds are transferred into the Property Enterprise Fund. The ambitious target is to achieve £40m in capital receipts from sales of under-used and surplus property assets over the next two to three years. To date in this financial year 72 pieces of land and property have been sold to a value of £6,116,998. The total receipts since the establishment of the fund are almost £10 million.

Reinvestment has been made in turn in the Thanet Relief Road and the purchase of Manston Business Park. In June 2006, the county council acquired 27 hectares of land at Manston Park, Thanet, also known as the Kent International Business Park, from the administrators of Planestation plc. This action reflected the opportunities which the site offers in terms of regeneration and economic return on KCC’s investment as well as the significant public sector investment in establishing the site in the past decade. Manston Park was the largest of three sites identified in the mid 1990s as having a key role to play in addressing the economic development and employment issues prevalent in Thanet.

KCC took the opportunity to enter into a joint venture vehicle with Thanet District Council to take advantage of significant opportunities in terms of regenerating Thanet and demonstrating the Kent Commitment, bearing fruit and enhanced two tier working in practice.
Making a difference

EuroKent/Manston Business Park

Creating jobs for local people and attracting companies to move into one of Kent’s most deprived areas are the reasons behind a unique joint venture.

Kent County Council and Thanet District Council have established the first property related collaboration between a county and a district. This innovative joint venture partnership seeks to stimulate the regeneration of Thanet and the wider east Kent economy by jointly developing and marketing their pooled property interests and creating an environment which will attract high quality companies and jobs in a phased and co-ordinated manner.

Maximising the potential of the combined sites will create a strong economic development catalyst for this economically deprived part of the county. Manston Park, in a prime position alongside Manston International Airport and having been under-developed for a number of years until KCC’s purchase in 2006, is a prime site for business use where a number of major companies already operate. EuroKent is a strategic site between the retail and leisure hub to the north at Westwood Cross and the new Marlowe Academy School and deprived communities to the south where the most appropriate balance between commercial and residential uses is now being explored.

Appropriate provision of utilities is being assessed and provided at both sites through the East Kent Spatial Development Company (EKSDC) to enable development and shared costs for end users. (KCC is a founder member of the EKSDC specifically established to forward fund infrastructure provision thus unlocking development site potential). Initial work is already under way on site to prepare the ground for development. A vital new access road for EuroKent costing £5million plus is due for completion in autumn 2008.

The initial masterplan work which promoted the need for co-ordinated planning and joint promotion of the two sites is complete, and a small dedicated implementation team now in place. Advisers are engaged to prepare planning, marketing and development partnering strategies.

The joint venture company is a true partnership with equal representation and assets committed to the joint venture. It will steer the development of the two sites within the broader context of emerging economic regeneration opportunities in East Kent including development at the airport, potential major inward investment in the area by Chinamex, the off-shore wind farm potential and the Port of Ramsgate’s role in the construction and maintenance.

KCC is working on a number of other projects in Thanet to boost the area. These include the major art gallery for Turner Contemporary, a £17.4million development on Margate seafront, and the East Kent Access Road (phase 2 costing around £65m) will be built to the south of Manston to ease congestion and encourage further investment.

30
LASER is a group of local authorities which combine buying power to get the best possible price for gas, oil and electricity.

Set up by KCC 10 years ago, it is now the largest local authority energy buyer in the UK and involves 80 local authorities including borough, district and county councils, most of the London boroughs, universities, Transport for London and the London Underground. In addition over 2000 individual schools and charitable/voluntary organisations also benefit.

By joining together, these authorities are able to buy power more efficiently and cost-effectively, resulting in savings to all the stakeholders, most importantly the individual council tax payer at the end of the chain.

KCC employs staff who monitor the power industry and market to ensure they strike, like stockbrokers, at the exact time that the price is right. The cost of these staff is offset by the administration fee paid by the authorities which are part of LASER.

The local authorities in the consortium can pass the savings they make by buying power cheaper straight on to their customers. As well as saving money for the tax payer, KCC has also helped other authorities save money by undertaking the full administration and billing function, reducing the need for the authorities to have their own staff in post doing the same job.

Software has now been developed which monitors power use electronically, making the payment of bills much easier as well as cheaper.

Kevin Harlock, Director of KCC’s Commercial Services, said: “As well as saving money we have been able to foster excellent relationships with the energy suppliers to ensure we get the best possible price at any time. We are seen as such an important buyer that we also give advice to the Energy Minister.”

“I have received a number of compliments about the customer service received which is in stark contrast to the previous comments about our previous supplier. Thanks.”
One of Kent’s country parks has an award winning visitor centre which is encouraging even more people to visit.

Shorne Wood Country Park Visitor Centre is an amazing example of sustainable building.

Constructed primarily with timber from local woodlands, the centre generates much of its own energy from wind, solar power and sustainable wood fuel and also harvests rainwater.

There are live LCD displays inside the centre showing the energy and water being used and generated at any one time, and the centre is available to hire for meetings, enabling local businesses, schools and other groups to get together in a sustainable way.

The centre opened in 2006 and was visited by Climate Change Minister Joan Ruddock in the summer of 2007. It was shortlisted for the Kent Design Awards in 2007.

One of KCC’s Towards 2010 targets is to ensure new KCC buildings set an example by delivering the best possible standards of construction, applying a pragmatic approach to sustainability using energy-efficient, robust and built-to-last materials. Another target is to reduce the impact of KCC’s buildings and vehicles on the environment, including trialling the use of bio-fuels and other new technologies. Shorne Wood Country Park Visitor Centre is one way KCC is fulfilling these objectives.

Development of the centre was led by KCC and received significant funding from the Government’s Thames Gateway programme.

Cabinet Member Keith Ferrin:

“Shorne Wood is KCC’s most popular country park with a quarter of a million visitors annually. Its award-winning visitor centre is a wonderful attraction which showcases several examples of the actions we are taking to tackle climate change in Kent.”
KCC has changed the way it pays suppliers of care management services, using purchase card technology, through Royal Bank of Scotland’s (RBS) transactional data matching system (TDM).

KCC pays an estimated £40 million per year through 12 payments to RBS, instead of processing 30,000 individual transactions manually. This has resulted in the achievement of £700,000 of efficiency gains in social care administration.

The county council wants to empower its residents, particularly those receiving care, to make their own decisions about the services they receive and exercise the freedom of consumer choice.

To enable this vision to become a reality certain ‘tools’ are required which allow choice and control to be achieved.

KCC has more than 60 suppliers providing services to 36,000 adults living at home including 22,000 elderly people and those with mental and physical disabilities.

TDM is an outsourced, automated payment and data matching solution that uses an organisation’s existing accounting and ordering systems, and provides completely automated payment and data reconciliation, without reducing management control.

It does not require plastic cards but works by electronically reconciling buyers’ order details to a virtual Government Procurement Card visa payment that is generated automatically, and then delivers electronic files to the buyer’s finance systems to automate cost allocation.

TDM is an e-commerce solution which has been implemented to manage invoices from and payments to, providers of domiciliary care.

Oliver Mills, Strategic Director, Social Services said: “Given the ever increasing need for support, arising from an ageing population, there is no room for our processes to be ascumbersome as they were. We needed to reduce bureaucracy and back office procedures and improve levels of control and checking, in order to function efficiently and cater for the increased demands on our services.

