

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 10 February 2010.

PRESENT: Mrs T Dean (Chairman), Mr R W Bayford, Mr R Brookbank, Mr L Christie, Mr G A Horne MBE, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr R F Manning, Mr M J Jarvis, Mr R E King, Mr J A Kite, Mrs J Law, Mr R J Lees and Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute for Mr J E Scholes)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough and Mr A Sandhu, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mrs T Oliver (Director of Strategic Development and Public Access), Ms A Slaven (Director Youth Services and KDAAT), Miss C Martin (Head of Supporting People), Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership) and Mrs A Taylor (Research Officer to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

34. Minutes - 9 December 2009

(Item A3)

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting on 9 December 2009 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

35. Minutes - 25 January 2010

(Item A4)

- (1) Mr Horne asked that, when it became known, Members be informed of the level of funding package which the Government was offering to Kent County Council.
- (2) Mr Kite asked that, following the release of the council tax rates, Members look at the emerging evidence of possible efficiencies from some of the new unitary authorities.
- (3) Following questions raised at the meeting on 25 January Mr Christie asked for confirmation of the other local authorities which had also raised a separate precept to cover the budget gap resulting from Asylum costs.
- (4) The responses to these queries would be made available to all Members.

RESOLVED: That the minutes of the meeting on 25 January 2010 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

36. Notes - Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues - 7 January 2010
(Item A5)

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee approve the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 7 January 2010.

37. Notes - Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues - 29 January 2010
(Item A6)

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee approve the notes of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 29 January 2010.

38. Follow-up Items from Cabinet Scrutiny Committee
(Item A7)

- (1) The Chairman explained that the Gully Schedules information would be available in July 2010, the 6 month review of the ways in which Local Members can input into Highways Issues would be put to the Scrutiny Board for consideration by the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (2) The Kent Design Guide meeting had been arranged for 10 March which clashed with a Member meeting; this would be re-arranged on a date suitable for the majority of Members.

POST MEETING NOTE: This meeting has been re-arranged for 14 April 1.30pm – 4pm, further information would be circulated to Members.

- (3) The Chairman updated Members of the Committee on discussions she had been having regarding the possibility of allowing members of the public to email in questions live to future meetings. Members were interested in trying to do this although accepted that further thought was required.

RESOLVED: That the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee note the follow up items report.

39. Decision to award the Kent TV contract to an external company
(Item C1)

(Mr R W Gough, Cabinet Member for Support Services and Performance Management and Mrs T Oliver, Director of Strategic Development and Public Access were in attendance for this item to answer questions from Members of the Committee)

- (1) Mr R King declared a personal interest as he was a Member of the Board of Kent TV.
- (2) The Chairman explained that in light of the decision made on 9 February to terminate the Kent TV contract at the end of the pilot period in March 2010 there was no longer a formal item for call in. The Chairman thanked the

witnesses for attending; she had three questions to put to them if they were content to answer them at the meeting.

1. What was the position regarding the termination of the contract and the notice period to staff
 2. Were any of the organisations who submitted a tender bid for the Kent TV contract willing to deliver the service without a subsidy from Kent County Council
 3. What was the position with the Webcasting contract which it was understood was interlinked with the Kent TV contract
- (3) The witnesses explained that they were happy to try to answer Members questions at this stage.
- (4) In response to the first question from the Chairman, Mrs Oliver explained that the Procurement Team were in discussion with Ten Alps (the company who ran Kent TV)
- (5) In response to the third question from the Chairman, Mrs Oliver explained that it was the Council's intention to continue with the webcasting service and discussions would be had over the best way to retender for the service.
- (6) In response to the second question from the Chairman, Mr Gough explained that no tenders had been received with did not rely on subsidy from Kent County Council. It was made clear that revenue generation was very important to the Council, had Kent TV come at zero cost it might have been a different situation.
- (7) Mr Christie asked how much money was now being put back into the budget. The decision to terminate the Kent TV contract was made following the difficult economic situation, the combined contract value of Kent TV was £750,000 and would this now be put back into the budget. Mr Gough explained that this would be covered in the budget statement.
- (8) In response to a question from Mr Manning about how the service provided by Kent TV was going to be replaced Mr Gough explained that Kent TV had made a number of important achievements and there were many aspects which the Council would like to take forward and this would be the subject of further discussion.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee:

