Section 1: Introduction

All Kent councils have submitted a single, agreed response to the Minister's letter of 5 February 2025 committing to a unitary structure being implemented across Kent with effect from 1 April 2028 and responding to the criteria set out in the appendix to the Minister's letter.

It has not been possible to agree the likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities (criteria 'B' in the guidance for Interim Plans) across all 14 Kent authorities, but the authorities listed on the title page have agreed this supplementary submission which provides a range of data associated with four possible geographies, a high-level financial analysis and an assessment of each model against some principles agreed by Kent Council Leaders and the government's assessment criteria for unitary local government.

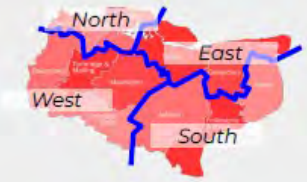
The following submission comprises:

- A description and map of each possible unitary model
- A range of data for each model including: population (now and future projected), alignment to health and care partnerships and travel to work areas, spatial planning constraints and demographic information.
- A high-level financial analysis of the costs, benefits and implementation costs associated with a three or four unitary model together with an analysis of possible efficiencies associated with staffing, property, third party spend and democratic costs.
- An assessment of each model against principles agreed by Kent Council leaders and the government's established assessment criteria for unitary local government.

Section 2: Possible Options for Unitary Government in Kent

The above Council leaders have agreed to explore four possible models for unitary government in Kent as follows:

- Model 1: A three unitary model made up as follows: West (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone); North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway and Swale); East (Canterbury, Thanet, Ashford, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe).
- Model 2: A four unitary model made up as follows: West (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone); North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway); East (Canterbury, Swale, Thanet), South (Ashford, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe).
- Model 3: A four unitary model made up as follows: Mid (Ashford, Swale, Folkestone and Hythe); West (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone,); North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway); East (Canterbury, Dover, Thanet)
- Model 4: a four unitary model comprising: **West**: (Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge and Malling and Sevenoaks); **Mid** (Maidstone, Ashford and Swale); **North** (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway); **East** (Thanet, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Canterbury).

Option 1 **Three unitary authority** North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, and Swale) East (Thanet, Dover, Canterbury, Folkestone & Hythe, Ashford) West (Maidstone, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells, Sevenoaks)	
Option 2 **Four unitary model** West (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone) North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway) East (Canterbury, Swale, Thanet) South (Ashford, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe)	
Option 3 **Four unitary model** Mid (Ashford, Swale, Folkestone & Hythe) West (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells and Maidstone) North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway) East (Canterbury, Dover, Thanet)	
Option 4 **Four unitary model** North (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway) East (Thanet, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone & Hythe) Mid (Swale, Maidstone, Ashford) West (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge & Malling, Tunbridge Wells)	

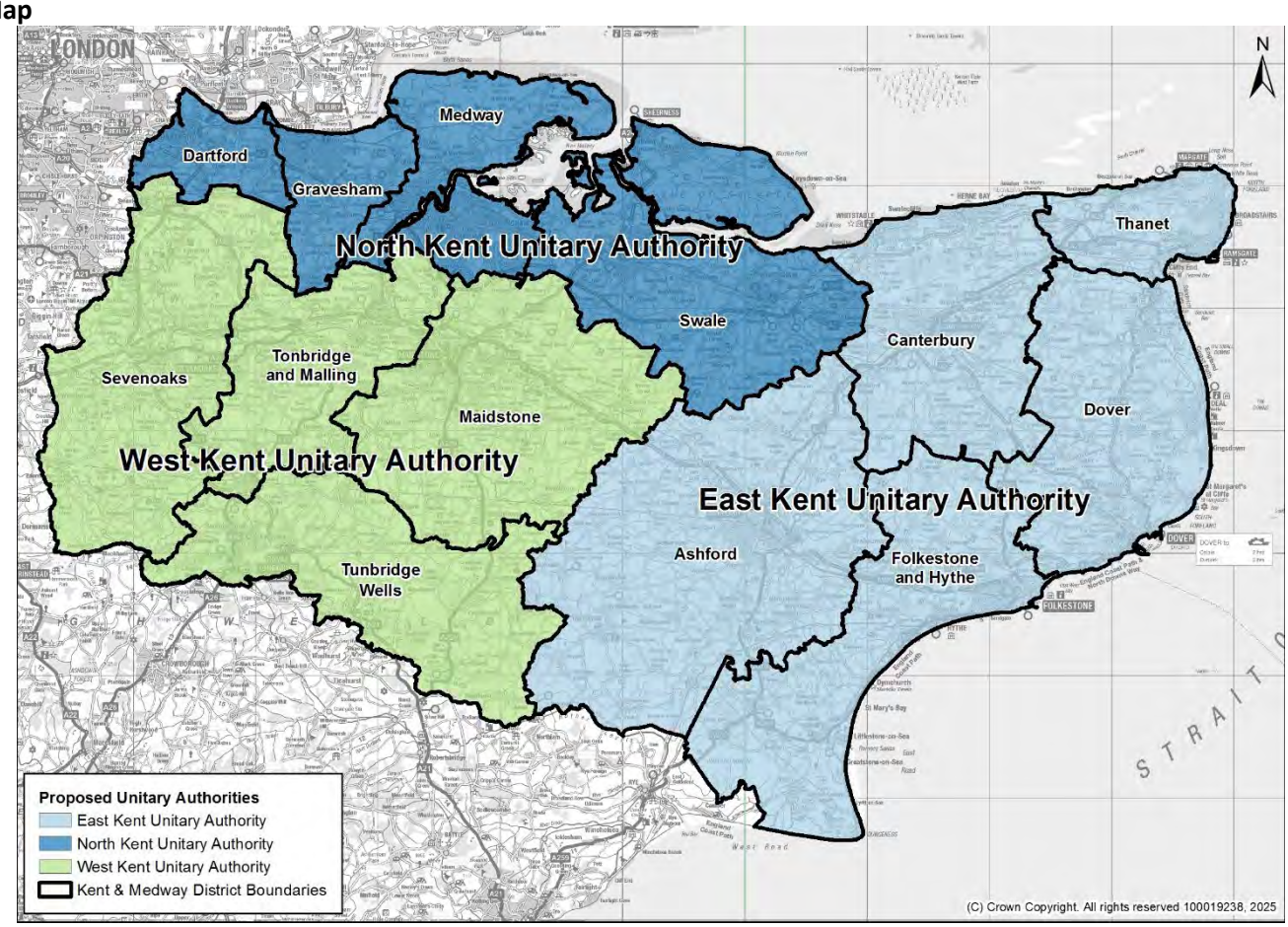
Not all leaders support all the models, and it may be that further models (or variants to the above) may be produced and assessed as part of future work and may feature in the final submission to government.

Section 3: Information on Possible Unitary Geographies

Section 3.1: Model 1 (Three Unitaries)

Model 1 (three unitaries):	**North** (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway, Swale) **East** (Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Thanet) **West** (Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells)

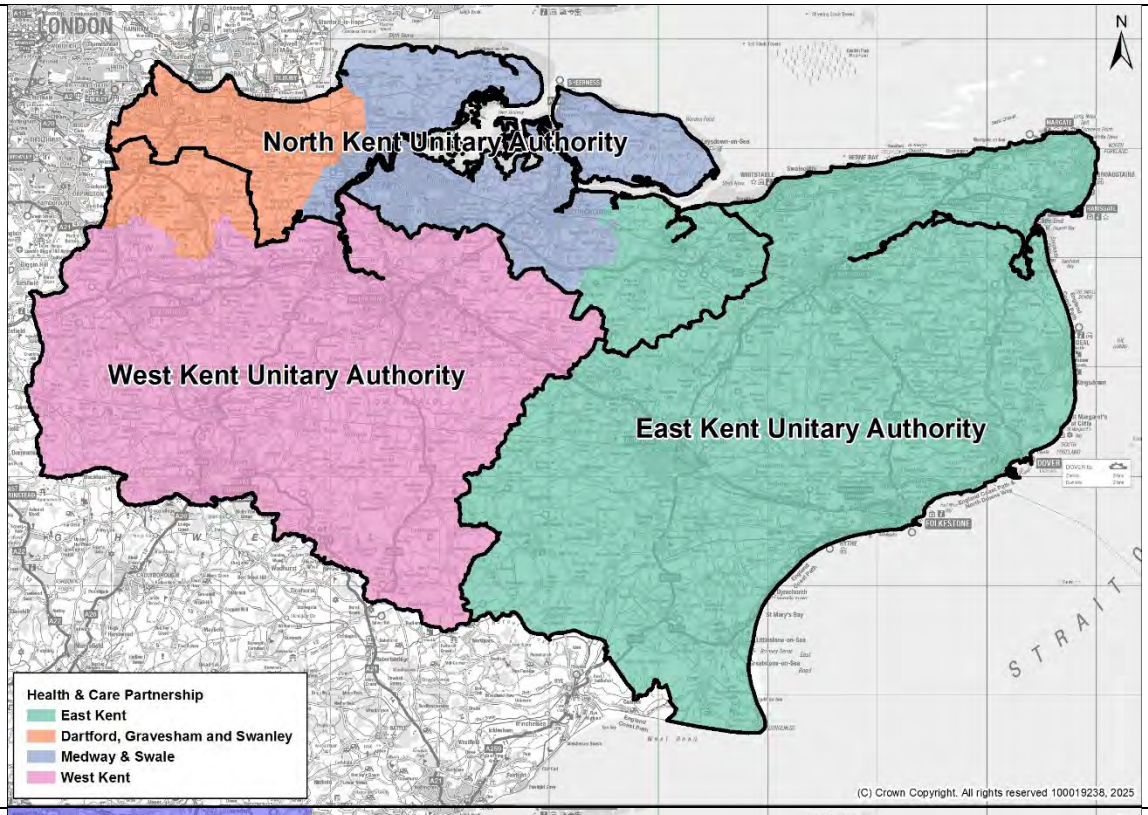
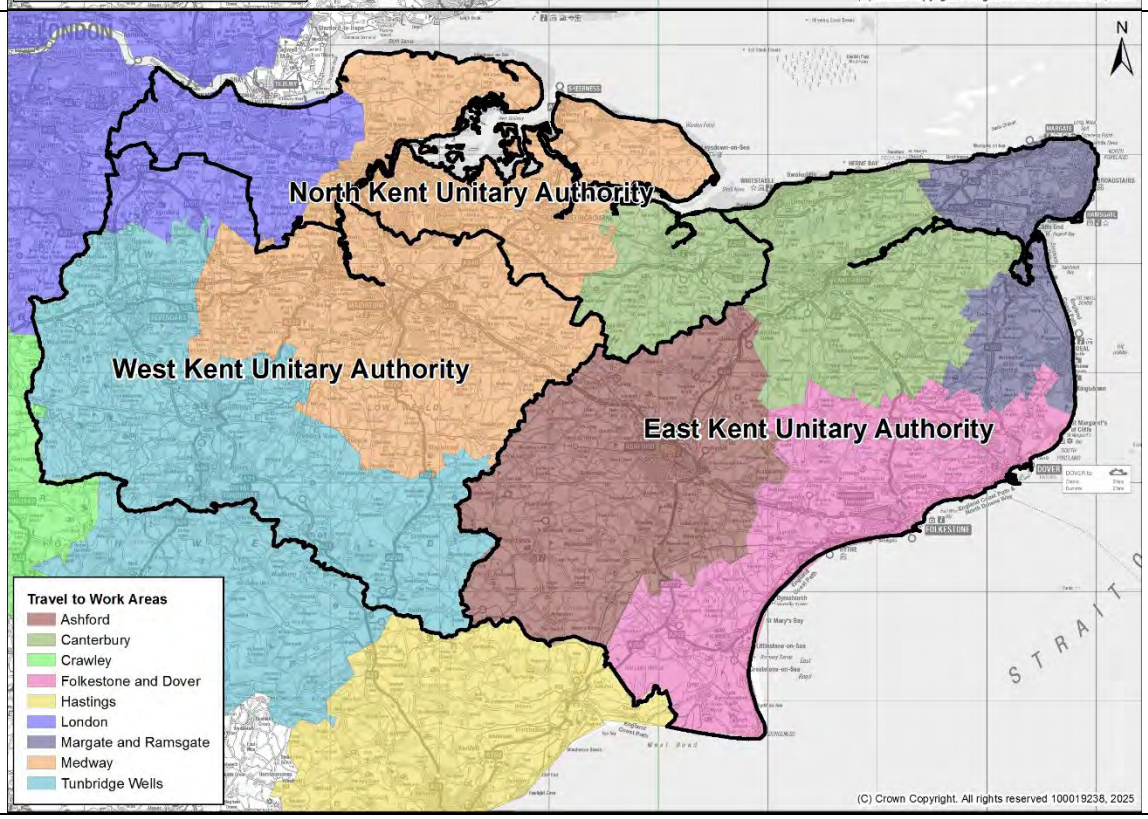
Map



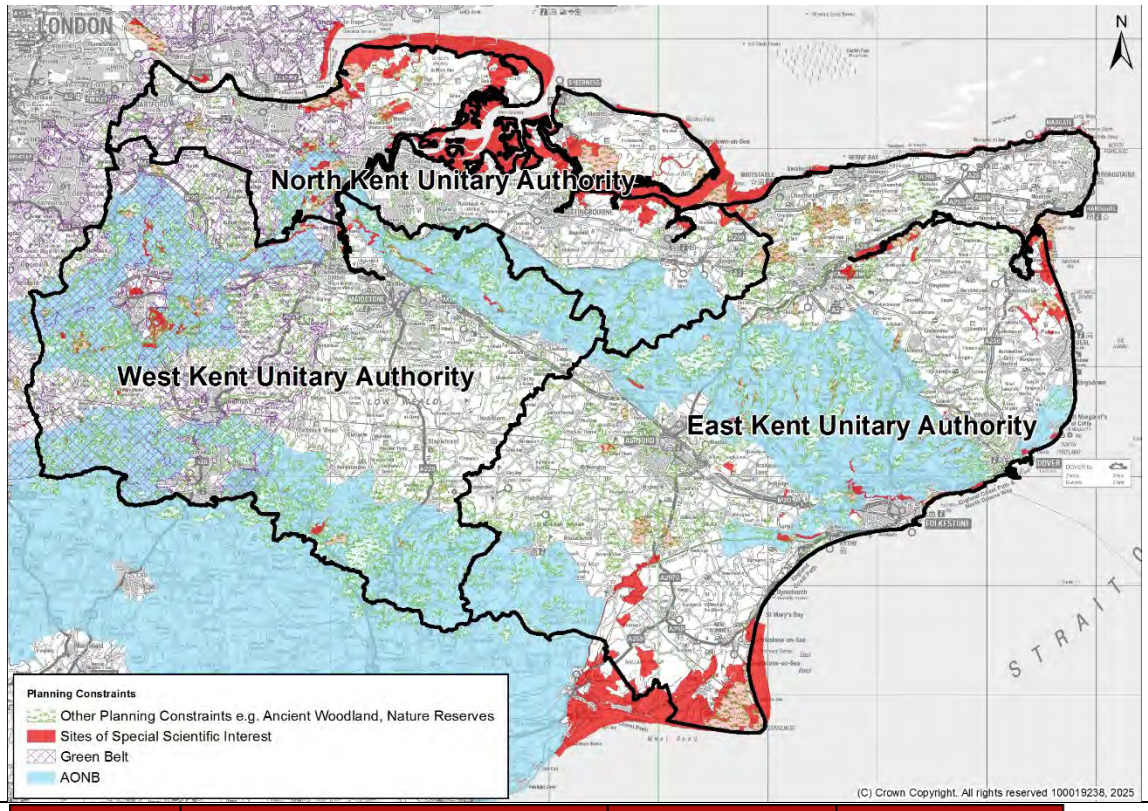
Population:

Potential Unitary	District	District population (mid-2022)	Unitary population (mid-2022)	Potential growth by 2035*
North Kent	Dartford	118,820	**663,111**	*41k to 96k*
	Gravesham	106,970		
	Medway	282,702		
	Swale	154,619		
East Kent	Ashford	135,610	**661,559**	*53k to 103k*
	Canterbury	157,550		
	Dover	117,473		
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,237		
	Thanet	140,689		
West Kent	Maidstone	180,428	**551,223**	*39k to 72k*
	Sevenoaks	121,106		
	Tonbridge and Malling	133,661		
	Tunbridge Wells	116,028		

**Two estimates based off the % growth between 2022 and 2035 for each district from: a) the ONS Sub-National Population Projections and b) the KCC Housing Led Forecast. Weighted by each district's contribution towards the UA's total population (2022 MYE).*

NHS Health & Care Partnership alignment:	
Travel to Work Areas:	

Spatial planning constraints:



Indicative Local Housing Need - annual (new standard method)

Potential Unitary	District	Indicative Local Housing Need (new method)		Estimated avg household size*
North Kent	Dartford	712	4,026	*2.49*
	Gravesham	672		
	Medway	1,594		
	Swale	1,048		
East Kent	Ashford	952	4,921	*2.30*
	Canterbury	1,216		
	Dover	746		
	Folkestone and Hythe	859		
	Thanet	1,148		
West Kent	Maidstone	1,358	4,700	*2.42*
	Sevenoaks	1,149		
	Tonbridge and Malling	1,096		
	Tunbridge Wells	1,098		

**Estimated by taking the average household size in each district (from Census 2021) and producing a weighted average based on the LHN.*

Social and Demographic Information Drawn from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion

Population Composition

	West	North	East	Kent	England
Males	48.75%	49.09%	48.45%	48.72%	49.00%
Females	51.25%	50.91%	51.55%	51.28%	51.00%
Population Aged 0-15	19.81%	20.79%	17.49%	19.12%	18.50%
Population Aged 16 to 64	60.30%	62.44%	59.56%	60.43%	62.88%
Population Aged 65+	19.89%	16.77%	22.96%	20.45%	18.61%

IMD Score

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (combining indicators under seven different domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment Deprivation).