“We purchase over 2.5 million hours of care each year and the number of paper invoices would sometimes be as high as 25,000. TDM saves on crucial administration time and allows us to cut out bureaucracy - eliminating costly and time consuming manual procedures, and eliminating any risk of human error or fraud.

“The way in which TDM works is very transparent which means that there is less need to audit retrospectively. Overall, we are incredibly pleased!”

Kevin Boyle from The Royal Bank of Scotland comments on the project: “At Royal Bank Commercial Cards, we are prepared to invest resource and time to provide maximum value to our customers. With Purchasing Card Consultancy Limited we developed a care services solution for KCC and the result is a fully automated system for care services – the only one in the UK. It is estimated that the system will process around £30 million worth of care payments during its first 12 months, making it one of the largest GPC Visa programmes in the UK. It’s a great example of Government and private enterprise co-operating to improve efficiency in the public sector and we are proud to be a part of it.”
Young people in 20 of Kent’s secondary schools are benefiting from the input of Community Youth Tutors.

Employed within Kent Youth Service, these school-based youth workers are deployed in the schools to improve the learning environment for pupils, often developing out of school clubs and activities that improve the quality of life for young people.

The schools have been carefully chosen and are in areas where there are high levels of deprivation or poor results. Already the schools involved in the programme are noticing a difference in their pupils who are more motivated and keeping out of trouble. The school is becoming a more attractive place for them, thanks to the Community Youth Tutors.

These tutors spend around 40 per cent of their work time in school during normal school hours, developing and delivering lessons such as Personal Health and Social Education (PHSE) and Citizenship. Some run the school council or have timetabled time with pupils who are truanting or who face exclusion. The rest of their working day is spent in school after normal learning hours. After school programmes are developed which interest the pupils and give them something constructive to do out of school hours. Sports, IT and drama clubs are proving popular distractions which help these young people have a better relationship with their school.

In the evenings, many of the Community Youth Tutors work with a small team of part-time colleagues to provide a youth club for young people in the local area, or operate as detached youth workers by delivering street-based youth work. Outside of term time operation, the Community Youth Tutor will also work closely with their Youth Service colleagues to offer an extensive programme of holiday activities, which frequently includes residential trips and adventurous activities.

The Community Youth Tutors are a popular addition to the school, having a formal role in the daytime classroom setting, and more of an informal relationship with young people out of school hours and is one way that KCC recognises the importance of informal education.

A recent review (summer 2007) showed the 20 Community Youth Tutors have a high profile in the schools and are respected and valued by the young people who see them as someone to trust and go to.

It showed schools want more of their time and in one special school, the work of the tutor was complimented in a recent Ofsted report of the school – particularly in relation to the contribution made to the PSHE work of the school.

A headteacher: “He brings specialist provision into the college which richly benefits the students. The provision enables us to offer an alternative curriculum option which benefits students who cannot cope with the traditional academic curriculum. This in itself reduces exclusions, improves the behaviour and attitude of students involved, helps them to gain a sense of achievement and self-confidence which in itself offsets or minimise disaffection and ultimately improves examination success and attendance.”
Locate in Kent

Funded, supported and established in 1997 by KCC, Locate in Kent is KCC’s countywide inward investment agency. It offers free impartial and confidential advice to companies looking to relocate in Kent and Medway.

Over the last 10 years Locate in Kent has advised 468 companies in the UK and overseas to relocate or expand in the county.

The agency has provided assistance to a variety of global names in numerous business sectors including Abbott Laboratories, Lloyd’s of London, The Woolwich, Hochiki, Genzyme and The Telegraph Group. Its work has led to the take-up of around 5m sq ft of commercial property space in the county and has created more than 20,200 direct jobs.

Its services include advice and guidance on available property, access to its online commercial property database which covers the whole of Kent and Medway, plus ready-made business networks to tap into an aftercare service to assist businesses with their integration, development and growth in the county. The agency also offers companies customised research data to support a location decision including information on rent levels, demographics and salary costs. The company can also provide free grants advice and assistance through the South East Grant Advisory Service (Se-gas).

One of the companies the agency assisted in 2007 was US-owned Solace Pharmaceuticals. Alex Leech, Head of Business Operations at Solace said: “Locate in Kent gave us highly valuable support in finding the best location for our UK headquarters. We took premises at Denne Hill Business Centre in Canterbury because Kent has a very strong pharmaceutical sector. The county also offers a great working environment and a rich talent pool, which were other strong deciding factors.”
In 1976 KCC acquired the former derelict, windswept, World War II West Malling Airfield.

Working with property developer Liberty Property Trust, one of the largest property trusts in the United States, KCC is delivering Kent’s most prestigious mixed-use development on the airfield site – now renamed Kings Hill.

KCC entered into an equity sharing joint venture partnership with Liberty Property Trust to develop the site.

The 800-acre development brings massive regeneration and boasts award-winning design and a top-quality working and living environment. It has become an exemplar for sustainable living and features as one of the Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE) national housing best practice examples in ‘Better Places to Live’.

Over the next decade, the ambitious masterplan aims to provide two million square feet of new business space, 2,750 new homes and a range of community and leisure facilities that will ensure the development of a truly vibrant and sustainable neighbourhood. To date 800,000 sq ft of new business space has been developed, with over 100 companies in residence employing around 5,000 people.

Kings Hill currently has a resident population of over 6,000 people living in 1,600 new homes. Current home builders represent some of the best known developers in the UK. Award-winning designs such as the Lacuna development are an example of the commitment to quality expected of home builders selected. The choice of accommodation includes affordable housing, high-density village centre homes and a comprehensive range of family homes.

At Kings Hill these include an 18 hole championship golf course, a racquets, fitness and swimming centre, two primary schools, a community centre, a central area providing the daily convenience shopping needs of the community and, of course, a medical centre. Six pieces of sculpture have been placed in key focal locations.

All this has been achieved through a partnership which has a shared vision alongside shared commitments to quality and to creating added value.

Kings Hill has developed with a reputation as a premium property spot – one of the UK’s first truly mixed-use contemporary communities.
Business Incubator Units (BIU) develop an environment to facilitate the growth and development of small or start-up businesses on school sites.

They provide the opportunity for the host schools to benefit from links to new business with the potential for curriculum enrichment opportunities through work related learning, potential work experience opportunities, raising pupils’ aspirations through exposure to entrepreneurship, as well as the potential longer term benefits to the wider community outside the school.

KCC is currently progressing two models of BIU. These include the Astor College in Dover and the Abbey School in Faversham, which focuses on general small or start-up business to “raise the educational attainment and aspirations of young people in the school community”. Each has four units.

At the Abbey School, all units are occupied and the school logo has been redesigned by students working with the research and development section of one of the tenants.

At Astor College three out of four units are full and tenants have expressed an interest in working with school students.

The second model is the Marlowe Innovation Centre (MIC) in Ramsgate which is currently under construction and should be opened for business in mid-April 2008. This has a much stronger focus on innovative business.

As the centre is part funded by European Regional Development Fund the nature of its tenants is a key element of meeting the funding criteria. Marlowe will have approximately 30 units.

A quote from the Marlowe Innovation Centre business plan:
“The initial focus of the centre will be on supporting any business that supports the definition of innovation – any business that seeks to transform ideas into commercial value.”
The title came as more and more passengers were choosing to travel by bus in Kent — some 47 million journeys in 2006. And it followed a number of service initiatives pioneered by KCC.

