

NOTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee's Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on Thursday, 2 March 2006.

PRESENT: Mr D Smyth (Chairman), Mr C J Capon and Mrs T Dean.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr N J D Chard.

OFFICERS: Mr D C Lewis, Strategic Director, Resources; Mr A Wood, Head of Accounting Services; Mrs E Goodrick, Financial Strategy Manager; Mr M Ayre, Senior Policy Manager; Mr R Fitzgerald, Performance Monitoring Officer; and Mr S C Ballard, Head of Democratic Services.

1. Notes of Previous Meeting
(*Item 1*)

(1) Mrs Dean said that she was still awaiting the information requested in notes 2(3) and 3(2). (**Action: AW**)

(2) The Notes were noted.

2. National 2004/05 BVPI Comparisons
(*Item 2*)

(1) Mr Fitzgerald presented the tables comparing KCC's 2004/05 BVPI results with the national figures. The tables had been prepared following the recent publication of the national figures.

(2) Members discussed the BVPIs:-

BV43(a) and (b) - Statements of Special Educational Needs

(3) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Fitzgerald said that he understood that KCC was on course to meet the 2005/06 targets.

BV159(d) - Tuition for Excluded Pupils

(4) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Wood said that the recent fall in the figures shown in the budget monitoring report had been caused partly by an unusual increase in primary exclusions; and partly by the normal annual pattern where, as the year progressed, it became more difficult to find the required level of tuition for excluded pupils.

BV193(a) and (b) - Schools Budget

(5) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Fitzgerald explained that the % figure referred to the % of FSS passported to schools. The indicator was being amended because FSS was no longer visible in the latest funding formula although Mrs Goodrick said she believed that the DfES was still using it in calculating settlements.

BV53 - Intensive Home Care

(6) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Ayre confirmed that this indicator covered all intensive home care, whether paid for by the client or not.

BV178 - Public Rights of Way

(7) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Fitzgerald explained that this indicator was based on two sample surveys, each covering 2.5% of the network, carried out each year by KCC PROW staff. Mrs Dean asked for the definition of "easy to use" used in the indicator. **(Action: RF)**

BV177 - Community Legal Services

(8) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Fitzgerald explained that this indicator related to work which local authorities undertook in supporting Citizens Advice Bureaux.

BV176 - Domestic Violence Refuge Places

(9) In answer to a question from Mr Chard, Mr Fitzgerald explained that places had to be directly financially supported in order to comply with the indicator definition. Although KCC provided indirect support for refuge places by way of general grants to refuge charities, this did not count for the purposes of the indicator.

BV198 - Treatment of Drug Misusers

(10) In answer to a question from Mrs Dean, Mr Fitzgerald explained that KCC's involvement in this indicator was through our participation in the Drugs Action Team partnership. The data was collected through GPs, clinics, etc.

General

(11) Mrs Dean suggested that Policy Overview Committees should receive reports on the BVPIs relating to their areas as part of their strengthened monitoring role. **(Action: SCB)**

3. The Lyons Inquiry - Interim Report *(Item 4)*

(1) The Group had a lengthy discussion about the work of the Lyons Inquiry and related issues such as the Government's evolving localism agenda; the White Paper on Local Government expected in June; the Comprehensive Spending Review 2007; and the new performance framework post-2008.

(2) The Group suggested that, as well as submitting a detailed response to Lyons at this stage, the County Council should also include a covering letter setting out some general principles, such as:-

- decisions on local government functions should be taken before decisions on structure;

- public services should normally be managed by democratically-accountable organisations, rather than QUANGOs.

(3) The IMG agreed to hold a special meeting on Thursday 9 March at 10.00 am to consider the draft “first principles” covering letter and the draft detailed response previously circulated.

4. Kent - The Unique Local Challenges

(Item 3 - Report by Deloittes)

This item was deferred to the next meeting.

5. Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring

(Item 5 - Report to Cabinet, 6 March)

The IMG received and noted this report. It was agreed that issues relating to the Strategic Planning budget should be discussed at the next meeting. **(Action: AW)**

6. Strategic Director, Resources

The Group noted that this was the last meeting of the IMG which Mr Lewis would attend. The Members thanked Mr Lewis for his invaluable guidance and support and offered him their best wishes for the future.