West	North	East	Kent	England
13.73	23.34	22.44	19.54	21.76

Unemployment

The proportion of working age people receiving benefits for unemployment.

	West	North	East	Kent	England
Unemployment benefit claimants (Jobseekers Allowance and out of work Universal Credit claimants)	2.66%	3.94%	3.98%	3.47%	4.22%
Youth unemployment (18-24 receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	4.34%	6.76%	6.06%	5.72%	5.46%
Older person unemployment (50+ receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	0.93%	1.44%	1.34%	1.20%	1.65%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), female	2.51%	3.55%	3.36%	3.07%	3.75%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), male	2.82%	4.35%	4.63%	3.89%	4.71%

Average House Price

Average property price for all dwelling types between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024

West	North	East	Kent	England
£375,814	£285,695	£263,733	£313,496	£313,307

Crime

Total recorded crimes and crimes per 1,000 people between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024.

	West	North	East	Kent	England
Total Crime	44,508	73,897	65,978	152,915	5,173,622
Rate	80.7	111.5	99.6	95.9	90.6

Health

Proportion of claimants of disability benefits from the DWP.

	West	North	East	Kent	England
Independence Payment (PIP)	6.81%	9.48%	11.25%	9.24%	9.20%
Disability benefit (DLA)	2.05%	2.67%	2.71%	2.51%	2.10%
Older people social care benefit (Attendance Allowance)	12.34%	13.69%	14.16%	13.43%	13.23%
Households on Universal Credit, Disabled Child Entitlement	1.66%	2.59%	2.50%	2.27%	1.82%

Households on Universal Credit - Limited Capability for Work Entitlement	4.28%	6.61%	11.25%	5.97%	6.14%

Education

Level of Qualification of people aged 16+ from the 2021 Census.

	West	North	East	Kent	England
No Qualifications	15.72%	19.59%	18.77%	17.96%	18.08%
Apprenticeship	5.25%	6.02%	5.72%	5.61%	5.32%
Other	2.64%	3.01%	2.98%	2.88%	2.76%
Level 1	10.06%	11.93%	10.81%	10.79%	9.69%
Level 2	15.08%	15.60%	14.40%	14.86%	13.32%
Level 3	16.68%	17.34%	18.31%	17.42%	16.92%
Level 4/5	34.57%	26.51%	29.01%	30.49%	33.92%

Councillor/Electorate numbers

Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Electorate	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
East Kent	Ashford	95,087	464,222	15,474	7,737	4,642
	Dover	87,238				
	Folkestone and Hythe	70,194				
	Canterbury	108,317				
	Thanet	103,386				
West Kent	Sevenoaks	90,283	407,167	13,572	6,786	4,071
	Tonbridge and Malling	100,052				
	Tunbridge Wells	85,162				
	Maidstone	131,670				
North Kent	Dartford	84,833	477,468	15,915	7,957	4,774
	Gravesham	76,516				
	Medway	206,075				
	Swale	110,044				
		1,348,857				

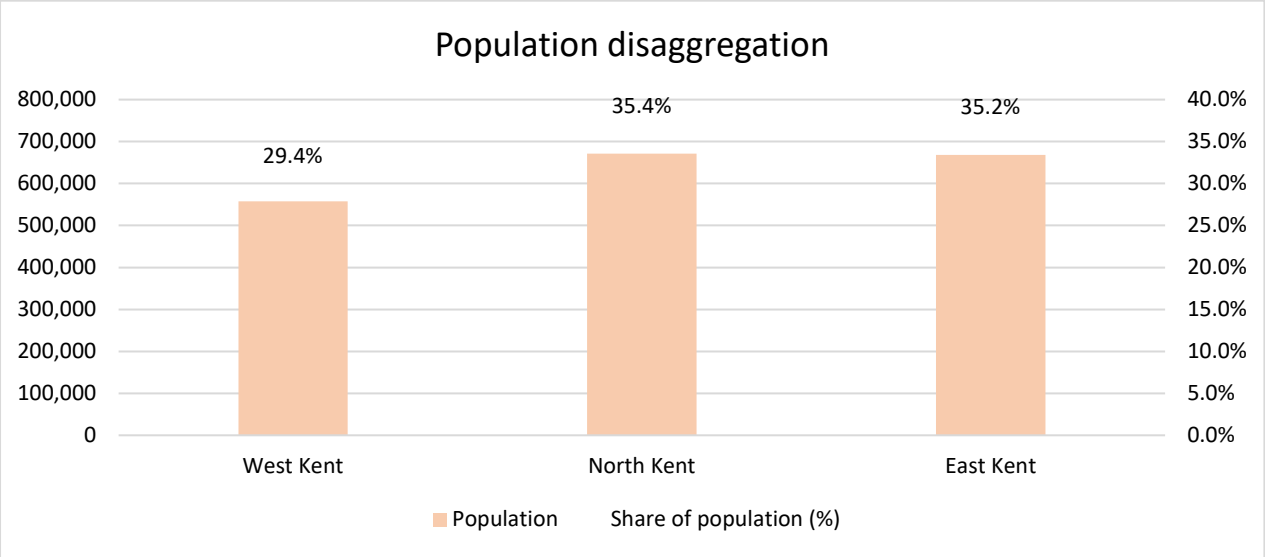
Councillor/Population numbers

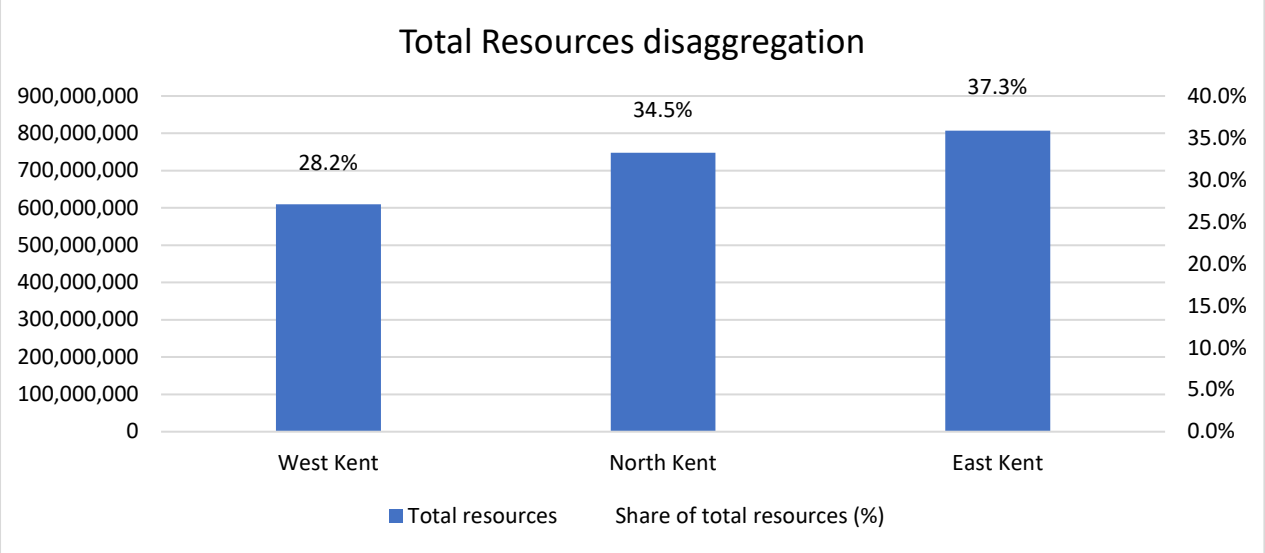
Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Population	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
East Kent	Ashford	138,283	668,247	22,274.9	11,137.45	6,682.47
	Dover	118,591				
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,995				
	Canterbury	159,939				
	Thanet	140,439				
West Kent	Sevenoaks	121,262	557,675	18,589.16	9,294.58	5,576.75
	Tonbridge and Malling	135,206				
	Tunbridge Wells	117,020				
	Maidstone	184,187				
North Kent	Dartford	120,699	671,129	22,370.96	11,185.48	6,711.29
	Gravesham	107,737				

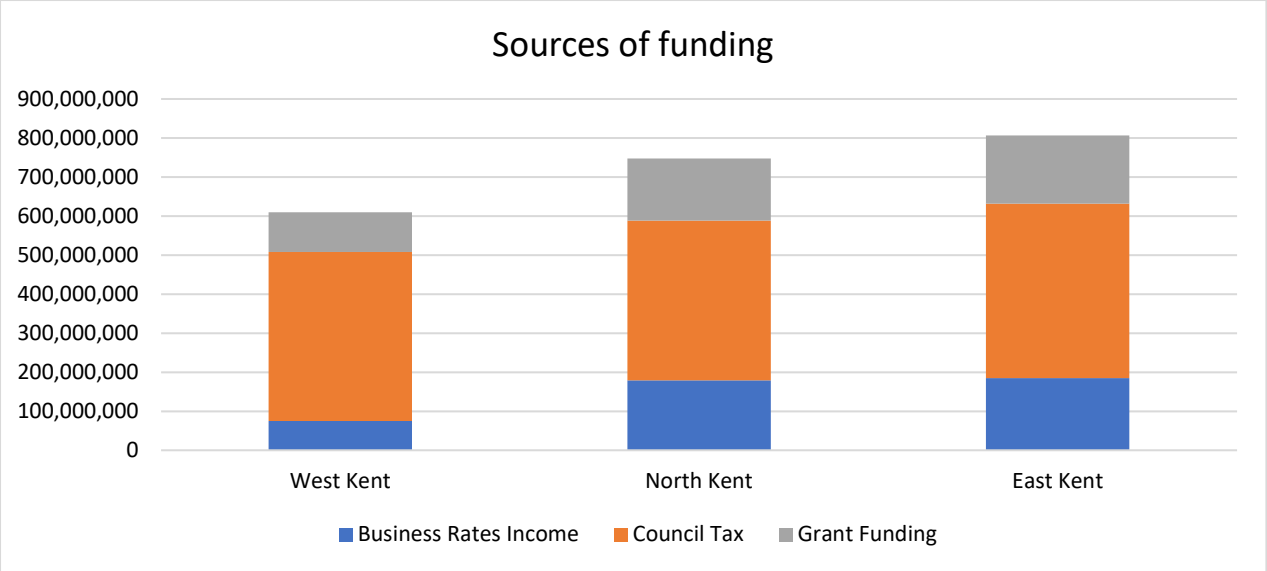
	Medway	286,800				
	Swale	155,893				
		1,897,051				

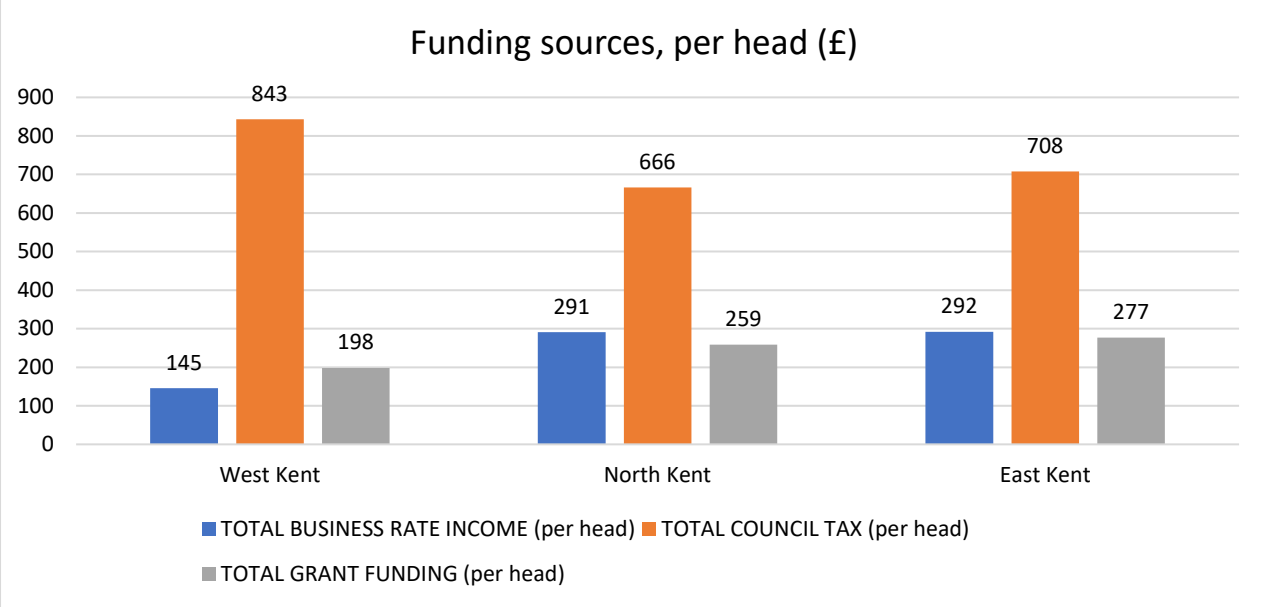
Funding Disaggregation Model

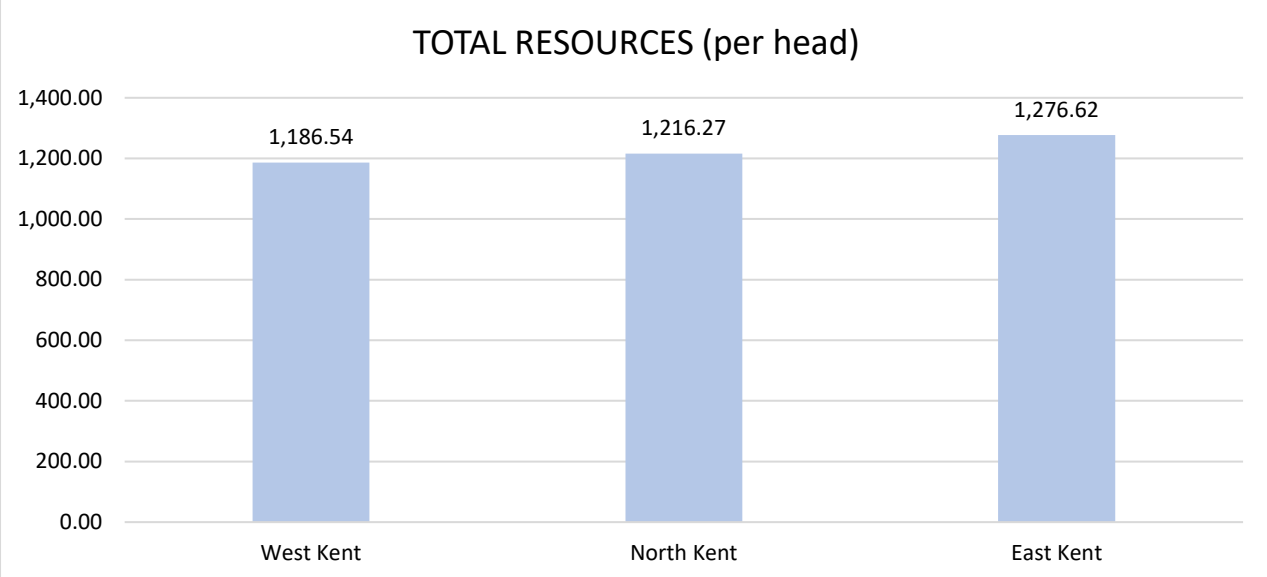
Information on major funding streams received by cluster (including Council Tax, grant funding and Business Rates Retention) using a model from Pixel which uses data from publicly available sources and Council returns to government.