Fastrack buses in Dartford and Gravesend have attracted three million passengers since they were launched in 2006. The buses run on dedicated core express routes which will ultimately connect nearly all the major existing developments in this part of the Kent Thameside growth area. With buses running every 10 minutes, passenger numbers were averaging 40,000 a week and this has led to a 19 per cent shift from car to bus travel.

KCC and the operator Arriva Southern Counties received two more national bus awards for Fastrack — one for infrastructure and the other for innovation.

Elsewhere, the Kent Freedom Pass trial launched in 2007 was the first of its kind in the country giving unlimited travel to 11-16 year olds in Canterbury, Tunbridge Wells and Tonbridge for a one-off £50 payment. In the first few months, the trial attracted more than 4,800 teenagers, and there are plans to expand its availability in other parts of the county.

The Thanet Bus Loop has attracted an extra two million passengers to services between Margate, Ramsgate and Broadstairs. In response to passenger demand, the frequency of services was increased from every 10 minutes to every seven minutes and they provide an easy connection to the local Queen Elizabeth the Queen Mother Hospital and the nearby Westwood shopping centre. Buses are easily accessible with low floors, and there are specially raised kerbs at bus stops. Other improvements include bus priority systems to reduce delay, better bus stops and more passenger information.

There has also been exceptional passenger growth on the Maidstone-Medway service 101, and the Dover – Deal Diamond network now has five per cent more passengers.

Countywide passenger numbers have grown by 15 per cent in the last five years. This is as a result of the council actively working with bus operators on building quality bus partnerships with Arriva and Stagecoach East Kent, investing in new vehicles, attracting extra funds and improving bus stops.

KCC Lead Member for Highways Roger Manning, who collected the transport authority award, said that council officers deserved all the credit for winning. “It recognises the partnerships we have developed with the bus operators,” he said.

“I can’t think of an improvement. So far I think Fastrack services are brilliant.”

Miss K, Greenhithe
Kent is fast becoming a major film setting thanks to the Kent Film Office – a KCC initiative that promotes the wide diversity of Kent’s urban, industrial and countryside locations as major film and television venues.

Launched in 2006, Kent Film Office works in partnership with district councils, National Trust, English Heritage and others to develop the county as a major venue and location for film and television. This in turn benefits the Kent economy.

The office helps the film and television industries find locations in Kent in which to film. To date it has helped secure significant filming including a six-month major Channel 4 series, Cape Wrath (made by Ecosse), which ensured direct spend into the local economy of £2.5 million and employed 35 local people.

A Bollywood movie was filmed at the Kent and East Sussex Railway in Tenterden, a Tesco apple advert secured the future of a community apple orchard as the fee went direct to the parish, and an East Kent filming company has been given a chance to expand through the help given by Kent Film Office to film Ruby Blue.

The development of Kent Film Office links directly with the strategic document Towards 2010 which includes a target to develop Kent as a major venue and location for film, television and creative industries to benefit the Kent economy.

It also increases opportunities for graduates to work in Kent, another Towards 2010 target, and develops the economic prosperity of Kent in line with the Kent Agreement.

The film industry is worth £4.3 billion to the UK economy and Kent is now taking a slice of that thanks to the Kent Film Office. Research has shown that for every £1 spent on location, another £2.50 is spent in the local economy. Tourists are also attracted to the area to see film settings, boosting the local economy even further.

Douglas Rae, Managing Director and Executive Producer of Ecosse:
“It has been an inspiring experience working with Kent on Cape Wrath. At every level we have received support and encouragement for filming and I will be delighted to return next year for series two.”
Making a difference

40 Skill Force

Not all young people benefit from the traditional school curriculum and need motivation to stretch themselves academically or vocationally. Kent is providing this wider curriculum choice through its 14-24 Innovation Unit and supporting 2010 targets. Innovative courses, such as those offered by Skill Force, enable young people to develop team building, problem solving and communication skills, discipline, motivation, self respect and resilience.

The aim of the project is to provide support to primarily KS4 pupils in danger of disengagement, disaffection and possibly exclusion from eight Kent Secondary Schools by delivering a part-time programme of varied, practical and vocational activities, learning and accreditation opportunities.

Skill Force has doubled the number of schools it works with in the county. It is now working with students at Archers Court Maths and Computing College, Hartsdown Technology College, Swanley Technology College and Walmer Science College. Students from Hextable School and Wilmington Enterprise College are also attending Swanley Tech to take part in the programme there. The new schools join Community College Whitstable, Minster College, New Line Learning Academy and Sittingbourne Community College where the scheme is now in its fourth year.

Three hundred students are benefiting from Skill Force tuition and the number will increase to 400 from September 2008.

KCC Leader Paul Carter said: “I am very pleased that the Skill Force programme is available to more young people in the county. It has made such an impact since its launch, helping many to find a purpose, raise self-esteem and has led to reductions in truancy levels.

Skill Force Leader Darren Hughes said: “It’s great that more young people are benefitting from this type of programme, which makes a positive impact on them at an important time in their lives. It is very rewarding to see the transformation these youngsters make during their time with us.”

The Skill Force courses offer vocational qualifications, community work and life skills in a classroom and outdoor activities based framework. Instruction and mentoring is provided mainly by ex-armed forces personnel, who develop a close working relationship with individuals and groups, building a culture of respect and mutual support. The initial pilot phase of the programme was externally evaluated by the Institute of Education, University of London and was deemed a success. Impacts included reduction in exclusions, improved behaviour, attendance, attitudes towards education and attainment and resulted in students being provided with a range of practical, vocational qualifications.

UK wide, 90 per cent of teachers in schools with Skill Force teams felt the programme had been successful in improving behaviour.

In July, students and tutors got together for an end of year presentation. Gillian Boyle from Minster College was named Student of the Year 2007 and was presented with a trophy from the 2006 winner Kyle Clarke, who joined the Skill Force team as an apprentice after the programme turned his life around.

Kyle said: “Following the award last year, I was employed on a two-year apprenticeship by Skill Force and I’m also studying a public service course at college. Skill Force turned my life around 100 per cent and I hope to work with them in the future and help others.”
Evolve is a programme which helps vulnerable adults do just that, and in so doing turns their lives around.

Launched in April 2004, the project sees KCC working in partnership with The Prince’s Trust, Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust and other partners to help lone parents, adults from the black and minority ethnic communities and other vulnerable adults understand their choices for returning to work.

By raising their aspirations and self-esteem, the programme makes a real difference to their lives.

People in some of the most deprived areas of Kent are realising they have real opportunities through Evolve – learning about education and employment and getting advice on vocational training, mentoring, advice and guidance.

Ways in which the Evolve Partnership has made a difference:

- Over 800 individuals have engaged in the range of interventions offered by the partners and 57 per cent have entered employment, voluntary work or education.

- 170 lone parents have participated in a range of opportunities and 58 per cent have either entered employment, voluntary work or education.

- 325 adults who are suffering from mental illness have participated with the vocational advisers situated in the Community Mental Health teams with 53 per cent entering employment, voluntary work or education.

- 211 adults from black and minority ethnic communities have participated with development workers in Gravesend, Dartford and Ashford with 41 per cent entering employment, voluntary work or education.

- 137 young adults have participated and 53 per cent of those young adults have entered employment, voluntary work or education.

