

NOTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee's Informal Member Group on "Kent - What Price Growth?" held on Thursday, 2 March 2006.

PRESENT: Mr D Smyth (Chairman), Mr B R Cope, Mrs T Dean and Mr J E Scholes.

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence; Mr R Hardy, Assistant Director of Strategic Planning; Mrs E Goodrick, Financial Strategy Manager; Miss D Clark, Senior Planning and Research Officer; Mr T Major, Acting Group Manager, Capital; and Mr P Campion, Manager, Development Contributions Team.

OTHER OFFICERS: Mr S C Ballard, Committee and Member Services Manager.

1. Notes of Previous Meeting

- (1) The notes of the meeting of the Informal Member Group held on 26 September 2005 were noted.
- (2) On note 2(a) Mr Smyth said that since last September the ODPM had announced a further £20m funding for Ashford (in addition to the £11m originally agreed).
- (3) Mr Gibbens said that an announcement on Government funding for North Kent Thameside was still awaited.

2. "Kent - What Price Growth?" - Presentations

- (1) The Group received four PowerPoint presentations as follows:-
 - (a) Demographic Forecasts used in Financial Planning Model (Debbie Clark, Senior Planning and Research Officer, Strategic Planning)

In the discussion following the presentation, Mr Hardy pointed out that the demographic data demonstrated that there was growth pressure throughout Kent and that it would therefore be a mistake to focus only on the growth areas.

Mr Cope asked if the number of new homes projected would actually get built. Mr Hardy said that the actual number of completions in recent years had been higher than the projections. Miss Clark said that now that actual completion figures were known for the first five years of the 2001-2016 forecasting period, these would be used to update the forecast. In answer to a question from Mr Scholes, Mr Hardy said that the impact of the 2012 Olympics on housebuilding in Kent could not be predicted and was not therefore included in the forecast.

Mrs Dean asked if the statistics on completions for 2001-06 could be produced on a district by district basis. **(Action: DC)**

(b) The Financial Model (Mr T Major, Acting Group Manager, Capital)

In the discussion following the presentation, Mr Hardy and Mrs Goodrick said that the model was very useful for identifying pinch-points and pressures. It was currently being improved as new and better information became available or potential improvements (eg building in an allowance for inflation) were identified.

Mr Cope asked about the differential between primary and secondary school places shown in the model for Ashford. Mr Hardy explained that schools would be built at different times not only throughout the period covered by the model (20 years) but also beyond.

(c) Budget and MTP (Elaine Goodrick, Financial Strategy Manager)

In the discussion following the presentation, Mr Hardy explained that the purpose of forecasting the impact of “Kent - What Price Growth?” on KCC’s budget and MTP was to demonstrate that the County Council was making its own resources work harder in order to meet the growth agenda, and was not simply relying on outside funding.

(d) Development Contributions (Paul Campion, Manager, Development Contributions Team, Regeneration and Projects Division, Strategic Planning)

As part of his presentation, Mr Campion circulated asset maps which were currently being prepared for each district. These were necessary in order:-

- (i) to identify the location of KCC’s own assets so that more effective use could be made of them;
- (ii) to provide evidence of locations where additional facilities were needed as a result of housing development.

In the discussion following the presentation, Mr Campion explained that KCC’s current threshold for developer contributions was developments with a minimum of 10 homes. This threshold was currently under review with District Councils and the House Builders’ Federation because of the need to take account of areas where growth was mainly by way of a large number of small developments.

Mr Campion confirmed that the level of developer contributions for any development was ultimately decided by the District Council, as the local planning authority. However, District Councils now welcomed KCC’s involvement in negotiating developer contributions, particularly in terms of providing sustainable evidence to justify the case for a particular level of contribution.

Mr Campion said that the Government’s proposal for a Planning Gain Supplement might encourage District Councils to go down the route of agreeing a standard tariff per dwelling for developer contributions. However, any tariff system needed to recognise the different development pressures facing individual districts.

(2) The Group:-

- (a) thanked the officers for a very interesting and informative set of presentations;
- (b) **agreed to recommend to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee that the same presentations should be given to all Local Boards (preferably at joint meetings of two or more neighbouring Boards) over the next 12 months.**

3. Date and Topic for Next Meeting

The Group agreed that its next meeting should be held on Monday 24 April at 3.00 pm in Swale 2 to discuss the issue of water supply and waste water disposal County-wide **(Action: RH/SCB)**. The Group requested that all Members of the new Select Committee on Climate Change should be invited to attend this meeting. **(Action: SCB)**

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