Sources of funding
900,000,000
800,000,000
700,000,000
600,000,000
500,000,000
400,000,000
300,000,000
200,000,000
100,000,000
0
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Business Rates Income
Council Tax
Grant Funding

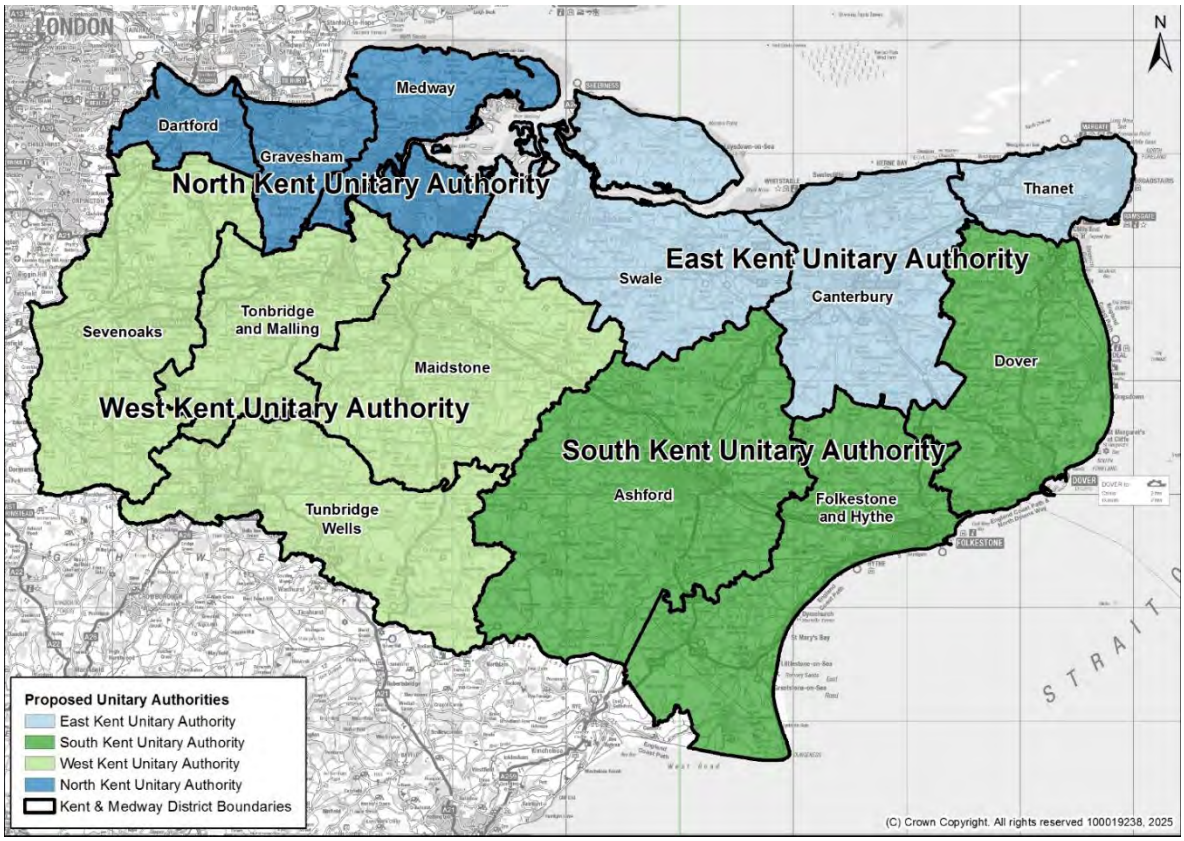

Funding sources, per head (£)
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
145
843
198
291
666
259
292
708
277
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
TOTAL BUSINESS RATE INCOME (per head)
TOTAL COUNCIL TAX (per head)
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING (per head)


TOTAL RESOURCES (per head)
1,400.00
1,200.00
1,000.00
800.00
600.00
400.00
200.00
0.00
1,186.54
1,216.27
1,276.62
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent

Section 3.2: Model 2 (Four Unitaries NSEW)

Model 2 (four unitaries, NESW):	**North** (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway) **East** (Canterbury, Swale, Thanet) **South** (Ashford, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe) **West** (Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells)

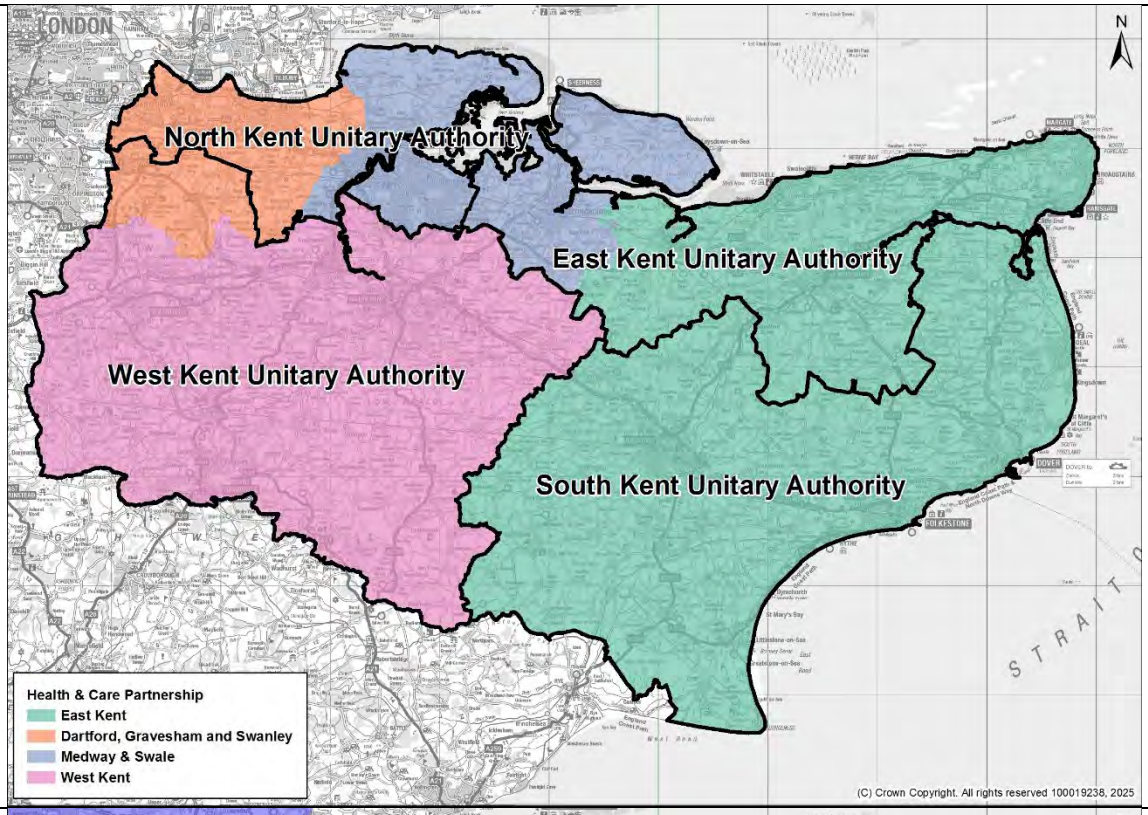
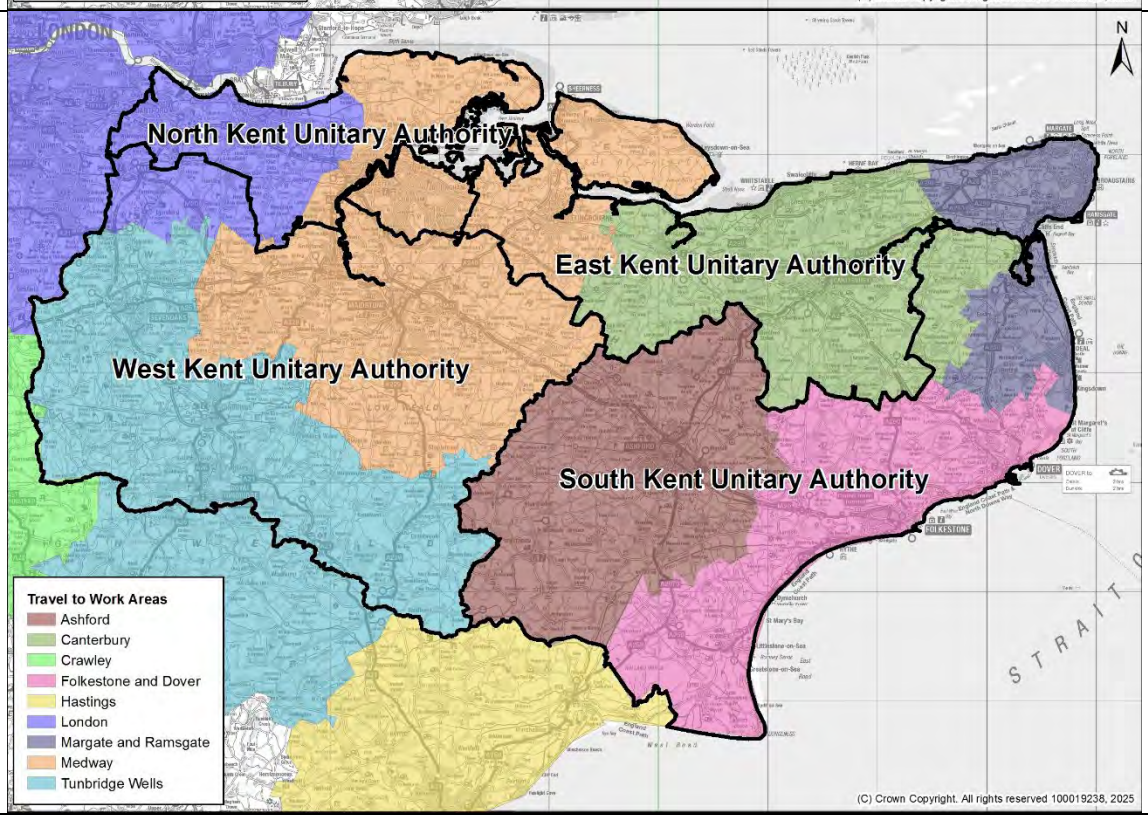
Map



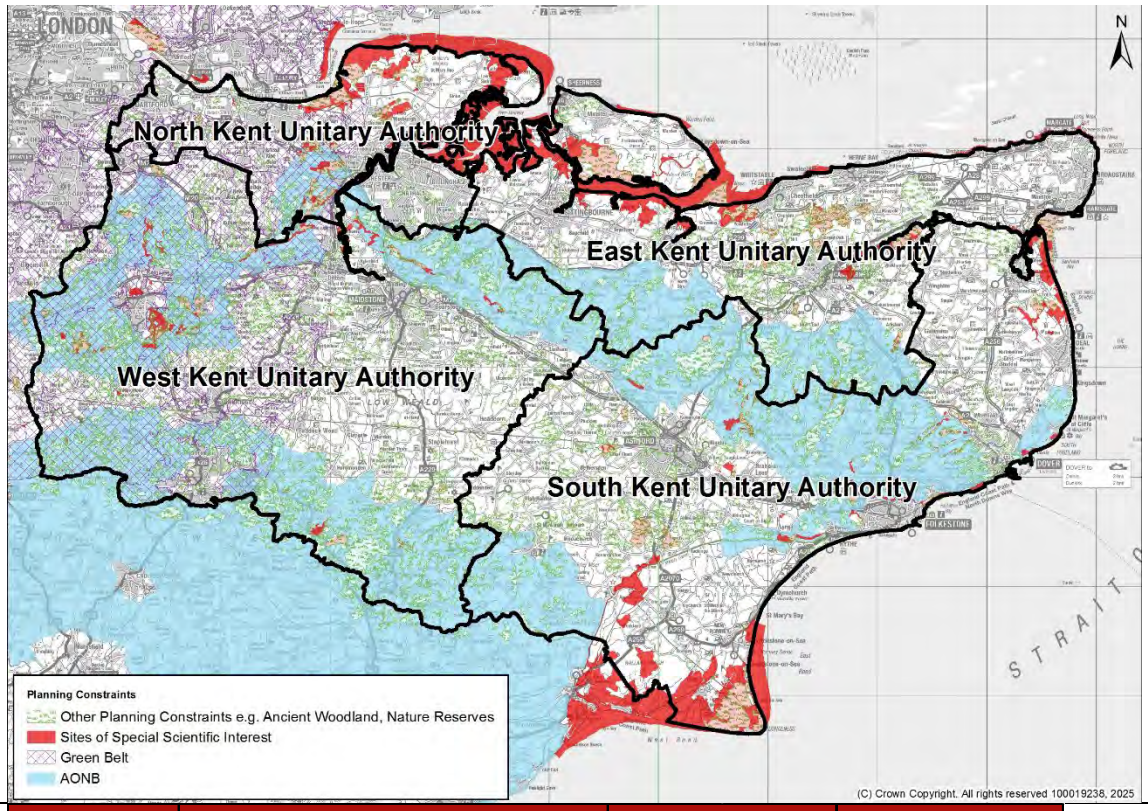
Population:

Potential Unitary	District	District population (mid-2022)	Unitary population (mid-2022)	Potential growth by 2035*
North Kent	Dartford	118,820	**508,492**	*26k to 77k*
	Gravesham	106,970		
	Medway	282,702		
East Kent	Canterbury	157,550	**452,858**	*32k to 69k*
	Swale	154,619		
	Thanet	140,689		
South Kent	Ashford	135,610	**363,320**	*35k to 53k*
	Dover	117,473		
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,237		
West Kent	Maidstone	180,428	**551,223**	*39k to 72k*
	Sevenoaks	121,106		
	Tonbridge and Malling	133,661		
	Tunbridge Wells	116,028		

**Two estimates based off the % growth between 2022 and 2035 for each district from: a) the ONS Sub-National Population Projections and b) the KCC Housing Led Forecast. Weighted by each district's contribution towards the UA's total population (2022 MYE).*

NHS Health & Care Partnership alignment:	
Travel to Work Areas:	

Spatial planning constraints:



Indicative Local Housing Need - annual (new standard method)

Potential Unitary	District	Indicative Local Housing Need (new method)		Estimated avg household size*
North Kent	Dartford	712	2,978	*2.51*
	Gravesham	672		
	Medway	1,594		
East Kent	Canterbury	1,216	3,412	*2.33*
	Swale	1,048		
	Thanet	1,148		
South Kent	Ashford	952	2,557	*2.33*
	Dover	746		
	Folkestone and Hythe	859		
West Kent	Maidstone	1,358	4,700	*2.42*
	Sevenoaks	1,149		
	Tonbridge and Malling	1,096		
	Tunbridge Wells	1,098		

**Estimated by taking the average household size in each district (from Census 2021) and producing a weighted average based on the LHN.*

Social and Demographic Information Drawn from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion

Population Composition

	West	North	East	South	Kent	England
Males	48.75%	48.92%	48.65%	48.71%	48.72%	49.00%
Females	51.25%	51.08%	51.35%	51.29%	51.28%	51.00%
Population Aged 0-15	19.81%	21.14%	17.81%	18.00%	19.12%	18.50%
Population Aged 16 to 64	60.30%	62.79%	60.52%	59.08%	60.43%	62.88%
Population Aged 65+	19.89%	16.07%	21.67%	22.92%	20.45%	18.61%

IMD Score

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (combining indicators under seven different domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment Deprivation).

West	North	East	South	Kent	England
13.73	22.21	24.80	21.43	19.54	21.76

Unemployment

The proportion of working age people receiving benefits for unemployment.

	West	North	East	South	Kent	England
Unemployment benefit claimants (Jobseekers Allowance and out of work Universal Credit claimants)	2.66%	4.03%	4.15%	3.63%	3.47%	4.22%
Youth unemployment (18-24 receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	4.34%	6.71%	5.87%	6.79%	5.72%	5.46%
Older person unemployment (50+ receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	0.93%	1.51%	1.42%	1.21%	1.20%	1.65%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), female	2.51%	3.67%	3.46%	3.15%	3.07%	3.75%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), male	2.82%	4.40%	4.87%	4.12%	3.89%	4.71%

Average House Price

Average property price for all dwelling types between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024

West	North	East	South	Kent	England
£375,814	£287,693	£263,733	£288,232	£313,496	£313,307

Crime

Total recorded crimes and crimes per 1,000 people between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024.

	West	North	East	South	Kent	England
Total Crime	44,508	57,388	49,644	32,843	152,915	5,173,622
Rate	80.7	112.9	109.5	90.3	95.9	90.6

Health

Proportion of claimants of disability benefits from the DWP.

	West	North	East	South	Kent	England
Independence Payment (PIP)	6.81%	8.91%	11.58%	10.90%	9.24%	9.20%
Disability benefit (DLA)	2.05%	2.49%	2.92%	2.70%	2.51%	2.10%
Older people social care benefit (Attendance Allowance)	12.34%	13.71%	14.11%	14.02%	13.43%	13.23%
Households on Universal Credit, Disabled Child Entitlement	1.66%	2.37%	2.91%	2.32%	2.27%	1.82%
Households on Universal Credit - Limited Capability for Work Entitlement	4.28%	6.27%	7.68%	6.63%	5.97%	6.14%

Education

Level of Qualification of people aged 16+ from the 2021 Census.