Jeneame

“Before starting this course I was looking to return to work, but didn’t feel that I had the confidence to. By doing this course it has given me the confidence to sit in an interview and know what to do. I am no longer nervous about finding a job.”

Linda

“I learnt about all the jobs available in childcare and decided it was for me. Above all, the course gave me confidence and the chance to meet others in similar circumstances. I no longer feel that I have nothing to offer.”
The first Skills Plus centre opened in Sittingbourne in 2003 and the initiative is offered for free to adults wanting to improve their numeracy and literacy and is available through the Kent Adult Education Service.

Courses are run at 11 dedicated Skills Plus centres throughout the county and also at further adult education centres.

Many adults find they need to improve their English and Maths skills later in life in order to fill gaps in their education with recognised qualifications in order to secure a specific career or simply to help with daily tasks such as shopping and filling in forms.

Prospective students can join at any time throughout the year and courses run mornings, afternoons and evenings so studies can be fitted around family life and other commitments. Each student has an assessment to gauge their level of ability and their studies are tailored to suit each person based around real-life situations.

Aimed at anyone over the age of 19, completion of the course leads to National Qualifications in English and Maths which are an accepted alternative to GCSEs for adults.

In October 2007, the 5,000th learner was enrolled with Skills Plus and since August 2007 alone, 1,379 new students have joined the scheme. There are plans to open further centres in the county and it is hoped that partnerships with employers, schools and community groups will enable more people to work towards nationally recognised qualifications in English and Maths.
The first stage of the Tour de France proved to be a Tour de Force for Kent when it passed through the county in July 2007.

Two million people turned out to line the streets and cheer on the riders, which was the best possible result for the behind-the-scenes team who spent more than a year preparing for the big day.

In glorious sunshine, Kent looked great, as aerial pictures of packed Wealden villages and the colourful throng of spectators at Canterbury’s thrilling finish, were beamed to a world-wide TV audience. The payoff for Kent was also significant. Independent research later showed that Kent had received an economic boost of £15million from the organisers and those attending.

KCC Tour de France project co-ordinator Amanda Lumley said: “This is a great result for Kent as the study shows more than £15million of direct spend was brought to the local economy.”

Kent County Council is confident that the priceless value of showcasing Kent on national and international television will be seen in years to come when more visitors choose Kent as their holiday destination.

This could not have happened without the dedicated work of a team of over 4,000 people, including staff from Kent Highway Services who managed the traffic and crowds along the route, in co-operation with Kent Police and other district and borough councils.

Kent Highways Services had a mammoth task of arranging the closure of more than 150 miles of Kent’s roads and about 1,300 junctions to enable Le Tour to pass through safely. Roads which Le Tour used had to be prepared with safety barriers, cones and hay bales. Kent Highway Services took on extra staff in the Contact Centre, who dealt with more than 7,500 calls over the weekend, 87 per cent of which were dealt with directly.

While the French organisers said it was one of the best stages in the race’s history, for the people of Kent and the many visitors, it was a great day out. For the Kent economy, it was a welcome boost!
A major part of Kent County Council’s strategy to manage increasing traffic volume is the state-of-the-art Traffic Management Centre (TMC) in Maidstone.

The TMC was launched in November 2006. It is currently focused around Maidstone, but it is being extended to cover other parts of Kent.

The centre uses a combination of technology including CCTV, Automatic Number Plate Recognition (ANPR) and Variable Message Signs. This technology allows the centre staff to manage traffic congestion by improving journey times on routes into town centres, by collecting up-to-the-minute information about road conditions and by developing strategies to reduce regular occurrences of congestion and incidents. The centre also allows KCC to work better with the national Highways Agency to minimise congestion on Kent’s roads caused by motorway incidents.

Information collected by the centre is fed to the travelling public through the media, roadside information signs and through the interactive Kent Traffic and Travel website. The website is linked to CCTV cameras and traffic signals. It shows the locations of roadworks in Maidstone and on Kent’s motorways, the location of any congestion ‘hot spots’ and people can look at roads through the CCTV cameras located at key junctions.

KCC also manages traffic through its transport planning, and a system called PIPKIN is used to achieve an evidence-based approach to transport planning.

All small and medium-sized transport improvement projects (rather than maintenance works) are fed into PIPKIN, which assesses them against the objectives of Kent’s Local Transport Plan (LTP). This system allows the planned projects to be rated, ensuring that priority is given to schemes that offer value for money and make the greatest contribution to delivering the targets and objectives of Kent’s LTP.
KCC works hard to secure contributions from developers for infrastructure to support new housing development, including the highways and transportation, schools, community facilities and social services facilities needed to make the new developments successful places where people enjoy living.

The county council ensures there is adequate investment to support new development and relieve pressure on existing towns and villages. After the culmination of several years of complex negotiations KCC has secured community infrastructure worth an estimated £109m to support 6,250 new homes at Eastern Quarry in north Kent. This area will be transformed into a new residential community set in a series of ‘villages’.

Homes will also benefit from new parks, lakes and woodland areas and will be connected to Ebbsfleet, Bluewater, Dartford and Gravesend by Fastrack - a real alternative to the car for local journeys.

Due to the scale, its inherent complexity and the long period of delivery (over 20 years), an innovative approach to development contributions and infrastructure provision has been adopted and the mechanisms for control will be contained in a combination of the Section 106 agreement, reviewable delivery strategies and planning conditions. The legal agreement was finally completed and the planning permission released on 14 November 2007. The facilities are to be joint use and multiagency where appropriate to ensure that the wider aims and objectives of KCC service providers, not least in respect of preventative services, are delivered on the ground hand in hand with housing growth. The culmination of this work ensures that a truly sustainable new development is delivered for future generations whilst existing communities are fully protected.

The Development Investment Team deals with planning policy, countywide contributions and major development sites (over 500 units). There are over 20 major sites at various stages in the development process across the county. Other recent examples include Ashford Barracks housing development where approximately £7m has been agreed and Westwood, Thanet where KCC has agreed approximately £4.5m in development contributions for community infrastructure.

KCC has recently published a revised Development Contributions Guide which will help support future negotiations. This aims to promote a consistent and transparent approach across Kent towards the requirement for and the calculation of development contributions for county council provided services.

It will also help to quantify the likely level of contributions required in respect of KCC services to meet the impact upon existing community facilities resulting from development. This will raise awareness at a very early stage of the potential requirements to enable developers and landowners to take these matters into account when formulating their proposals and costs.
Operation Cubit is an initiative to try to deal with the abandoned vehicle problem in a better way.

This is a multi-agency approach aimed at dealing with abandoned cars and untaxed vehicles more effectively than previous fragmented systems and the concept has been extensively piloted in Kent.

The Kent Cubit Partnership consists of Kent County Council, Kent Police, Medway Unitary Authority, the Kent district councils, Kent Fire Brigade, and the DVLA.

The essential aims of the partnership are to provide a comprehensive and speedy response that tackles not only abandoned and unlicensed vehicles, but also actively encourages vehicle licensing and discourages future abandonment.

The basis of this operation is the immediate removal from the public highway of any vehicles which are untaxed or whose tax is out of date by more than one month, whether they are considered to be abandoned or not.

The scheme also deals with the immediate removal of abandoned vehicles on private land (such as private housing car parking areas) by posting statutory notices in advance on the land.