1. Thank Mr Gough and Mrs Oliver for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

40. The Kent Supporting People Programme and the Five Year Supporting People Strategy 2010 - 2015

(Item C2)

(Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Deputy Cabinet Member for Communities, Ms A Honey, Managing Director Communities, Ms A Slaven, Director Youth Services and KDAAT and Miss C Martin, Head of Supporting People were in attendance for this item to answer questions from Members of the Committee)

- (1) Mr Christie explained that this item had been called in following concerns that the overall Direction of Travel of the Supporting People Programme would lead to residential wardens being increasingly replaced by non residential and floating support for elderly and vulnerable people.
- (2) Ms Slaven explained that the Direction of Travel of the Supporting People Programme aimed to meet the needs of those significant vulnerable groups whose needs were not currently being met by the programme.
- (3) Miss Martin explained that there had been extensive consultation, there were significant pressures on some groups and the programme aimed to meet the needs of the most vulnerable groups. There was a commitment to maintain scheme managers and wardens within category 2 housing (sheltered housing where scheme managers were present) and there was a commitment to fund alarms in category 1 housing. However, some providers, such as Dartford Borough Council, Ashford Borough Council and Amicus Horizon, had provided the service through floating wardens, which worked well to provide 24hr cover, to cover sick and annual leave. Home Improvement Services were considered sacrosanct and it was vital to ensure that the services which were being funded were meeting the needs of the vulnerable groups.
- (4) In response to a question from Mr Christie regarding the final decision maker for the system for service provision Miss Martin explained that the Council would consult with the service users, KCC administer the grants and there were a mixed economy of providers however if KCC wished to prevent the provider from removing residential wardens it could.
- (5) The Chairman stated that in the past there had clearly been bad feeling from the residents, many of whom moved into sheltered accommodation on the understanding that there would be a residential warden, had this been tested in law? Miss Martin explained that a test case went to the High Court and it was being tested in the Civil Courts. Where Managers/Wardens had been removed some of the tenants had gone to court, however the courts were acknowledging the situation but not insisting that the wardens should be reinstated.
- (6) Mr Kite stated that it was Government Policy to move towards floating services, there had been a year on year reduction in funding whilst the client groups were expanding. Occupants of the residential homes wanted stability more than anything else. Mr Kite asked for confirmation that there had been a shift in funding and that the changes were guided by Government Policy. Miss Martin explained that in Kent the funding had been managed to ensure that the level of funding had been maintained or increased. Supporting people funding nationally had been reduced.

- (7) Mr Horne concurred with Mr Kite in that stability was vitally important for residential in sheltered housing. There was undoubtedly pressure to remove wardens and make changes to the regime, however Mr Horne asked for assurance regarding the policy for the warden schemes that were currently in place, were they safe? What would happen in cases of retirement? Miss Martin explained that the Council was reliant on funding from the Government, assuming the funding continued the Council would expect providers to continue to provide services required by residents even after retirement.
- (8) Miss Martin explained that there had been difficulties in recruiting to residential manager posts. Mr Horne asked whether these difficulties had, in part, been due to the lack of certainty over the future of the posts. Ms Honey explained that it was a question of how to 'future proof' the service, if the Government funding were to change the services would have to be re-prioritised, however there was no greater risk to the warden staff than any other staff in the Directorate. In response to a further question from the Chairman about the reasons behind the recruitment problems Miss Martin explained that it was generally because the expectations on scheme managers were quite onerous, there was a perception from residents that they should be available 24/7, however in practice this was not the case.
- (9) Mr Brookbank asked about the timeline for consultation over future proposals and had some more specific questions about people with learning difficulties being placed in older people's homes, these would be followed up with the relevant officers after the meeting.
- (10) Mr Hotson welcomed and supported the paper but asked for confirmation on whether the supporting people programme covered the armed services. Miss Martin explained that funding supported the Royal British Legion; the programme recognised that single homeless people had less ability to access services and the programme would pick up on the needs of the armed forces.
- (11) In response to a question from the Chairman about the timescale Ms Martin explained that there was an 18 month lead in time during which funding would be agreed and relevant planning permission would be sought. There were a number of other services currently being funded such as the rough sleepers service which helped encourage rough sleepers into sheltered accommodation.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee:

- (1) Thank Mr A Sandhu, MBE, Ms A Honey, Ms A Slaven and Miss C Martin for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions;
- (2) Ask that the relevant officer clarify in writing the Council's position of preventing providers from removing residential wardens.