

**Revenue & Capital Budget Monitoring Exception Report 2010-11 (1 June 2011)**  
*(Proposed contribution of £500k from the Youth Service to a new earmarked reserve)*

Cabinet portfolio: Mr PM Hill OBE

Synopsis: The report to Cabinet was based on the monitoring returns for March and highlighted the main movements since the third full monitoring report presented to Cabinet in April. Cabinet was asked to agree the creation of a new earmarked reserve, from the underspending in the Youth Centres

Reason for call-in: Members were concerned about the governance rules on youth centre income and the effect of the creation of the reserve on KCC's plans to pump-prime Big Society initiatives.

Recommendations and responses:

- 1. Thank Mr Hill, Ms Slaven, Mr Turner and Mr Tilson for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.**
- 2. Make no comments on the proposal.**

**Putting Children First: Kent's Safeguarding and Looked After Children  
Improvement Plan & KCC's Workforce Strategy for Children's Social Services  
(1 June 2011)**

Cabinet portfolio: Mrs J Whittle

Synopsis: The reports to Cabinet:

- a) sought endorsement of the Improvement Plan and reports on progress to date
- b) asked Cabinet to note the content of the report and endorse the steps being taken to make KCC the Employer of Choice for children's social workers and to delegate the approval of the final changes to the remuneration of children's social workers to the Cabinet Member for Specialist Children's Services following engagement with staff and managers in the service.

Reason for call-in: Members wished to examine in detail whether the implementation of the Improvement Plan and the workforce strategy measures being proposed would bring about the improvement required and that these necessary improvements would be sustained into the future, particularly bearing in mind the cost of implementing the improvement plan.

Recommendations and responses:

**1. Thank Mrs Whittle, Mr Wells, Mr Newsam and Ms Beer for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.**

**2. Make no comments on the decision of the Cabinet to note the progress made on the Improvement Plan**

*In relation to the follow-up items from 8 December 2010:*

**3. Express regret that Members were not informed that a copy of the draft Improvement Plan could not be provided to the Committee.**

The Improvement Plan was made available to all Members at the earliest possible opportunity. The draft was revised in early 2011 and, as a multi-agency and not a KCC document, was subject to formal ratification by the multi-agency Improvement Board chaired by Liz Railton CBE. It was therefore not appropriate to circulate a draft to the Committee before it had been ratified by the Board or preceded to KCC's Cabinet. Ms Railton reports on a quarterly basis to the Secretary of State and the Leader of the Council of progress made by KCC and other agencies against the Improvement Plan. The ratified Plan was also debated at County Council on 12 May and taken to Cabinet on 23 May. The Plan is a standing item on the Specialist Children's Services Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee and is being scrutinised on a monthly basis by the All-Party Children's Services Improvement Panel. In addition, the Cabinet Member is providing quarterly updates on the Improvement Plan to Cabinet (which is publicly webcast).

Date of response: 15 June 2011

**4. Ask the Cabinet Member, Specialist Children's Services, to consider whether an officer from Audit should be added to the membership of the Improvement Board.**

I believe an officer from Audit should be included in the random audits of cases to ensure we have a thorough check of the quality of case recording and have instructed this be done.

Date of response: 15 June 2011

**5. Express disappointment that information requested at the meeting on 8 December 2010 relating to the outcome of the meeting with the Minister, the outcome of the review into the circumstances surrounding the judgements and historical data relating to social worker posts, vacancies and safeguarding referrals had not been provided.**

A range of verbal and/or written presentations and updates to County Councillors by the Interim Director, Malcolm Newsam and Cabinet Member, Jenny Whittle, have been very explicit about the significant vacancies in social worker posts which were at a height in the early part of 2010 and the significant increase in safeguarding referrals. Sarah Hohler, the then Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Education directorate, wrote to all Members on 19 November 2010 following publication of the Ofsted report on Safeguarding and Looked After Children in Kent. This letter stated that *"during the last two years there has been a 21% increase in referrals"* and that *"KCC's social worker vacancy rate has more than halved from 26% in January 2010 to 11% currently"*.

The scale of the problems in Children's Social Services when Ofsted undertook their inspections in August and October 2010 and the subsequent actions taken to improve safeguarding and looked after children services have been discussed at length in a range of verbal and/or written presentations and reports to the County Council and Cabinet which have been webcast to the public, all-Member briefings and the cross-party Children's Services Improvement Panel.

The Leader met with the Children's Minister to discuss the Council's planned actions in response to the Ofsted report on Safeguarding and Looked After Children. On 27 January 2011, the Minister issued an Improvement Notice to the Council since when a comprehensive Improvement Plan with defined timescales and lines of accountability have been published and approved by the external Improvement Board, chaired by Liz Railton CBE. The performance of the County Council and the other agencies with a responsibility for providing services to vulnerable children is scrutinised on a monthly basis by this Board. Ms Railton reports on the Council's progress on a quarterly basis to the Secretary of State and the Leader of the Council. Her first report, which was circulated by the Leader of the Council to all Members on 1 June 2011. In his covering note, the Leader stated that *"the report is most positive but we must not underestimate the challenges ahead and the time it will take to deliver the significant changes to turn around Children's Social Services"*.

Date of response: 15 June 2011