If a vehicle is removed:
- Vehicle owners will have to pay statutory fees plus any back-tax to reclaim their vehicles
- Vehicles not claimed within the prescribed periods (in most cases this is seven days) will be sent for destruction

The benefits of the scheme are:
- Immediate removal (vehicles with statutory notices affixed often became a target for vandals or arson attack)
- Substantial induced vehicle taxation income to the treasury
- Reduced vehicle crime
- Reduced vehicle fires
- Reduced risk to the environment
- Reduced risk of safety hazard to children
- Reduced car tax avoidance
- Overall improvement to quality of life to communities
- Early and positive action against offenders/offensive vehicles

Since the scheme was launched in 2001, the team has dealt with more than 4,500 abandoned and/or untaxed vehicles each year.

Records show a decrease in the number of abandoned vehicles. Kent County Council believes that Operation Cubit has made a significant contribution in stemming the rising tide in abandoned vehicle numbers.

Based on its success, Operation Cubit was expanded in January 2003. There are now two Cubit teams permanently operating in Kent and Medway. In future, every area will receive target operations on a regular basis, and ultimately the Kent Cubit Partnership aim to make Kent, as far as possible, a no-go area for abandoned and untaxed vehicles.
The Clean Kent Campaign was launched by KCC on behalf of the partnership in May 2004 to tackle environmental crime, improve the cleanliness of neighbourhoods and involve local people to help take pride in Kent.

It aims to improve and maintain the quality of the local environment, particularly focussing on a reduction in fly-tipping, littering and graffiti as well as reducing rubbish fires and environmental anti-social behaviour.

The campaign has a particular focus on litter and fly-tipping and changing attitudes towards these to help reduce environmental crime and make Kent a cleaner county. This is being achieved through a combination of enforcement activity, community action, strong marketing/communications and schools education programmes.

A target of the 2010 document is to expand the Clean Kent programme to tackle the top 20 fly-tipping hotspots and increase the capacity to prosecute fly-tipping offenders.

The campaign is closely monitored and data is recorded monthly by partner organisations, collated quarterly and held centrally by KCC.

Much progress has already been made including a predicted 40 per cent reduction in loose rubbish fires, 10 per cent reduction in fly-tipping (with a prediction to achieve 17 per cent), and a 20 per cent increase in the public perception that Kent is clean.

Extended Services in Kent support schools both centrally and through cluster based Extended Services Development Managers to develop a range of services to support schools to build their capacity to become universal access points for Children, Families and Communities. By doing this they ensure extended provision is an integral part of school improvement planning.

The Department for Children Schools and Families (DCSF) has set out a core offer of services which requires that schools will provide access to quality childcare, parent support, including family learning, community access including Adult Education, study support with a varied menu of activities and swift and easy access to specialist services.

Having achieved the stretch target in 2007, set by the DCSF, there are currently 183 schools in Kent who are delivering the full core offer. By September 2008 the Extended Services Team is required to ensure that over 300 schools are delivering the full spectrum of services detailed by the core offer and by 2010 all Kent schools must be delivering to this standard.

Extended Schools, working in tandem with Children’s Centres and local prevention and early intervention teams provide a range of support locally, designed to respond to family needs. Many schools have developed their own range of support programmes to meet the needs they have uncovered through local consultation. In many clusters the Extended Services Development Managers (ESDM) have brokered successful local partnerships with childcare providers, youth, leisure and health care provision to ensure economies of scale can be achieved by schools working in smaller partnership groups to deliver activities and services across a locality, thus building a sustainable resource for communities.

In 2007 four Kent schools achieved Advanced Status as Extended Schools, through the Integrated Quality Framework assessed by Quality In Study Support (QISS) at Canterbury Christ Church University. Homewood School, Sittingbourne Community College, The Canterbury Campus and Christ Church CE Primary School were the first in the country to be accredited as advanced by the National Assessment Team. The schools will be receiving their award in London on 7 February 2008.
The Kent Children’s University (KCU) is aimed at raising attainment, improving self-confidence and fostering a love of learning by providing informal learning opportunities for children aged five to 14 years and their families. These activities are delivered out-of-school-hours.

It has recently celebrated its 10th year. In that time the scheme has grown from 100 participants to over 5000 each year.

Last year Kent Children’s University offered places to over 5000 learners across the county (250 Kent schools are part of the scheme). KCC has recently been asked to sit on the National Children’s University Steering Group.

KCC offers a variety of out-of-school-hours workshops aimed at all ability levels. These include Tadpole Club for those in Key Stage 1, KCU for those in Key Stage 2 and Family Learning for children to attend with an adult family member.

National evidence clearly shows that children who attend Children’s University (CU) activities improve their confidence and self-esteem, have better social skills and improve their attainment. The scheme is open to all schools in the county. KCC is able to offer a range of courses ranging from cookery to science, sport to ICT.

Feedback is sought from all key stakeholders including the participants themselves. The scheme has recently been awarded Quality in Study Support Advanced Status. This makes the Kent Children’s University the only CU in the UK to receive this and only the second provider in Kent to do so.

KCC seeks the views of headteachers, parents, young people and tutors. It adapts provision to meet their needs.

KCC has recently received an independent evaluation of KCU. The report highlighted the good work, commitment to quality and ability to provide flexible solutions to meet the needs of partners.

The following are quotes from parents:

**Parent from Maidstone on Family Learning**
“We both learnt so much in the time...This was the first time we have taken part in one of your courses and we don’t plan on it being our last...Thank you.”

**Parent from Gravesend on Family Learning**
“I just wanted to write to say how much my daughters and I enjoyed the glass painting workshop. We made several pieces and were thrilled with the results.... it was the first time we had attended and we would definitely go again”

**Parent from Canterbury on KCU**
“I am writing to let you know how much my daughter enjoyed the Design Technology course on Saturday. We appreciated the warm welcome and found the tutor to be approachable and friendly.”

**Dartford parent**
“I would just like to take this opportunity to say what a wonderful scheme this is and how much my daughter enjoyed the last session.”
Positive Futures

This project is part of the Kent Programme which aims to promote social inclusion programmes which benefit the local community, including adults, people with disabilities and the disadvantaged.

Positive Futures is a social inclusion project by Charlton Athletic Football Club in partnership with KCC and others. It uses football to divert young people from anti-social activities, promote healthy living and encourage local communities to flourish.

Around 50 full and part-time coaches are working across Kent engaging up to 3,000 young people per week, providing football training, self defence, boxing, dance, drama and fishing.

The project uses sport to promote messages relating to drug misuse, racial awareness and sex education. It works with young people from housing estates and those ‘at risk’ from pupil referral units and school pre inclusion units. School attendance, numeracy and literacy levels are improving as a result of the school-based projects.

This project is a direct example of how KCC is working to reduce the likelihood of young people offending – one of the targets of its Towards 2010 document. It also links with the HM Treasury report Aiming High for Young People.

The Charlton programme has helped to dispel the myth that there is nothing for young people to do and has involved close partnership working with district councils, housing associations, Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, schools, Network Rail, and the Football Foundation.

“Within weeks of joining the sessions I felt my confidence returning as I was doing something I really enjoyed. The coach was really supportive and helpful. In fact it’s down to him that I was able to take my coaching qualifications and become a coach within the community programme.”