	West	North	East	South	Kent	England
No Qualifications	15.72%	18.86%	19.82%	18.78%	17.96%	18.08%
Apprenticeship	5.25%	5.94%	5.75%	5.92%	5.61%	5.32%
Other	2.64%	3.04%	2.92%	3.03%	2.88%	2.76%
Level 1	10.06%	11.81%	10.86%	11.37%	10.79%	9.69%
Level 2	15.08%	15.61%	14.11%	15.25%	14.86%	13.32%
Level 3	16.68%	17.38%	18.68%	17.40%	17.42%	16.92%
Level 4/5	34.57%	27.37%	27.87%	28.24%	30.49%	33.92%

Councillor/Electorate numbers:

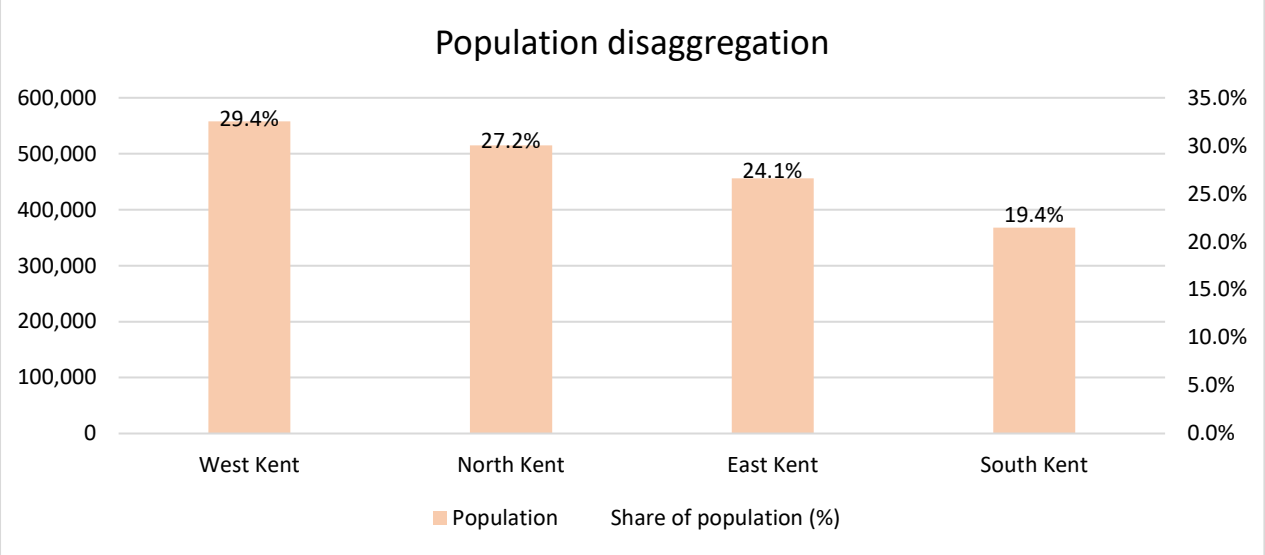
Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Electorate	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
West Kent	Sevenoaks	90,283	407,167	13,572	6,786	4,071
	Tonbridge and Malling	100,052				
	Tunbridge Wells	85,162				
	Maidstone	131,670				
North Kent	Dartford	84,833	367,424	12,247	6,123	3,674
	Gravesham	76,516				
	Medway	206,075				
East Kent	Canterbury	108,317	321,747	10,724	5,362	3,217
	Swale	110,044				
	Thanet	103,386				
South Kent	Ashford	95,087	252,519	8,417	4,208	2,525
	Dover	87,238				
	Folkestone and Hythe	70,194				
		1,348,857				

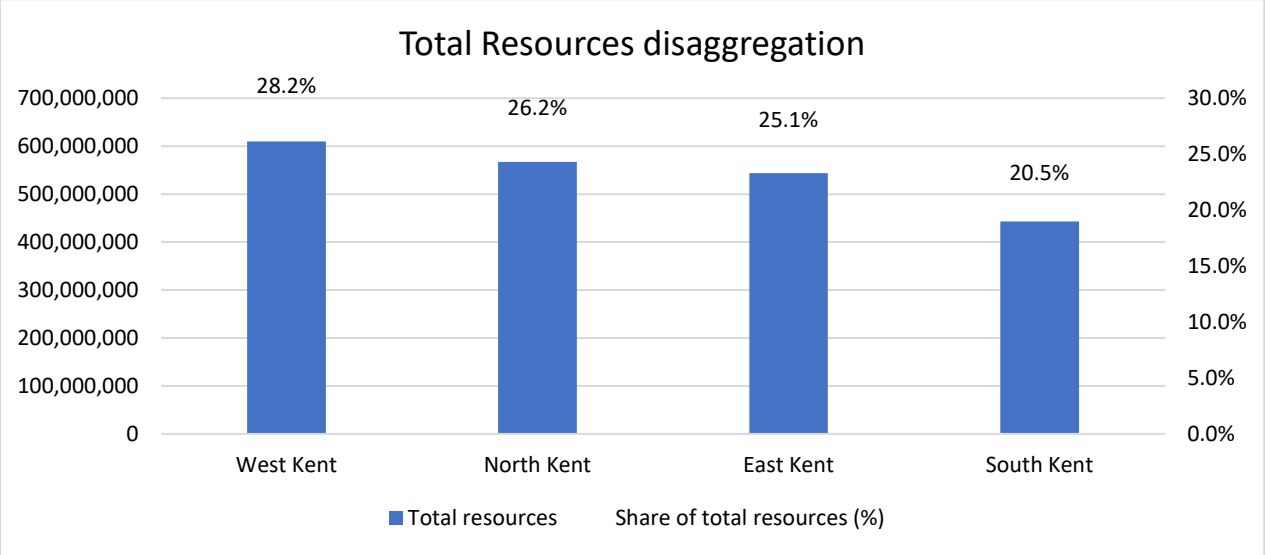
Councillor/population numbers:

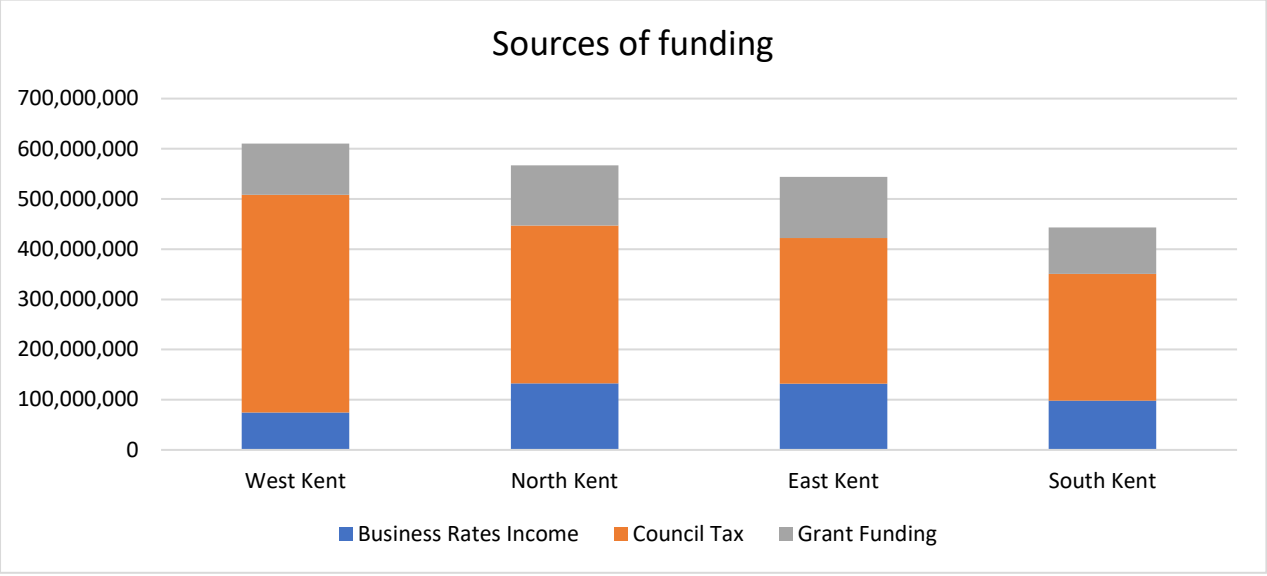
Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Population	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
West Kent	Sevenoaks	121,262	557,675	18,589.16	9,294.58	5,576.75
	Tonbridge and Malling	135,206				
	Tunbridge Wells	117,020				
	Maidstone	184,187				
North Kent	Dartford	120,699	515,236	17,174.53	8,587.26	5,152.36
	Gravesham	107,737				
	Medway	286,800				
East Kent	Canterbury	159,939	456,271	15,209.03	7,604.51	4,562.71
	Swale	155,893				
	Thanet	140,439				
South Kent	Ashford	138,283	367,869	12,262.3	6,131.15	3,678.69
	Dover	118,591				
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,995				
		1,897,051				

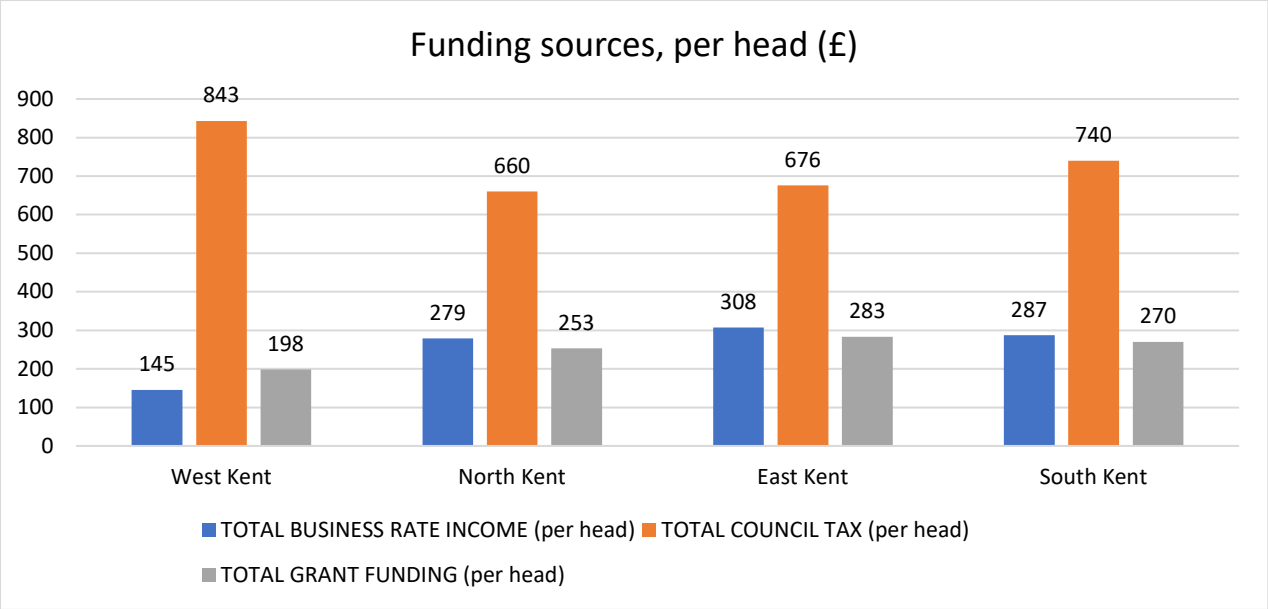
Funding Disaggregation Model

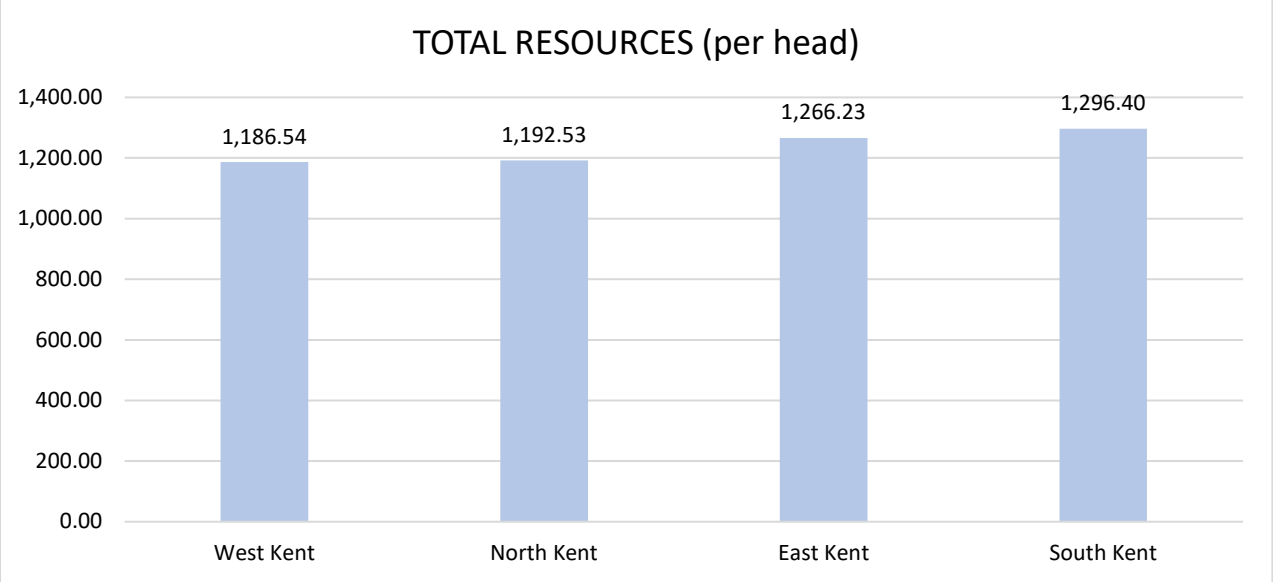
Information on major funding streams received by cluster (including Council Tax, grant funding and Business Rates Retention) using a model from Pixel which uses data from publicly available sources and Council returns to government.







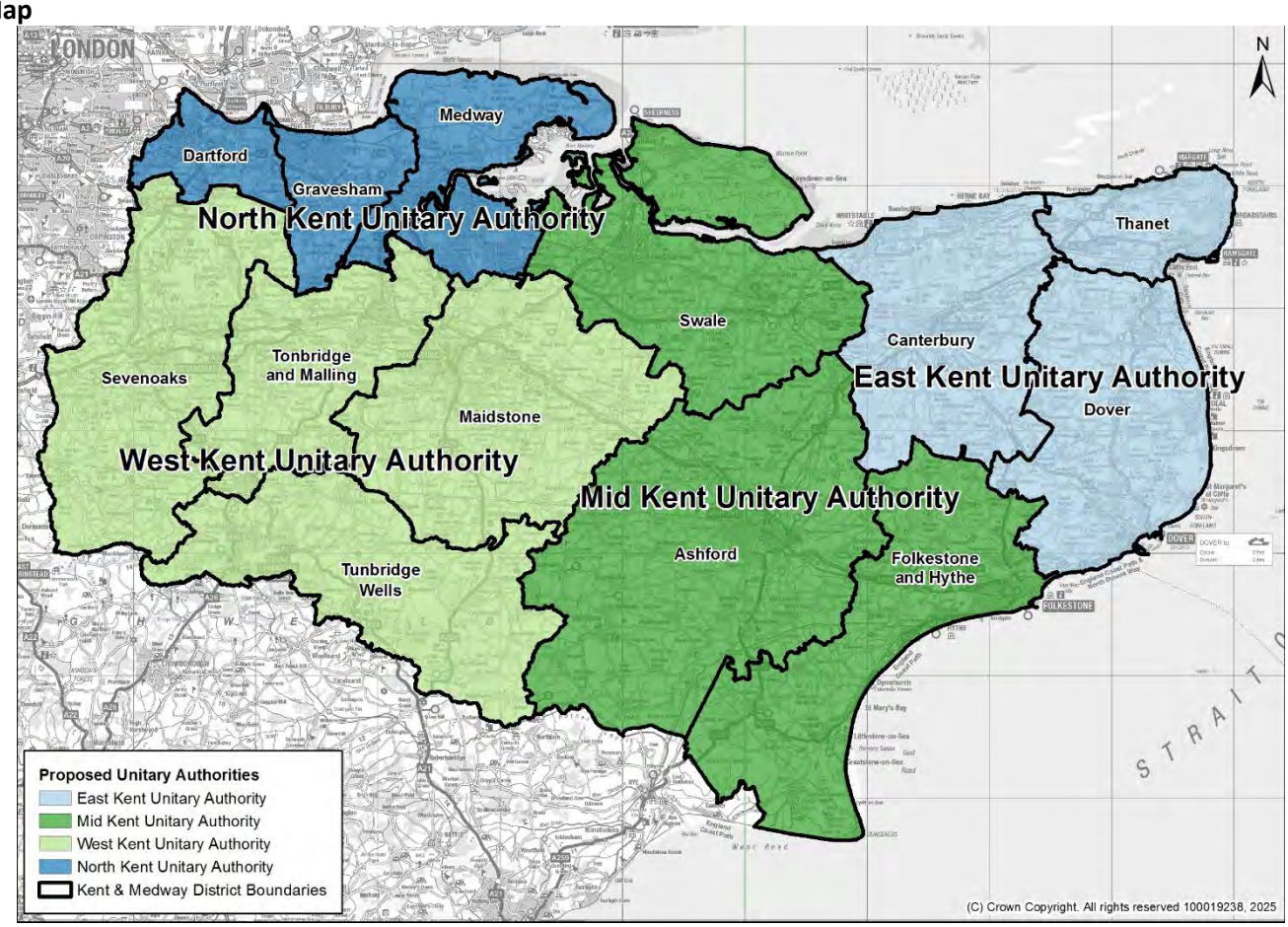

Funding sources, per head (£)
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
843
660
676
740
145
198
279
253
308
283
287
270
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
South Kent
TOTAL BUSINESS RATE INCOME (per head)
TOTAL COUNCIL TAX (per head)
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING (per head)


TOTAL RESOURCES (per head)
1,400.00
1,200.00
1,000.00
800.00
600.00
400.00
200.00
0.00
1,186.54
1,192.53
1,266.23
1,296.40
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
South Kent

Section 3.3: Model 3 (Four Unitaries NEMidW)

Model 3 (four unitaries, NEMidW):	**North** (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway) **East** (Canterbury, Dover, Thanet) **Mid** (Ashford, Folkestone and Hythe, Swale) **West** (Maidstone, Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells)