“The programme has really helped me get back on track, I’m happy to say I’ve passed nine GCSEs and I am in a job I enjoy. I definitely wouldn’t be where I am today without the football sessions.”
KCC staff are able to help the community while developing their own skills.

The council’s Policy on Volunteering actively encourages staff to use two of their five guaranteed days for learning and development to volunteer in the local community.

The range of activities staff are able to undertake are wide and varied but help them to develop skills they can use in the workplace. Volunteering work frequently involves leading a project, working with vulnerable groups, befriending, mentoring, gardening, painting and maintaining the environment.

The Kent Volunteering Programme involves KCC working with partner organisations to encourage volunteering.

The benefit to the volunteer and the organisation they help is immense.

KCC works to actively encourage people of all ages and in every community to help local voluntary and charitable bodies.

Across Kent, in towns and rural communities, thousands of people are involved in voluntary activities. Volunteers are needed in all areas and from all walks of life. Volunteering opportunities are as many and varied as there are people with time, interests and enthusiasm to share.

Kent has the largest number of registered charities outside of Metropolitan districts and an extensive number of voluntary groups. This reflects the time and expertise given by volunteers in the county. Without this generosity, so many organisations and projects could not survive. This shows the value of volunteers from all walks of life.

Businesses support voluntary activity by offering their assets which can be financial, staff time, skills, premises and equipment. Local employers and employees show many examples of ways that volunteering can be fun, fulfilling and make a real difference to life in Kent.

KCC staff member:
“I volunteered with Disability Snowsport UK, who support disabled adults and children to ski. I trained in the UK and France and then took two days of my Employee Volunteering Allowance and additional time to spend a week in Andorra...I deal with project management of respite centres and I have been able to apply this experience to my role as it has enabled me to have a much greater understanding of the children who are ultimately my customers.”

Staff member who works in a support role in education:
“I helped four children in my local school by listening to them read. I did this over a three month period at set times which fitted in with my workload and my manager. I now know more about the pressures on staff and the demands of the curriculum.”
The Kent Outdoor Pursuits Project was set up in 2005 to increase the opportunities for disabled people to take part in outdoor activities and to enjoy Kent’s countryside and over 2,500 people were involved in the first year alone.

The main aim is to remove the barriers which may prevent people with impairments from experiencing the outdoors, to allow them to enjoy activities with friends and family.

These include cycling, walking, sailing, archery, climbing and access to country parks.

Linked with the Kent Sports Development Unit, the project provides advice and works with a number of people who are expert in their specialised sports who help encourage those with disabilities to take part in sport and to develop their confidence and skills through physical activities.

Many groups which have worked with the project aim to provide health benefits to their members and to help with physiotherapy treatments through the use of sporting activities.

Through the project funding, around £40,000 has been awarded to local projects to help develop facilities and purchase adapted sports equipment. These include the Step Forward Disabled Cycling Club in Minnis Bay, Thanet and the addition of an all-terrain Tramper vehicle for use at Bedgebury Pinetum.

Richard Gaskell from Westbere Sailing Opportunities said:
“The Kent Disability Outdoor Pursuits Project was instrumental in getting Westbere off the ground and after working with us for the past seven years, we have seen 1200 visits from people with disabilities and their carers during 2007. We look forward to another successful year.”
These schemes were set up to make the elderly and vulnerable feel safer in their own homes.

A survey in 2001 showed people were concerned about anti-social behaviour, low-level crime and burglary and KCC joined forces with Help the Aged and launched the HandyVan service as a direct result.

The initial three year pilot scheme was aimed primarily at the over 60s on low incomes, to make the elderly and vulnerable feel safer in their own homes by installing safety and security products free of charge. The HomeSafe service was introduced in 2003. This expanded the service to helping vulnerable, disabled or older people to feel safer by carrying out security works and minor aids and adaptations to their homes.

The HandyVan service is funded by the Community Safety Unit and is delivered in partnership with Help the Aged, Kent Fire and Rescue Service and Kent Police who contribute equipment and resources. The service operates on a referral basis with requests coming from the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnerships (CDRPs), the voluntary sector and direct from clients. As part of KCC’s Towards 2010 priority to create safer and stronger communities, an extra van has been commissioned to provide a focussed service in areas of high burglary and/or high fear of crime.

KCC has continued to increase investment in this scheme. The HandyVan and HomeSafe initiatives are being developed further to provide a more targeted service and in some areas support is now being given to people who have suffered domestic violence.

The HomeSafe service is funded by the Community Safety Unit and the Occupational Therapy Bureau (from the DoH Access and Systems Capacity Grant). It won the national Best Partnership Working Award at the House of Lords in January 2007.

Between them, the HandyVan and HomeSafe services have carried out home safety checks and installations, where necessary, in the homes of 15,000 older and vulnerable people helping to make their homes more secure.

“The improved security helped my wife and I feel safer living in our home.”

“The service and work standard were excellent, the technician was considerate and very helpful and provided work of a very high standard and cleaned up after finishing.”

“We are writing to say how pleased we are with the work done by the HandyVan fitter. It has given us peace of mind to know that our home is really secure, both when we are at home and when we go out. We also have two new smoke alarms and everything was carefully explained to us.”
Access to employment is one of the major barriers faced by individuals with current or previous substance misuse problems.

Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team (KDAAT) recognises that it takes courage, determination, effort and commitment to build the confidence and skills that individuals require to make the leap from income support to paid employment.

To support this, Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team decided to support the provision of a course for ex-service users and volunteers working in the substance misuse sector in Kent and Medway.

Working in partnership with South Kent College, Folkestone they introduced a pilot of the Progression Award in Community Justice in January 2007. This City and Guilds Level 3 qualification provides a pathway into employment. It is a practice-based development programme which requires one day per week attendance at college for one year and a commitment to self-study. Students also need to have paid or voluntary work in the drug and alcohol services field.

The pilot group comprised of 15 paid and volunteer workers including ex-service users, all learning together and from each other.

The benefits to the students and the local workforce include increased knowledge, professionalism, skills and abilities. It has raised the confidence and self-esteem particularly of those who are ex-service users as it has given them a focus and provides the opportunity to give something back to the community. The course has helped many individuals with their own recovery, helped them re-integrate into society and ‘feel trusted’ again.

Key achievements to date are as follows:
- three administrative workers now hold substance misuse worker posts
- two ex-service users already in paid work in the field have progressed their career within their service
- four ex-service user volunteers have secured paid jobs in the field (two of whom are also ex-offenders)
- the remaining students are actively applying for substance misuse worker jobs

As a result of the success of the pilot, a second cohort of 19 students was enrolled in September 2007 with more potential candidates on a waiting list for a third group.
Maidstone Power Project was established in April 2006 to help young people who were at risk of getting involved in crime, anti-social behaviour or being excluded from school.

The project is aimed at young people aged 11 and over and gives them an opportunity to take part in activities that they may not otherwise get a chance to enjoy. Ice skating, snow boarding, ski-ing and snow tubing are all used to help them develop better attitudes and behaviour.

Funded by the Crime and Disorder Reduction Partnership (CDRP), the early intervention programme for young people takes referrals from local schools and the children’s social services team. The project was developed by KCC’s Youth Offending Service as part of its statutory responsibility to prevent offending by young people.

Working closely with partners such as the police, schools and parents, the Power Project youth workers are able to also have an influence on the young people and give advice on drugs, alcohol and healthy living.

As well as enjoying fun activities such as horse riding and fishing, the youngsters also visit historical sites in Kent.

The programme has rolled out in other districts across Kent but in Maidstone alone, plans to help around 100 young people over two years have been extended. To date, 133 young people have received support through the project which has been welcomed by schools, parents/carers and children’s social services.

Funding for the project, which amounts to £34k per annum, has been provided by a variety of partners within the CDRP including the Police, KCC, local pilot Children’s Trust, Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Fire and Rescue Service.

Harry, aged 11, recently took part in the Power Project in Tunbridge Wells. He had been identified as vandalising property in his neighbourhood and was bullying other children. Harry’s headmaster referred him to the Power Project earlier this year. Harry had an action plan developed for him while he was at the project, and he has been given help for anger management and encouraged to think about safety for himself and his whole community. As a result of his experiences on the project, Harry has become a peer mentor on crime prevention in his school and has worked with Kent Fire Brigade on this subject.
Kent Safe Schools seeks to listen to, consult, engage and support children and young people to encourage and empower them to actively participate and positively contribute to their schools and communities.

This countywide organisation was initiated in 1994 and currently operates as part of the KCC Attendance and Behaviour Service. The total annual income of the service is approximately £1.7 million. Of this, just under 15 per cent is received from KCC Community Safety Partnership, the remainder is provided by key partners in the commissioning of services.

Specifically, Kent Safe Schools delivers services in a flexible framework of activity that is regularly adapted to suit identified need. The framework includes youth action groups, primary intervention groups, peer mentoring, anti-bullying activities, transitional activities, diversionary activities, positive activities, work based learning and partnership working.

It is forecast that through delivery of these services, Kent Safe Schools Project Officers will provide support to in excess of 6500 children and young people in over 200 schools and community/youth groups.

A whopping 88.7 per cent of schools agree that Kent Safe Schools has a significant benefit to self-esteem and over 70 per cent reported an improvement in health and emotional wellbeing. A recent London Education Research Network (LERN) evaluation shows a 79 per cent return stating improved relationship between the school and the young person.

Young people involved in Kent Safe Schools projects have won over 20 Triangle Awards for their contribution to the local community.

The project has targeted areas with high levels of ‘Not in Education, Employment or Training’ young people ensuring that they are directly delivering projects in these hotspot localities. At present there are established, successful projects in Thanet, Maidstone and Dover.

Overall attendance on community programmes for young people not in education, employment or training and Youth Offending Service referrals in these areas is 78.5 per cent with a positive progression into college or work rate of 77.78 per cent.

Kent Safe Schools was nationally recognised in 2000 when it won the prestigious British National Crime and Community Safety Awards and this was followed in 2001 by being cited by a Social Services Inspection and National Audit Commission report as an example of good project practice.

Two peer mentors (trained by Kent Safe Schools) at Swanley Technology College received the Diana Princess of Wales Award. This award recognises outstanding contributions by young people in tackling bullying, and supporting young people in the community.
KCC’s Road Safety activities aim to reduce road casualties and contribute to quality of life in Kent.

Performance is measured against local and national casualty reduction targets. A key element of the national target is to achieve a 40 per cent reduction in the number of people killed or seriously injured in road crashes by 2010 (based on 1994 to 1998 average figures).

KCC chose to achieve this target by the end of 2007 – three years early.

This 40 per cent reduction means 478 fewer people will have been killed or sustained serious life changing injuries.

KCC launched the Help Save 478 Lives campaign to achieve these impressive figures in October 2005 with a highly successful PR, media and advertising profile. Since then the road safety team has primarily used publicity to lead KCC’s approach to bring down casualties, supported by education, training, enforcement and engineering.

Their work was enhanced by innovative partnership working, with Kent Police, Kent Fire and Rescue, the Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership, Zest ST and Jacobs providing powerful added value.

The publicity programme included advertising and media campaigns generating coverage on key issues such as speed, seatbelts, drink–driving, drug–driving and mobile phones. Younger drivers were targeted at pubs and clubs.

A dedicated 16 page road safety newspaper was delivered to 116,000 households, and regular news events and conferences were organised with partners which achieved extensive news coverage. PR and advertising ideas have included guerrilla marketing tactics and teen targeted web activities.

Most recently a Christmas advertising campaign was launched at County Hall with 250 drama students acting out an innovative TV advert which features a mime artist. This was shown extensively on BBC and ITV news programmes as well as running as the TV advert itself.

KCC’s aim is for the road safety team to engage with local people through media campaigns that create a Kent feel. Feedback from the target audiences has been overwhelmingly positive. Although it will not be possible to confirm success until early 2008 the indications are that this demanding 40 per cent reduction will be met.
The Kent County Council Act 2001 aims to regulate the trade in second-hand goods and to make it more difficult for criminals to dispose of stolen property by requiring traders in second-hand goods to register with Kent County Council and keep accurate records of all transactions.

The KCC Act 2001 also requires organisers of occasional sales, such as boot fairs, to provide advance notice of their sales and to keep records of people taking part.

The Act was introduced through the parliamentary system after concern about burglary and the handling of stolen property. Kent Police had been actively developing an intelligence led approach to enforcement and believed the majority of these crimes were being committed by a few networks and the property disposed of in the second-hand market.

By working with Kent Police, KCC decided it would be easier to regulate the second-hand market - increasing control on those involved and tackling the elements of society that supported illegal trade.

It took nearly three years of consultation and complex parliamentary process and cost approximately £250,000 to bring the KCC Act into force.

The Act required KCC and Kent Police to prepare a joint report for Parliament on its effectiveness. This was done in 2004 and as a result it was anticipated the Government would consider producing national legislation based on the KCC Act. Whilst, no national legislation has yet been produced, a number of local authorities have introduced similar legislation (Nottingham, Preston, Tameside) and others are actively considering it (Buckinghamshire).

In 2004/05 there was a reduction in recorded burglary and recorded vehicle crime in Kent compared to 2001. This was against the trend of the seven authorities in Kent’s comparative group. The KCC Act has also proved to be a successful tool in identifying second-hand car dealers. Originally 300 were recorded on the Kent Trading Standards database but with the implementation of the Act 1,200 have registered.
The Kent Healthy Schools Programme is both a strategic and operational scheme to ensure all schools are supported in working towards Healthy Schools status.

To achieve the status, a whole school approach to well-being must be demonstrated and four main themes addressed: PSHE, Emotional Health and Well Being, Healthy Eating and Physical Activity.

The programme is working towards delivering the national target of 100 per cent of schools participating in the scheme by December 2009 and 75 per cent with achieved Healthy Schools status.

Currently 323 or 54 per cent of schools in Kent have achieved Healthy School status, with 98 per cent or 581 participating in the programme.

One of the key commitments is to continue improving the quality of school meals.

At Bell Wood Primary School, cooks from around the county come together to complete a 20-week course in preparing and cooking healthier and more nutritious meals.

The course continues to offer cooks a range of practical tuition from pastry making to preparing fish and non-meat dishes to enhance their skills. There were also Chartered Institute of Environmental Health courses in food hygiene, health and safety, nutrition and food safety management.

Karen Reveley, from Eastchurch Primary School on the Isle of Sheppey attended the course last year. She said: "I have learnt lots of new recipes and it will change the way I work at the school. It’s a challenge coming up with new menu ideas but from the course and talking to the other cooks, I’ve got lots of new things to try.”
Activmobs are small groups of people who carry out physical activity together on a regular basis. They choose the activity and the system supports them to continue with that activity.