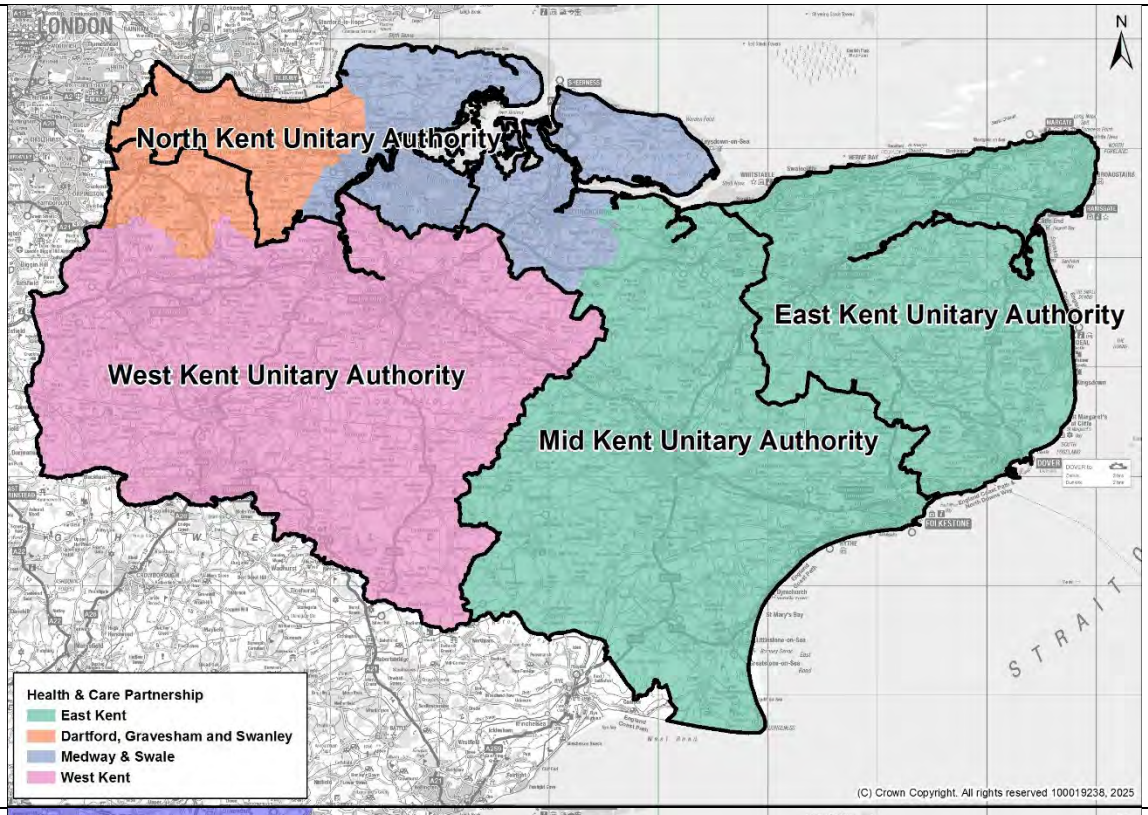
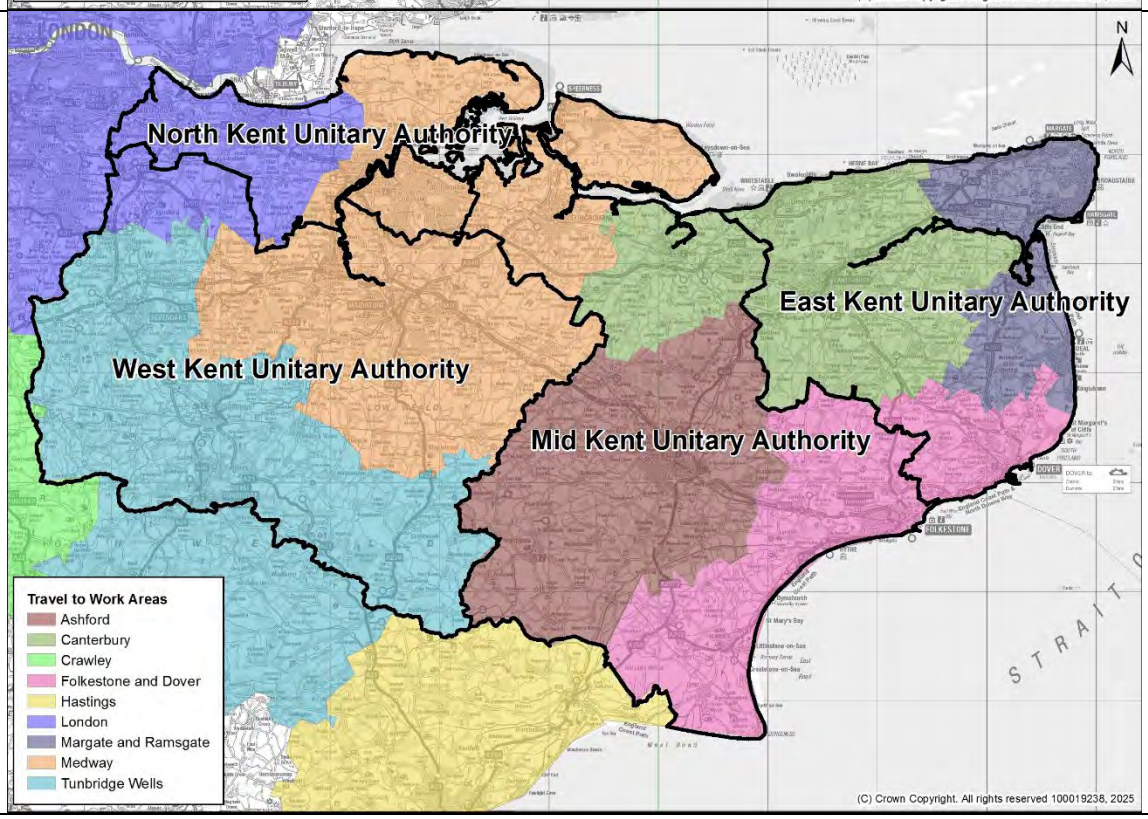
Map



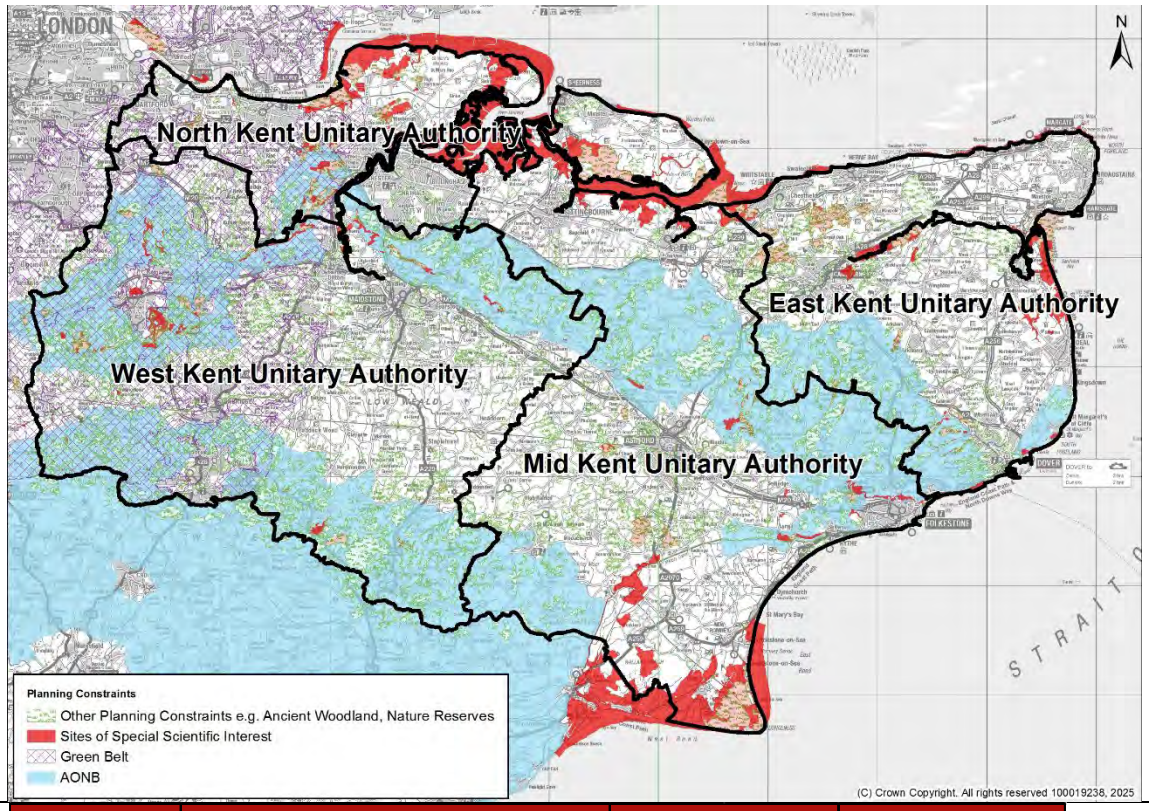
Population:

Potential Unitary	District	District population (mid-2022)	Unitary population (mid-2022)	Potential growth by 2035*
North Kent	Dartford	118,820	**508,492**	*26k to 77k*
	Gravesham	106,970		
	Medway	282,702		
East Kent	Canterbury	157,550	**415,712**	*30k to 61k*
	Dover	117,473		
	Thanet	140,689		
Mid Kent	Ashford	135,610	**400,466**	*38k to 60k*
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,237		
	Swale	154,619		
West Kent	Maidstone	180,428	**551,223**	*39k to 72k*
	Sevenoaks	121,106		
	Tonbridge and Malling	133,661		
	Tunbridge Wells	116,028		

**Two estimates based off the % growth between 2022 and 2035 for each district from: a) the ONS Sub-National Population Projections and b) the KCC Housing Led Forecast. Weighted by each district's contribution towards the UA's total population (2022 MYE).*

NHS Health & Care Partnership alignment:	
Travel to Work Areas:	

Spatial planning constraints:



Indicative Local Housing Need - annual (new standard method)

Potential Unitary	District	Indicative Local Housing Need (new method)		Estimated avg household size*
North Kent	Dartford	712	**2,978**	*2.51*
	Gravesham	672		
	Medway	1,594		
East Kent	Canterbury	1,216	**3,110**	*2.28*
	Dover	746		
	Thanet	1,148		
Mid Kent	Ashford	952	**2,859**	*2.39*
	Folkestone and Hythe	859		
	Swale	1,048		
West Kent	Maidstone	1,358	**4,700**	*2.42*
	Sevenoaks	1,149		
	Tonbridge and Malling	1,096		
	Tunbridge Wells	1,098		

**Estimated by taking the average household size in each district (from Census 2021) and producing a weighted average based on the LHN.*

Social and Demographic Information Drawn from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion

Population Composition

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Males	48.75%	48.92%	49.06%	48.30%	48.72%	49.00%
Females	51.25%	51.08%	50.94%	51.70%	51.28%	51.00%
Population Aged 0-15	19.81%	21.14%	18.79%	17.03%	19.12%	18.50%
Population Aged 16 to 64	60.30%	62.79%	60.17%	59.60%	60.43%	62.88%
Population Aged 65+	19.89%	16.07%	21.04%	23.37%	20.45%	18.61%

IMD Score

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (combining indicators under seven different domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment Deprivation).

West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
13.73	22.21	23.39	23.23	19.54	21.76

Unemployment

The proportion of working age people receiving benefits for unemployment.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Unemployment benefit claimants (Jobseekers Allowance and out of work Universal Credit claimants)	2.66%	4.03%	3.64%	4.19%	3.47%	4.22%
Youth unemployment (18-24 receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	4.34%	6.71%	6.67%	5.87%	5.72%	5.46%
Older person unemployment (50+ receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	0.93%	1.51%	1.25%	1.39%	1.20%	1.65%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), female	2.51%	3.67%	3.18%	3.46%	3.07%	3.75%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), male	2.82%	4.40%	4.11%	4.96%	3.89%	4.71%

Average House Price

Average property price for all dwelling types between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024

West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
£375,814	£287,693	£282,481	£267,711	£313,496	£313,307

Crime

Total recorded crimes and crimes per 1,000 people between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Total Crime	44,508	57,388	37,862	44,625	152,915	5,173,622
Rate	80.7	112.9	94.5	107.1	95.9	90.6

Health

Proportion of claimants of disability benefits from the DWP.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Independence Payment (PIP)	6.81%	8.91%	10.70%	11.84%	9.24%	9.20%
Disability benefit (DLA)	2.05%	2.49%	2.91%	2.73%	2.51%	2.10%
Older people social care benefit (Attendance Allowance)	12.34%	13.71%	14.02%	14.11%	13.43%	13.23%
Households on Universal Credit, Disabled Child Entitlement	1.66%	2.37%	2.60%	2.68%	2.27%	1.82%
Households on Universal Credit - Limited Capability for Work Entitlement	4.28%	6.27%	6.80%	7.58%	5.97%	6.14%

Education

Level of Qualification of people aged 16+ from the 2021 Census.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
No Qualifications	15.72%	18.86%	19.80%	18.95%	17.96%	18.08%
Apprenticeship	5.25%	5.94%	6.06%	5.60%	5.61%	5.32%
Other	2.64%	3.04%	2.99%	2.95%	2.88%	2.76%
Level 1	10.06%	11.81%	11.79%	10.43%	10.79%	9.69%
Level 2	15.08%	15.61%	15.29%	13.98%	14.86%	13.32%
Level 3	16.68%	17.38%	17.19%	18.98%	17.42%	16.92%
Level 4/5	34.57%	27.37%	26.89%	29.11%	30.49%	33.92%

Councillor/Electorate numbers:

Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Electorate	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
Mid Kent	Ashford	95,087	275,325	9,177	4,588	2,753
	Swale	110,044				
	Folkestone and Hythe	70,194				
West Kent	Sevenoaks	90,283	407,167	13,572	6,786	4,071
	Tonbridge and Malling	100,052				
	Tunbridge Wells	85,162				
	Maidstone	131,670				
North Kent	Dartford	84,833	367,424	12,247	6,123	3,674
	Gravesham	76,516				
	Medway	206,075				
East Kent	Canterbury	108,317	298,941	9,964	4,982	2,989
	Dover	87,238				
	Thanet	103,386				
		1,348,857				

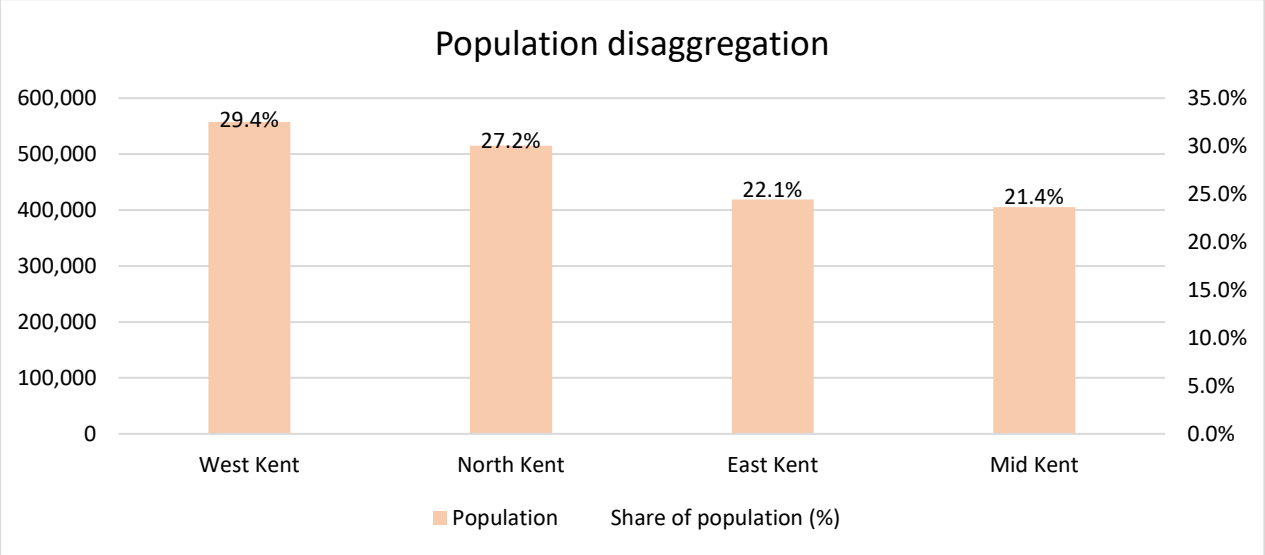
Councillor/population numbers:

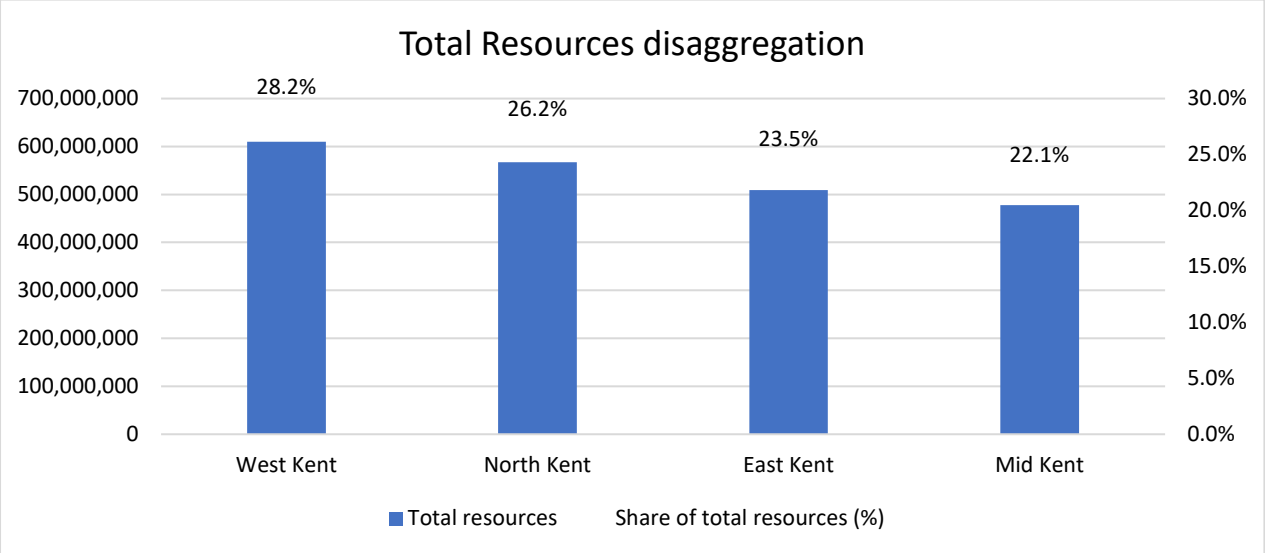
Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Population	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
Mid Kent	Ashford	138,283	405,171	13,505.70	6,752.85	4,057.71
	Swale	155,893				

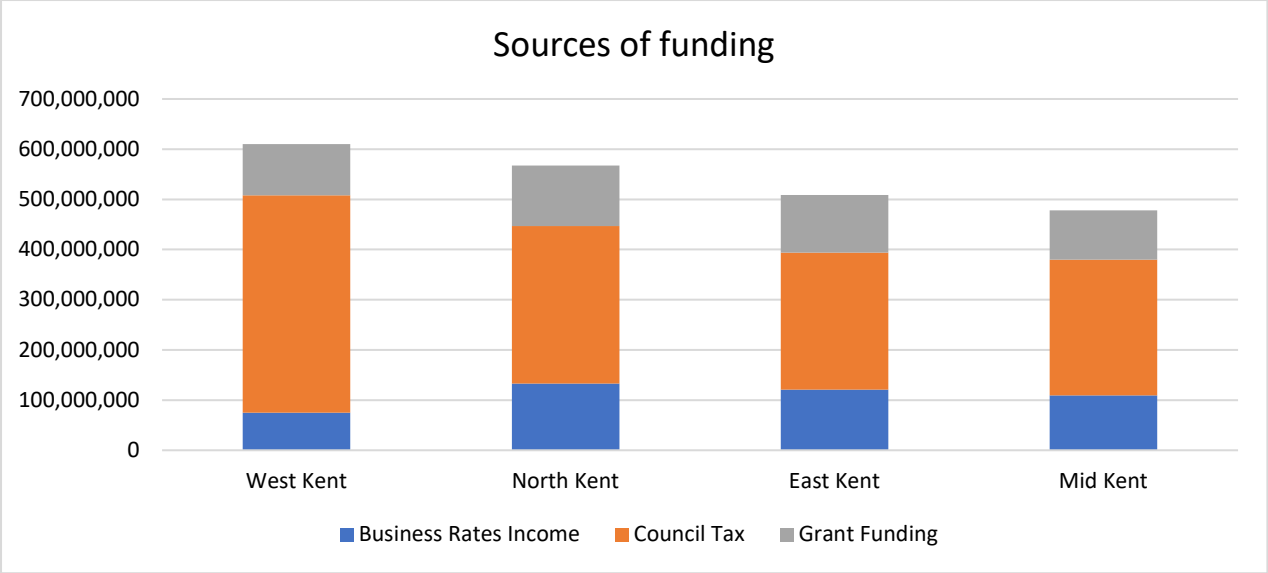
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,995				
West Kent	Sevenoaks	121,262	557,657	18,588.56	9,294.28	5,576.57
	Tonbridge and Malling	135,206				
	Tunbridge Wells	117,020				
	Maidstone	184,187				
North Kent	Dartford	120,699	515,236	17,174.53	8,587.26	5,152.36
	Gravesham	107,737				
	Medway	286,800				
East Kent	Canterbury	159,939	418,969	13,965.63	6,982.81	4,189.69
	Dover	118,591				
	Thanet	140,439				
		1,897,051				

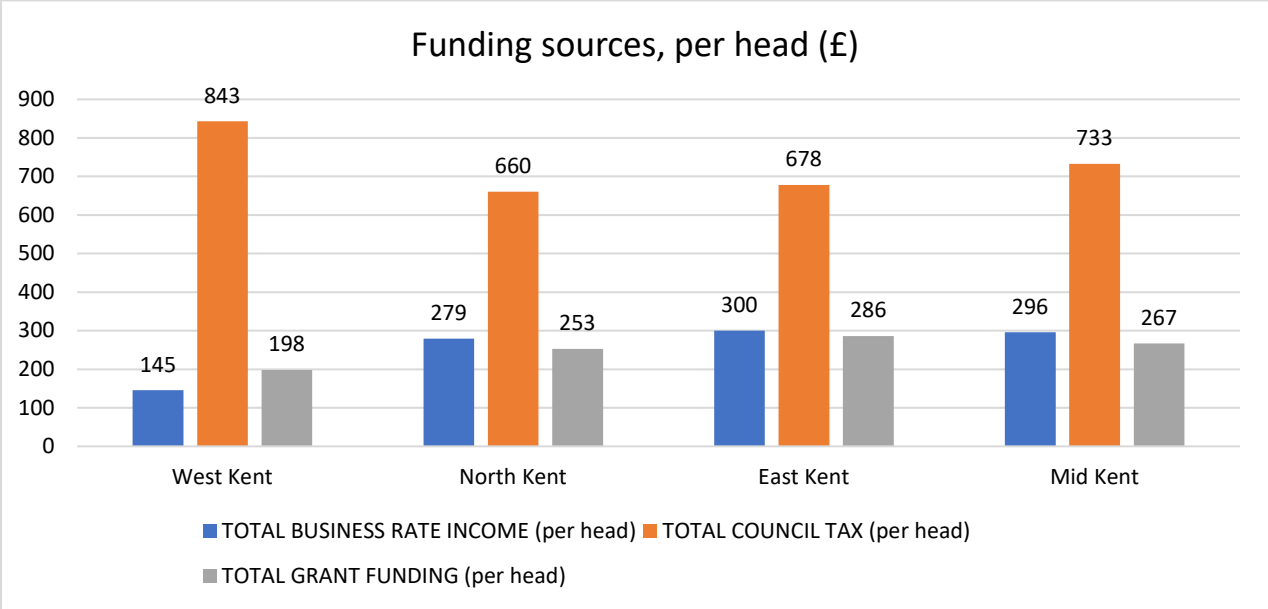
Funding Disaggregation Model

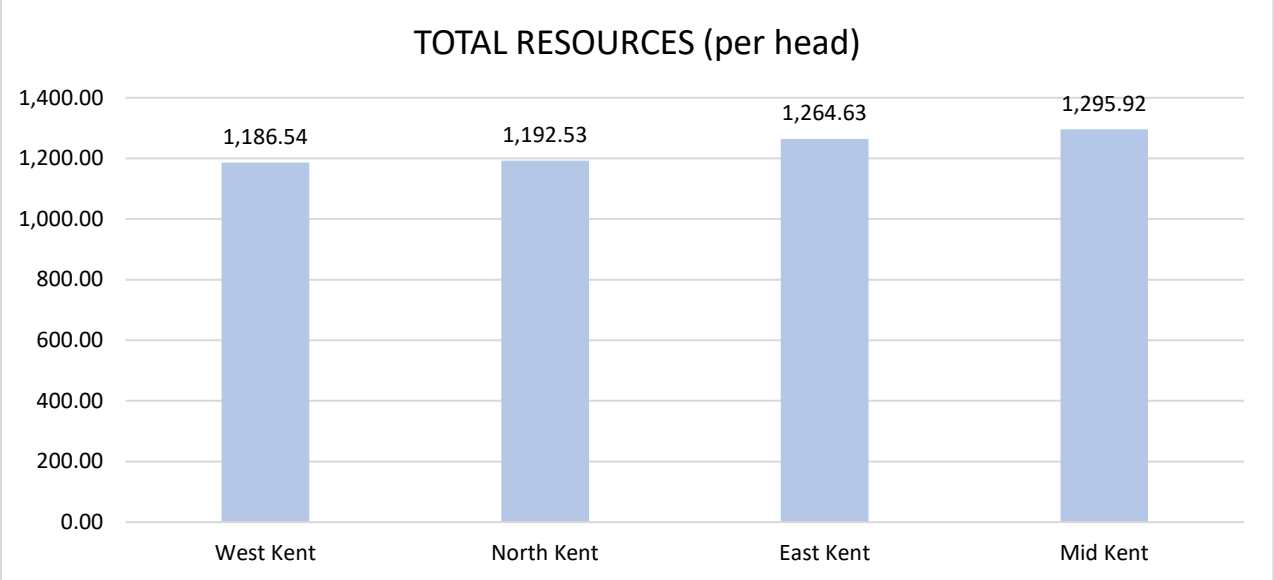
Information on major funding streams received by cluster (including Council Tax, grant funding and Business Rates Retention) using a model from Pixel which uses data from publicly available sources and Council returns to government.






Sources of funding
700,000,000
600,000,000
500,000,000
400,000,000
300,000,000
200,000,000
100,000,000
0
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Mid Kent
Business Rates Income
Council Tax
Grant Funding

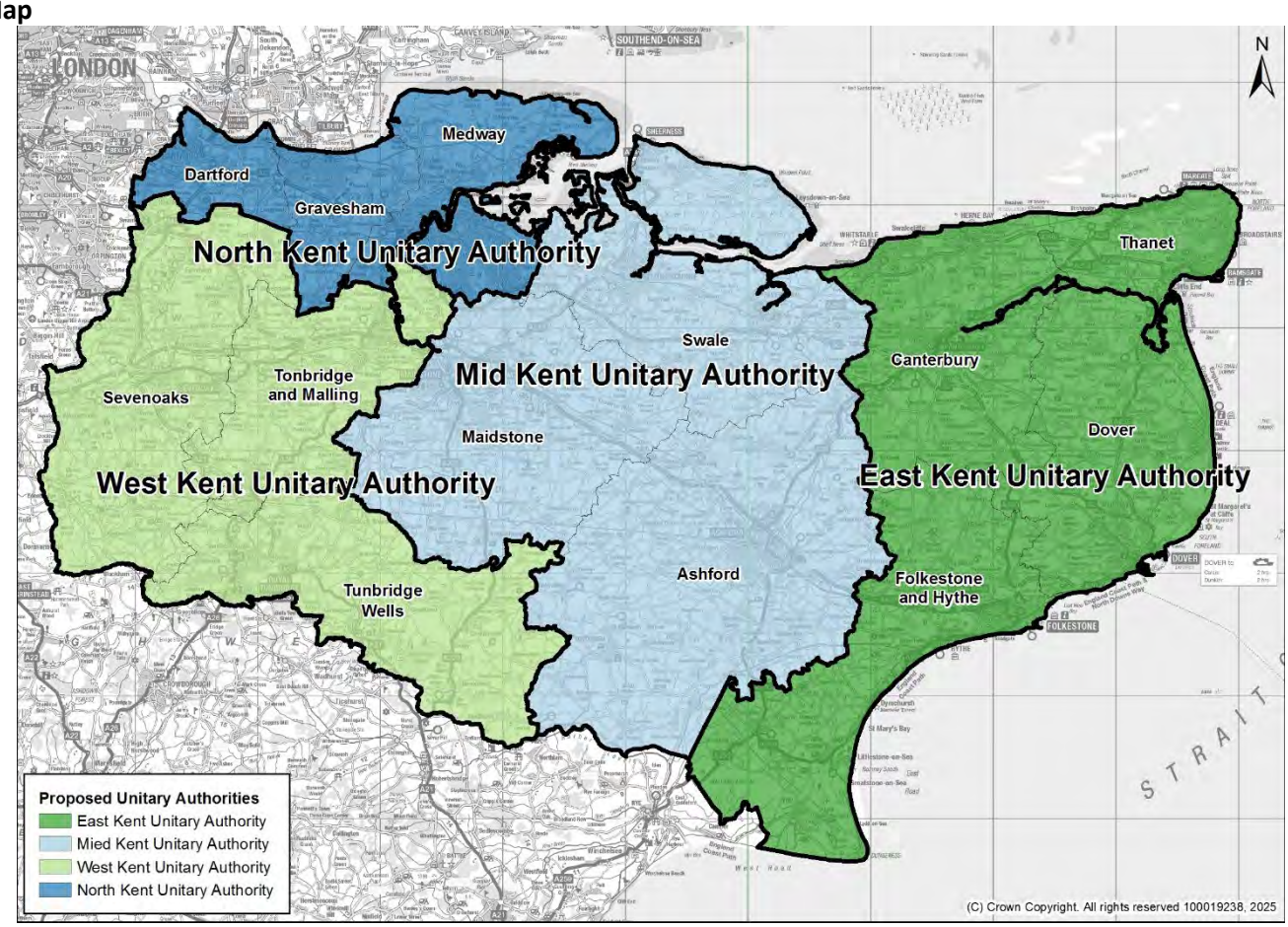

Funding sources, per head (£)
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
145
843
198
279
660
253
300
678
286
296
733
267
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Mid Kent
TOTAL BUSINESS RATE INCOME (per head)
TOTAL COUNCIL TAX (per head)
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING (per head)


TOTAL RESOURCES (per head)
1,400.00
1,200.00
1,000.00
800.00
600.00
400.00
200.00
0.00
1,186.54
1,192.53
1,264.63
1,295.92
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Mid Kent

Section 3.4: Model 4 (Four Unitaries NEMidW)

Model 4 (four unitaries, NEMidW):	**North** (Dartford, Gravesham, Medway) **East** (Canterbury, Dover, Folkestone and Hythe, Thanet) **Mid** (Ashford, Maidstone, Swale) **West** (Sevenoaks, Tonbridge and Malling, Tunbridge Wells)

Map

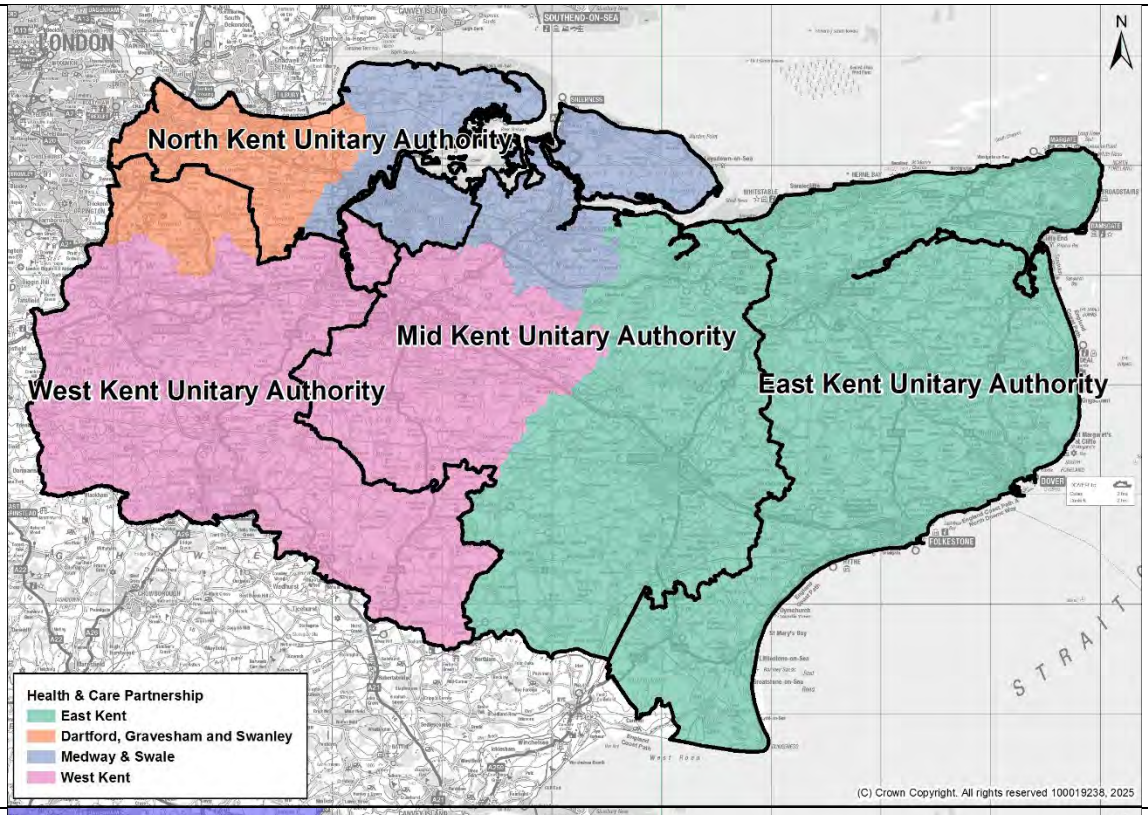


Population:

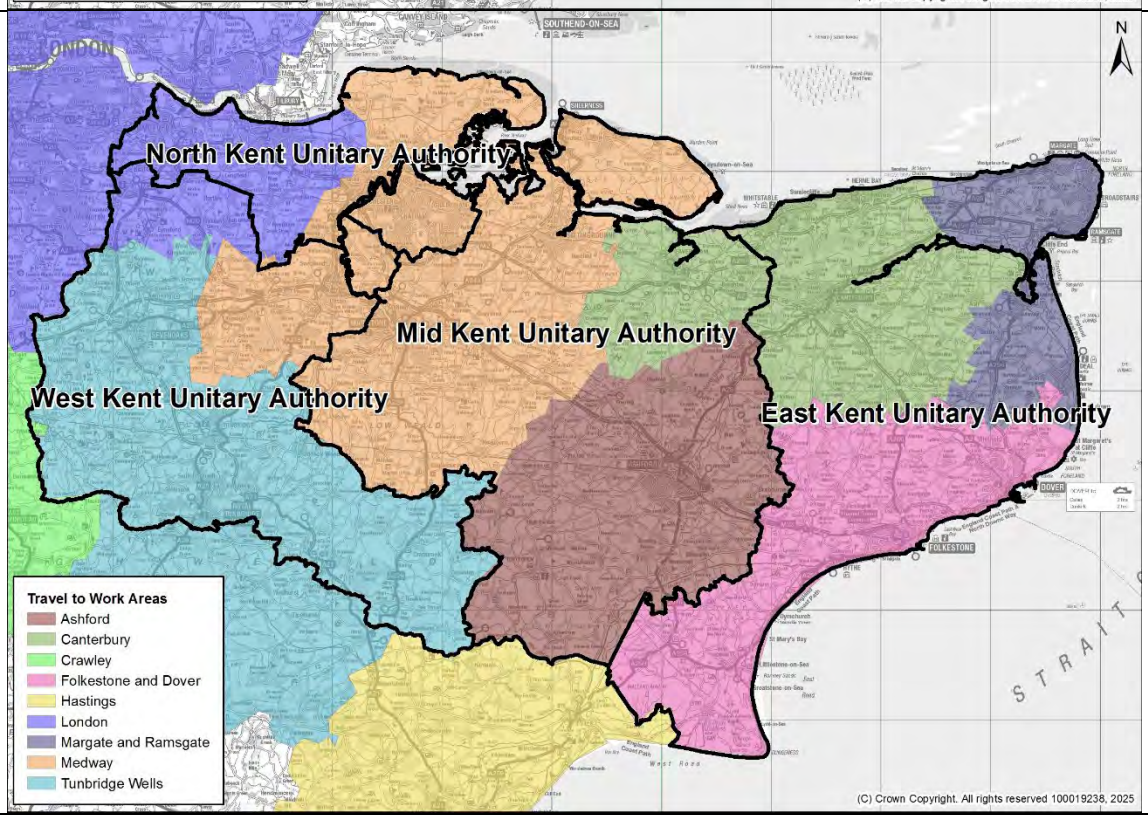
Potential Unitary	District	District population (mid-2022)	Unitary population (mid-2022)	Potential growth by 2035*
North Kent	Dartford	118,820	**508,492**	*26k to 77k*
	Gravesham	106,970		
	Medway	282,702		
East Kent	Canterbury	157,550	**525,949**	*39k to 75k*
	Dover	117,473		
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,237		
	Thanet	140,689		
Mid Kent	Ashford	135,610	**470,657**	*46k to 66k*
	Maidstone	180,428		
	Swale	154,619		
West Kent	Sevenoaks	121,106	**370,795**	*21k to 52k*
	Tonbridge and Malling	133,661		
	Tunbridge Wells	116,028		

**Two estimates based off the % growth between 2022 and 2035 for each district from: a) the ONS Sub-National Population Projections and b) the KCC Housing Led Forecast. Weighted by each district's contribution towards the UA's total population (2022 MYE).*

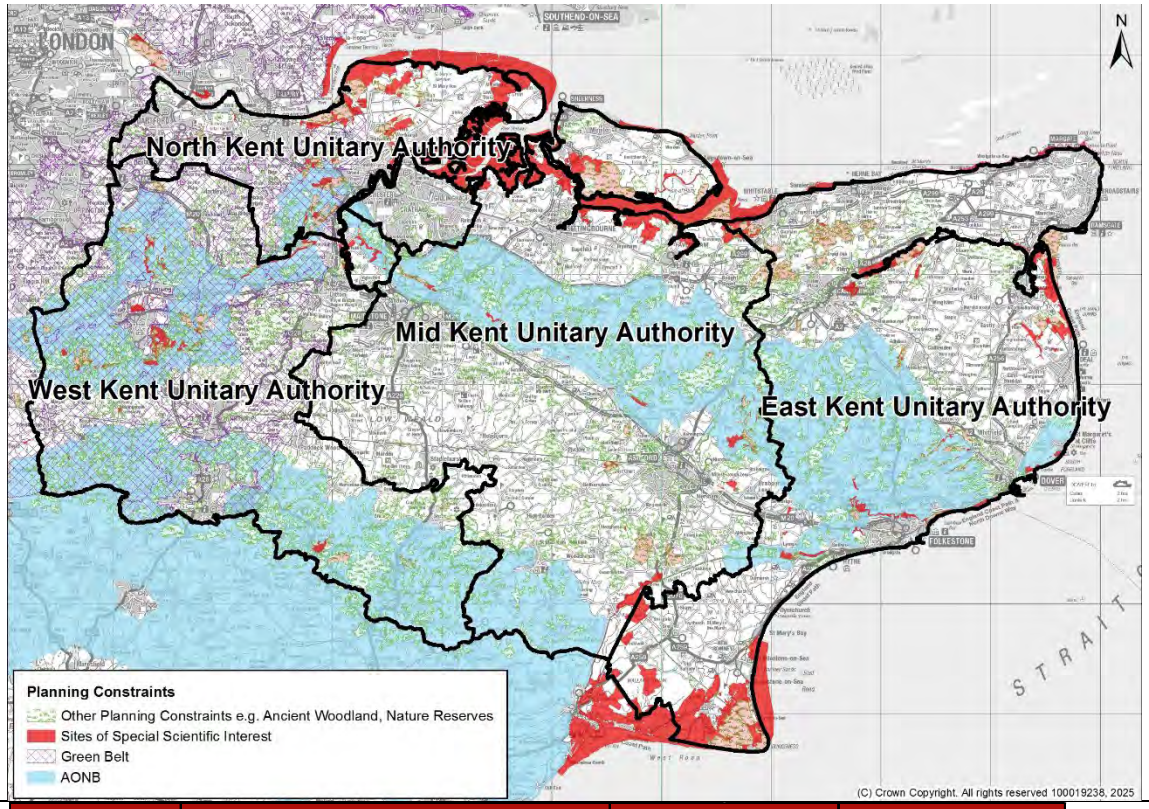
NHS Health & Care Partnership alignment:



Travel to Work Areas:



Spatial planning constraints:



Indicative Local Housing Need - annual (new standard method)

Potential Unitary	District	Indicative Local Housing Need (new method)		Estimated avg household size*
North Kent	Dartford	712	**2,978**	*2.51*
	Gravesham	672		
	Medway	1,594		
East Kent	Canterbury	1,216	**3,969**	*2.27*
	Dover	746		
	Folkestone and Hythe	859		
	Thanet	1,148		
Mid Kent	Ashford	952	**3,358**	*2.45*
	Maidstone	1,358		
	Swale	1,048		
West Kent	Sevenoaks	1,149	**3,342**	*2.41*
	Tonbridge and Malling	1,096		
	Tunbridge Wells	1,098		

**Estimated by taking the average household size in each district (from Census 2021) and producing a weighted average based on the LHN.*

Social and Demographic Information Drawn from Oxford Consultants for Social Inclusion

Population Composition

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Males	48.47%	48.92%	49.24%	48.39%	48.72%	49.00%
Females	51.53%	51.08%	50.76%	51.61%	51.28%	51.00%
Population Aged 0-15	19.96%	21.14%	19.60%	16.92%	19.12%	18.50%
Population Aged 16 to 64	59.74%	62.79%	61.14%	59.28%	60.43%	62.88%
Population Aged 65+	20.30%	16.07%	19.25%	23.79%	20.45%	18.61%

IMD Score

Index of Multiple Deprivation 2019 (combining indicators under seven different domains of deprivation: Income Deprivation; Employment Deprivation; Education Skills and Training Deprivation; Health Deprivation and Disability; Crime; Barriers to Housing and Services and Living Environment Deprivation).

West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
12.41	22.21	20.58	23.42	19.54	21.76

Unemployment

The proportion of working age people receiving benefits for unemployment.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Unemployment benefit claimants (Jobseekers Allowance and out of work Universal Credit claimants)	2.37%	4.03%	3.37%	4.18%	3.47%	4.22%
Youth unemployment (18-24 receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	3.59%	6.71%	6.12%	6.14%	5.72%	5.46%
Older person unemployment (50+ receiving JSA or Universal Credit)	0.86%	1.51%	1.16%	1.38%	1.20%	1.65%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), female	2.25%	3.67%	3.05%	3.47%	3.07%	3.75%
Unemployment benefit (JSA and Universal Credit), male	2.49%	4.40%	3.71%	4.93%	3.89%	4.71%

Average House Price

Average property price for all dwelling types between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024

West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
£390,940	£287,693	£307,893	£267,553	£313,496	£313,307

Crime

Total recorded crimes and crimes per 1,000 people between Dec-2023 to Nov-2024.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
Total Crime	26,682	57,388	46,050	54,263	152,915	5,173,622
Rate	71.9	112.9	97.8	103.0	95.9	90.6

Health

Proportion of claimants of disability benefits from the DWP.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England

Independence Payment (PIP)	6.48%	8.91%	9.02%	12.00%	9.24%	9.20%
Disability benefit (DLA)	2.02%	2.49%	2.66%	2.72%	2.51%	2.10%
Older people social care benefit (Attendance Allowance)	12.27%	13.71%	12.89%	14.49%	13.43%	13.23%
Households on Universal Credit, Disabled Child Entitlement	1.55%	2.37%	2.46%	2.56%	2.27%	1.82%
Households on Universal Credit - Limited Capability for Work Entitlement	3.94%	6.27%	6.17%	7.37%	5.97%	6.14%

Education

Level of Qualification of people aged 16+ from the 2021 Census.

	West	North	Mid	East	Kent	England
No Qualifications	14.89%	18.86%	18.99%	19.04%	17.96%	18.08%
Apprenticeship	4.88%	5.94%	5.98%	5.75%	5.61%	5.32%
Other	2.50%	3.04%	2.91%	3.00%	2.88%	2.76%
Level 1	9.66%	11.81%	11.50%	10.68%	10.79%	9.69%
Level 2	14.99%	15.61%	15.39%	14.17%	14.86%	13.32%
Level 3	16.28%	17.38%	17.30%	18.61%	17.42%	16.92%
Level 4/5	36.81%	27.37%	27.93%	28.74%	30.49%	33.92%

Councillor/Electorate numbers:

Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Electorate	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
Mid Kent	Ashford	95,087	336,801	11,226	5,613	3,368
	Swale	110,044				
	Maidstone	131,670				
West Kent	Sevenoaks	90,283	275,497	9,183	4,591	2,754
	Tonbridge and Malling	100,052				
	Tunbridge Wells	85,162				
North Kent	Dartford	84,833	367,424	12,247	6,123	3,674
	Gravesham	76,516				
	Medway	206,075				
East Kent	Canterbury	108,317	369,135	12,304	6,152	3,691
	Dover	87,238				
	Thanet	103,386				
	Folkestone and Hythe	70,194				
		1,348,857				

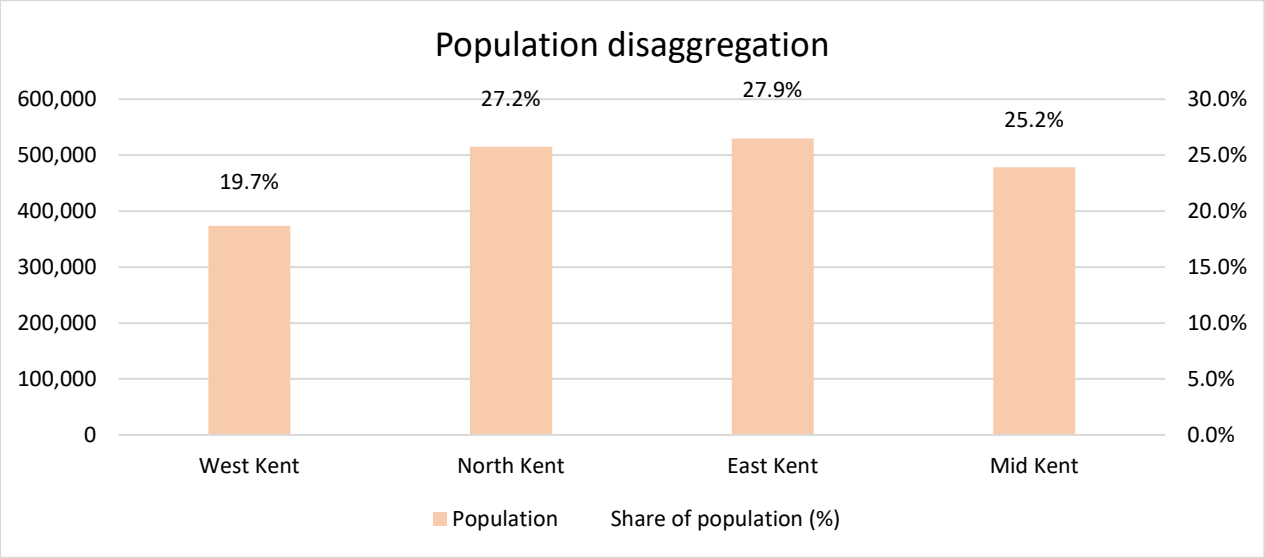
Councillor/population numbers:

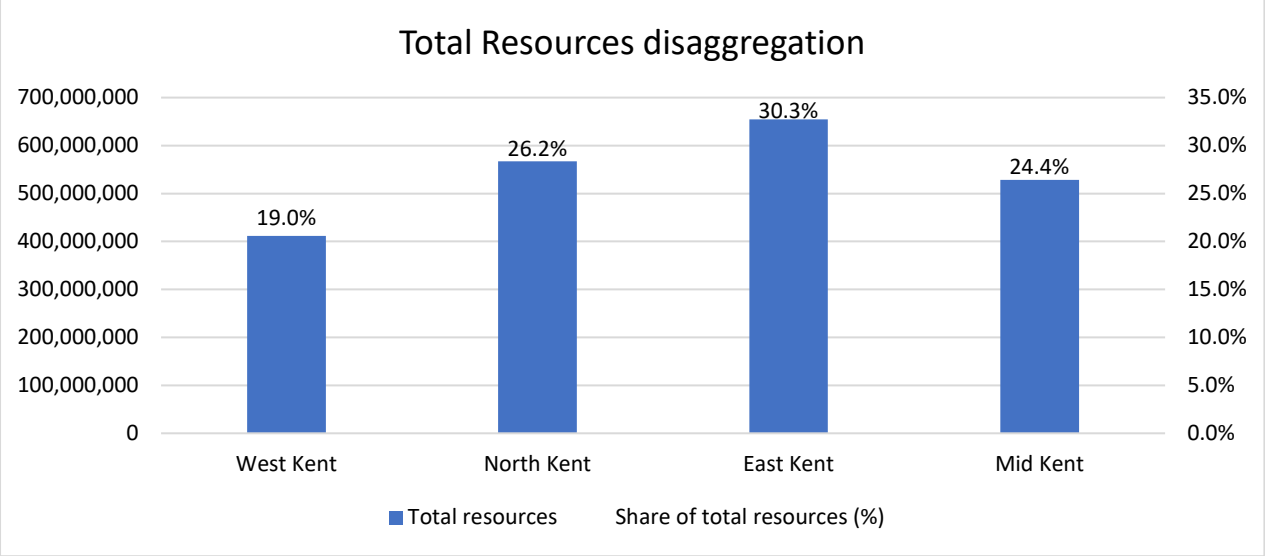
Proposed Unitary Option	District area	Population	Total	Per 30 Cllrs	Per 60 Cllrs	Per 100 Cllrs
Mid Kent	Ashford	138,283	478,363	15,945.43	7,972.72	4,783.63
	Swale	155,893				
	Maidstone	184,187				
West Kent	Sevenoaks	121,262	373,488	12,449.6	6224.8	3734.88
	Tonbridge and Malling	135,206				
	Tunbridge Wells	117,020				