Kent County Council joined forces with the Design Council to explore new ways for housing estate residents to get active. The aim was to develop services that could be instigated by local people themselves, rather than by the local authority.

A steering committee that included residents held stakeholder workshops with a community support officer, youth club leaders and others. Residents were asked to map out their day as a timeline, using flashcards of activities. One insight was that for many residents there were barriers to activity, and that inspiration needed to be drawn from those who successfully integrated activity into their everyday lives.

The solution was Activmobs, a radical new type of service to support self-organised groups of people with a shared interest. In the pilot, residents created three ‘mobs’: for people who walked their dogs and wanted to lose weight; for individuals with back problems; and for people interested in guided walks. Tools for quantitative and qualitative feedback were used to record benefits. There are now more than 20 mobs.

Activmobs enable people to carry out the activities that suit them rather than making assumptions about what they will want to do. They build on the idea that activity is most effective when driven and sustained by individual motivations and when it is placed within the context of people’s everyday lives rather than in a formal and sometimes off-putting setting, like a gym.

There were tangible, measurable improvements in personal wellbeing, such as improved sleep and greater physical flexibility. These findings helped the local authority to better understand new ways of tackling changing health issues and lifestyles. Activmobs increase opportunities for physical activity which is proven to have significant health benefits, resulting in long-term savings to health and social care.

Singing: As good as chocolate (but without the fat)... …that’s according to Sue and she’d know – she leads the Folkestone based ‘Local Vocals singing mob. According to Sue: “Singing releases endorphins that relax you and make you feel good. Plus the actual exercise of singing is beneficial to the lungs, posture, the stomach and back muscles.” The good news is that you don’t have to have great voice to join in and experience the benefits. “We always say as long as you can talk you can sing.”

Local Vocals embraces the Activmob spirit in that it’s an informal affair. You don’t stand in rows, and you don’t need to read music. Songs are learnt by ear and it’s a long way from school choir: “It’s amazing the number of people that come to us who’d been told to ‘keep quiet and just mime’ in the school choir and now discover that they actually have a voice and can share in making some beautiful sounds that really lift the spirit.”
Kent County Council works with the Department of Public Health and partners to help people have healthy lifestyles. These are just two of the current projects.

Bien Etre
Launched in September 2005 and part financed by the European Regional Development Fund, Bienetre is a two-year Interreg, healthy schools and communities project between partners in Kent and Pas-de-Calais.

By focusing on the enjoyment of healthy eating it aims to stimulate interest in healthier lifestyles through professional, social and cultural exchanges and increased community involvement in local projects and also further community development; and improve the lives of children and parents in local areas.

The project’s four aims were:
- To create cross border and local learning networks comprised of key partners involved with the health and education of children and the well being of communities in Kent and French partners
- To improve health and well being of deprived communities using food as a focus
- To share learning about healthy eating and lifestyle interventions
- To use schools as a focus but to extend the work to reach the communities they serve

There were three programmes within the project:
- Healthy eating
- Physical exercise
- Arts and drama

The project has targeted schools in the most needy parts of Dover and Pas de Calais in Northern France over two years, involving hundreds of children and their parents and teachers. Public promotional events have been held in Guenes (in France) and Dover Castle. The event in Dover in May 2007 was a highly successful celebration of what has been achieved and was attended by many who have been involved from both sides of the channel.

Fit Together
Fit Together is designed to develop links between providers of fitness and leisure facilities across the private and voluntary sectors including the Fitness Industry Association.

It is a loose association of interested organisations and businesses which look at ways they can work together more effectively. The Kent Obesity Strategy will also provide opportunities to extend and expand the role of leisure and fitness providers to participate in joint approaches to combat obesity in Kent.

Fit Together is particularly interested in promoting the use of facilities and opportunities offered by the leisure and fitness industry to those who are most disadvantaged in Kent and who would benefit most from adopting healthier lifestyles and taking more exercise, but who may not be able to afford them. Other priorities include promoting fitness and exercise amongst young women and girls, who often participate less than boys, and improving health in the workplace.
Two projects aimed at increasing the independence of older people are running in Kent. The first of these is The Brighter Futures Group (BFG) which is a partnership between KCC, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) and voluntary and community organisations.

The programme aims to support people aged 75 and over who are living alone, in poor housing and on a low income. By providing a range of community services mainly delivered by volunteers, the programme helps people stay independent in the community and reduce avoidable admissions into hospitals and care homes.

It seeks to reduce the isolation and loneliness that older people can face and helps them stay comfortably and independently in their own homes. The programme runs in the Ashford, Maidstone, Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks areas. It is funded with £1.39 million from HM Treasury.

Funding for BFG ceases at the end of September 2008. The BFG Board and project staff are developing a future funding strategy to assist projects to remain sustainable once funding ceases. As projects have evolved, some have diversified and expanded including internet cafes, more exercise classes, and Healthy Lifestyle Sessions.

The second project is Independence through the Voluntary Action of Kent’s Elders (INVOKE).

This is a new project running currently in east Kent and is designed to give older people greater independence through the delivery of local services to the community, enhancing self-management through increased choice and control.

The project supports older people in their own homes by increasing community services. It also aims to reduce the number of emergency hospital admissions. It has three services within it: Community Matron Support Workers, Community Information and Liaison Assistants and Care Navigators.

Public and patient involvement has been used in a variety of ways and as a result, key members within communities have been selected to support each tender panel and be part of the decision making process. This role has supported increased knowledge to people normally outside of the process, external to KCC, and enabled a level of understanding to be gathered as well as a more community, potential service user perspective to be incorporated.

The project has worked well to involve individuals through the development of roles in interviewing and as tender panel members. Following positive feedback, this has been celebrated in a recent edition of the Public and Patient Newsletter. The article reflected a narrative from Community Matrons and a Public and Patient Involvement (PPI) member, the wife of a person who is in receipt of the Community Matron Service of their experience and the added value that the PPI member made as well as the sense of personal inclusion she felt in the service development.
The resident population in eastern and coastal Kent is around 700,000 and the projected number of elderly residents is set to rise by 42 per cent by 2020.

A model for improving the current system of urgent and emergency care for patients will mean all health and social care professionals working together as a team with the patient at the centre using good communication and effective use of NHS and social care resources.

The improvements mean a more simple, effective and consistent approach to treatment at a centre, in the community or in the patient’s own home.

The Eastern and Coastal Kent Urgent Care Model supports care closer to home and aims to have comprehensive community services available in each locality and a number of locally based urgent care services which may include Urgent Care, Emergency, Accident, Trauma and Specialist Centres across east Kent where the patient will be able to walk in or phone for advice, assessment and treatment.

In the future, services will be delivered as close to home as possible through a variety of community services and if a hospital visit can’t be avoided, in either an Urgent Care Centre or in more specialised units in a more responsive manner.

There will also be quick and simple access to services available 24 hours a day throughout the year, making the patient journey better and they will be seen by the most appropriately skilled members of staff to meet their needs.

A continuity of care between health and social care services will ensure resources are best used and patient information is available to all those providing treatment.

The public, patients, staff and the wider community will be involved in future planning and the overseeing of services and the provision of services.
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