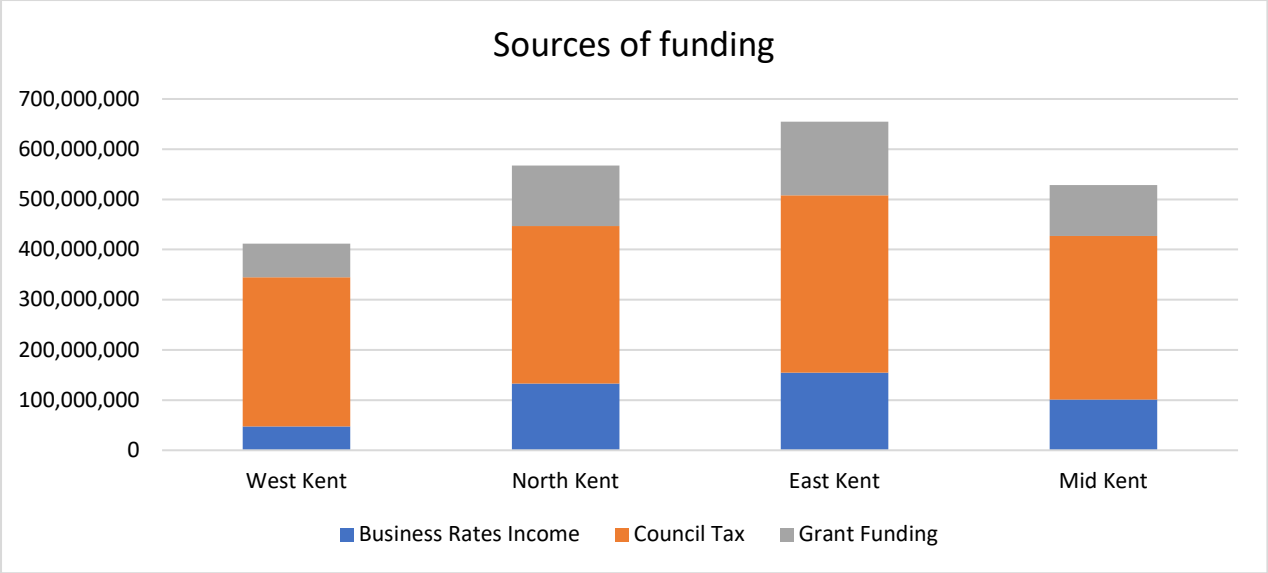
North Kent	Dartford	120,699	515,236	17,174.53	8,587.26	5,152.36
	Gravesham	107,737				
	Medway	286,800				
East Kent	Canterbury	159,939	529,964	17,665.45	8832.73	5299.64
	Dover	118,591				
	Thanet	140,439				
	Folkestone and Hythe	110,995				
		1,897,051				

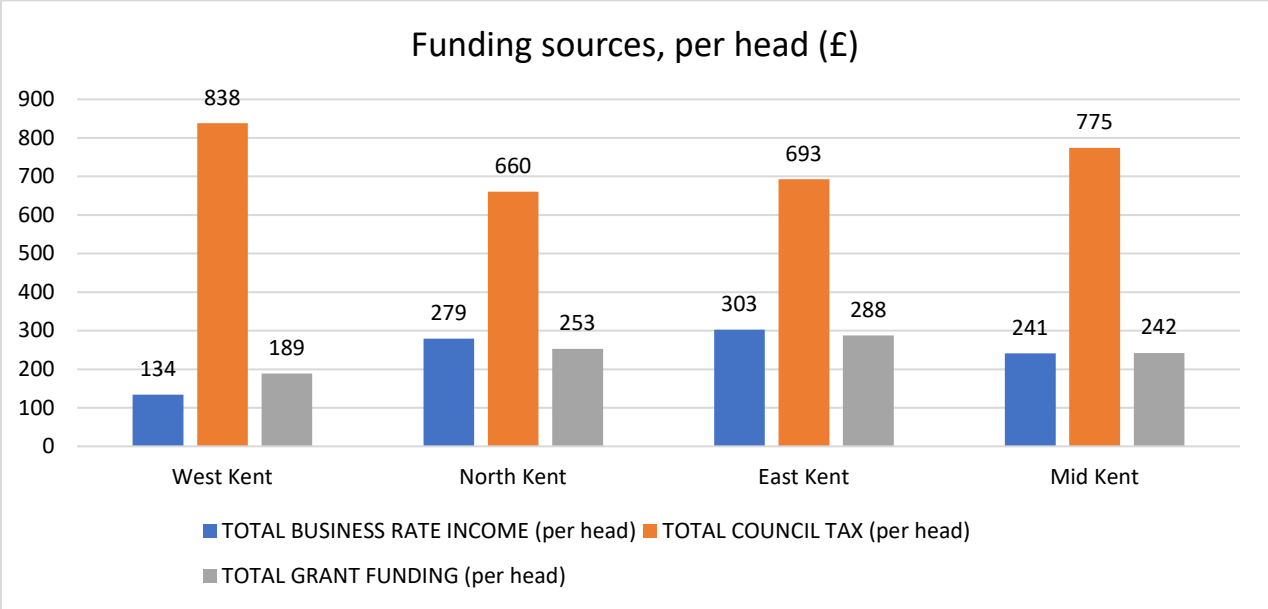
Funding Disaggregation Model

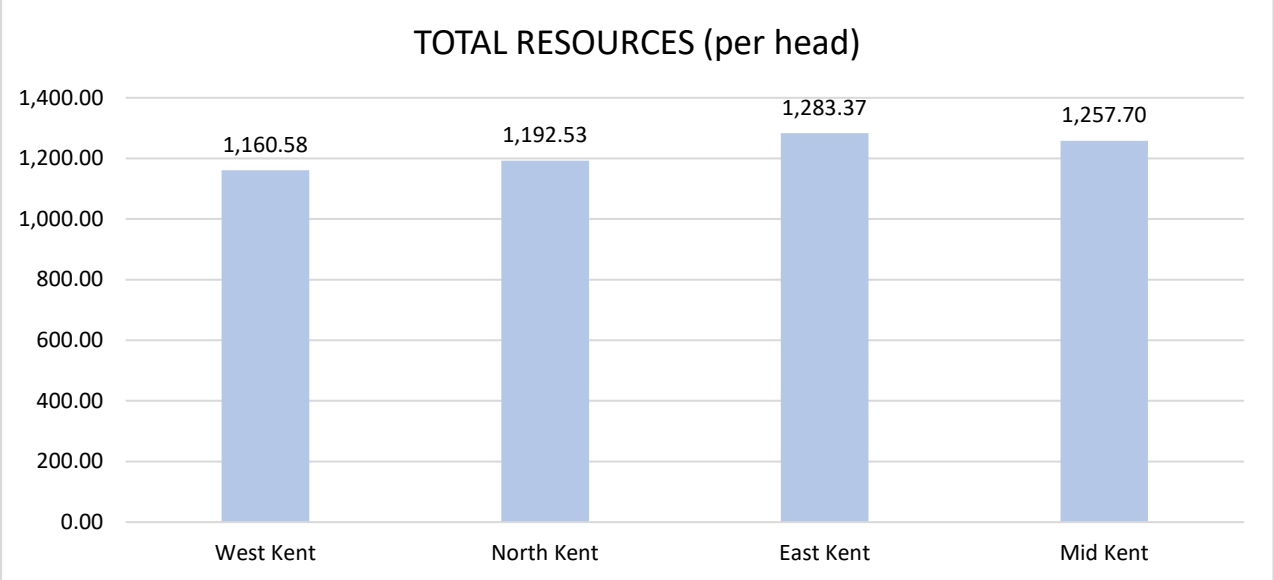
Information on major funding streams received by cluster (including Council Tax, grant funding and Business Rates Retention) using a model from Pixel which uses data from publicly available sources and Council returns to government.






Sources of funding
700,000,000
600,000,000
500,000,000
400,000,000
300,000,000
200,000,000
100,000,000
0
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Mid Kent
Business Rates Income
Council Tax
Grant Funding


Funding sources, per head (£)
900
800
700
600
500
400
300
200
100
0
134
838
189
279
660
253
303
693
288
241
775
242
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Mid Kent
TOTAL BUSINESS RATE INCOME (per head)
TOTAL COUNCIL TAX (per head)
TOTAL GRANT FUNDING (per head)


TOTAL RESOURCES (per head)
1,400.00
1,200.00
1,000.00
800.00
600.00
400.00
200.00
0.00
1,160.58
1,192.53
1,283.37
1,257.70
West Kent
North Kent
East Kent
Mid Kent

Section 4: Financial Analysis

Given the fact that the criteria for the Interim Plans (set out in the Appendix to the Minister's letter) included a requirement to "*identify likely options for the size and boundaries of new councils … along with indicative efficiency saving opportunities*" (criteria B) and to "*include indicative costs and arrangements in relation to any options including planning for future service transformation opportunities*" (criterion C) but also the fact that Kent councils, as a whole, have been unable to collectively agree potential geographies, seven of the Kent councils commissioned PricewaterhouseCoopers to undertake a high-level financial analysis of the costs, benefits and implementation costs associated with the above four unitary models. The brief was shared with all Kent Council Leaders.

PwC's model has used local figures provided by Kent councils together with public records (including Revenue Outturns and Revenue Account Budgets) together with actual figures and experiences associated with past unitarisation exercises. The model uses various inputs to assess benefits of reorganisation (in terms of staff, third party spend, property and democracy) with weightings applied to each of the detailed assumptions based on past experience and other factors, additional benefits arising from transformation opportunities as well as assessing both transition and disaggregation costs. The model then nets off the costs from the benefits to provide a net benefit over time and a payback period.

The assumptions contained within the financial analysis have been challenged and amended by both chief executives and S151 officers to reflect local circumstances and context. Both benefits and transition costs have been phased.

The results of the above analysis are that a three unitary option (Option 1 in the above models) delivers a net recurring benefit of £9.3m per annum whereas any of the four unitary options result in a recurring net additional cost of £5.4m per annum. Additionally, the upfront transition costs for establishing a three unitary model are lower, at approximately £42.6m, compared to around £54.7m for a four unitary model. The annual financial benefit of a three unitary model is approximately £3m higher, with a projected annual benefit of £37.7m, compared to £34.7m for a four unitary model.

In terms of payback, a three unitary model results in lower transition costs whilst delivering higher workforce and democratic support savings (albeit with a lower level of democratic representation). The payback period for investment in the new structure is relatively long due to the complexities and costs associated with disaggregation. A four unitary model incurs slightly higher transition costs, primarily driven by IT expenses and does not yield a payback period because of the significant disaggregation costs, including the replication of leadership structures and diseconomies of scale.

In terms of a balance review, a three unitary model is the most efficient option based on cost. Amongst the different four unitary options (models 2, 3 and 4), geographical permutations show little variability but option 4 results in the highest income forgone, making it less palatable compared to the alternative options.

Section 5: Initial Options Analysis

This section provides an initial assessment (recognising that more evidence will become available over time) of the proposed geographies against the government's established assessment criteria for unitary local government and also a series of design principles agreed by Kent Council leaders.

MHCLG Unitary Assessment Criteria

MHCLG Criteria	Three unitaries (Model 1)	Four unitaries (Models 2, 3, 4)
Single tier of local government: ▪ **Taxbases that do not create undue inequalities** ▪ **Will help increase housing supply**	As set out above, the geographies yield broadly similar resources per head (varying from £1,187 to £1,277). Where there are larger taxbases and larger resources per capita this matches those areas where cost and demand are higher. The larger geographies provide for more balanced geographies in terms of spatial planning constraints and would allow for a more strategic perspective on housing allocations, infrastructure and planning decisions and would make Local Plan integration more straightforward.	All the above geographies yield similar resources per head. In terms of taxbase, each of the four unitary model yields one unitary that is significantly (100k) below the designated minimum population threshold: South in Model 2; Mid in Model 3; West in Model 4 Model 4 yields a unitary (West Kent) that would struggle with significant spatial planning constraints. Smaller unitaries may struggle to take a strategic perspective on planning policy and development management and to resource the production and delivery of Local Plans (four as opposed to three). At the same time, smaller unitaries would arguably enable planning decisions to be taken closer to the communities affected.
'Right sized' local government: ▪ **Population >500k** ▪ **Supports efficiency and VFM** ▪ **Improves capacity and resilience to financial shocks** ▪ **Manageable transition costs**	Model 1 provides three unitaries all with populations in excess of 500k. It also provides for larger taxbases and, as the PwC financial modelling shows, requires lower disaggregation and transition costs and provides greater opportunities for economies of scale. The scale of the unitaries also offers greater resilience to financial shocks.	In each model, some populations are in excess of 500k but each model also produces one population that is around 100k lower than this. Four unitaries would also lead to lower taxbases and (as the PwC financial modelling demonstrates), higher disaggregation and transition costs.
High quality, sustainable services: ▪ **Improves service delivery/ prevents unnecessary fragmentation** ▪ **Opportunities for public sector reform** ▪ **Improves delivery/mitigates risk to services**	Model 1 uses existing Council boundaries which avoids fragmentation and lowers risk. Model 1 is also closely aligned with other public sector geographies (most significantly Health and Care Partnerships and acute trusts – which would be the most complex and expensive structures to reconfigure) which would provide opportunities for public sector reform. The proposal is also widely supported in stakeholder engagement.	Models 2-4 all use existing Council boundaries which avoids fragmentation and lowers risk. Alignment with other public sector geographies is not as ideal as Model 1 with some models splitting new unitaries across multiple health boundaries/catchment areas which will limit the potential for public sector reform. This model was supported by some stakeholders.
Meets local needs	Model 1 reflects established and recognisable historic, cultural and service	Models 2-4 reflects established and recognisable historic, cultural and service

▪ **Is informed by local views** ▪ **Improves/mitigates risk to local identity, cultural identity and history** ▪ **Addresses local concerns**	geographies (including the way in which some pan-county service geographies are managed). It does not provide perfect alignment to travel to work patterns but does map most closely on to acute trust geographies. The model is also supported by a number of partners who have been consulted.	geographies to a greater or lesser degree. As with Model 1, none of the four unitary models provide perfect alignment to travel to work patterns.
Supports devo arrangements: ▪ **Sensible population size ratios between local authorities and any strategic authority.**	Model 1 delivers a population size aligned to the Government's published minimum proposed criteria (500k). However, the size difference between the three Unitary Councils could vary by some 20 per cent.	The population size ratios varies from model to model but (as set out above) would yield one unitary of around 400k or less in each model.
Local engagement and empowerment: ▪ **Enables stronger engagement** ▪ **Delivers opportunity for neighbourhood empowerment**	Would result in larger unitary councils with larger councillor to elector ratios. With future projected population growth, this model could yield very large unitaries over the lifetime of the new councils. This could be managed and mitigated through structural and policy options that facilitate stronger neighbourhood/community engagement (e.g. parish and town councils or area committees).	All three models provide for small unitaries and lower councillor to elector ratios. The models would also provide headroom for future growth.

Geographical Design Principles

Kent Council Leaders have agreed a number of geographical design principles (set out below).

Design Principle	Rationale
Scale, capacity and resilience to deliver high quality and sustainable public services	The White Paper states that the size of the new unitary councils should be of sufficient scale to withstand financial shocks, and deliver high quality and sustainable public services, with a guide of 500,000 population. New councils must be of sufficient size to act as anchor institutions within their areas, both as major employers and purchasers of services to support market and service sustainability. Concerns about ensuring effective representation at scale need to be mitigated through organisational design principles.
Respects how people live and local identities	New councils should, as far as possible, align to the day-to-day reality of the local population they serve, with strong alignment around travel to work, travel to learn (particularly FE) and access to health (particularly acute) services.
Enhances Kent and Medway's devolution ambitions to achieve better outcomes for our communities	Evidence from city-regions is that Mayoral Combined (Strategic) Authorities work better when the 'constituent authorities' are of broadly similar sizes, with the same statutory and service responsibilities as each other, as they provide a strong strategic partner to the directly elected Mayor in the MSA.
Optimises partnership working arrangements	A significant unique selling point of Kent and Medway is the co-terminosity of public services within the region, and an expectation we can quickly deliver the benefits of integration across county-district / district – unitary services, but also quickly move towards a developed public service reform programme through integration and enhanced joint working with police, fire, health and DWP. New council boundaries should facilitate and enable that speed of delivery and PSR agenda (recognising that some partner boundaries are more reconfigurable than others – in particular acute health geographies).
Maximise simplicity for residents and service users and clarity for the public	We need to recognise and appreciate the differential impacts for our existing organisations and what causes complexity (and risk) – district services being merged, KCC services being disaggregated and Medway experiencing both. As part of this, we should be looking to keep the breakup of existing council boundaries to a minimum (i.e. unless there are compelling reasons to do so).

Geographical footprint	Initial assessment against design principles
Three unitary model **(Model 1)**	**Pros:** ▪ Delivers large populations that should provide resilience to cost pressures (particularly in areas facing the most acute cost pressures) ▪ Would be likely to align well with health geographies (in particular acute trusts) ▪ Would be likely to align with local identities (including TTWA and education/health geographies) ▪ Would be likely to yield similar-sized unitaries ▪ Would be likely to deliver broad alignment with existing service partnerships ▪ Would be less complex and costly in terms of the disaggregating upper-tier service responsibilities. **Cons:** ▪ Population sizes would be likely to be in excess of the minimum specified (and likely to grow). ▪ Would be more likely to be remote in terms of elector to councillor ratios and scale. ▪ Some adjustments may be required to fit with HCP/Acute Trust geographies ▪ Would be unlikely to align well with major transport corridors ▪ Would yield four voting members (when considered alongside the MSA)
Four unitary model **(Models 2-4)**	**Pros:** ▪ Delivers populations closer to the 'floor' suggested by the White Paper with headroom for future population growth ▪ Less remote in terms of elector to councillor ratios and scale. ▪ Would be likely to deliver reasonable alignment with local identities (including TTWA and education) but not acute trusts. ▪ Would yield five voting members (when considered alongside the MSA) **Cons:** ▪ Would be likely to deliver variable-sized unitaries (including one or more well below the threshold specified in the White Paper). ▪ Would be likely to result in an insufficient taxbase/financial resilience for some areas of the county to cope with the cost of current and future projected service pressures. ▪ Would be likely to have poor alignment to HCP/Acute Trust geographies