

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr T Maddison to the  
Leader of the Council**

Could the Leader of the Council inform Members of what measures he took on behalf of Kent County Council prior to 26 October that have allowed him to claim in KCC Press Release 826/06 that he and the Leader of Essex County Council could “celebrate their success in getting the Government to move on a feasibility study into a third Thames Crossing”?

**Answer**

The County Council has been pressing Government for a number of years to commission a feasibility study into a Lower Thames Crossing. It is County Council policy, set down in the Kent and Medway Structure Plan (adopted in July 2006) and in the Kent Thames Gateway sub-regional strategy in the draft South East Plan (published in March 2006). It is included in Towards 2010 and I have lost no opportunity in mentioning the need for the study in correspondence to Ministers as Leader of the County Council and as Chairman of the Kent Partnership. I am therefore delighted that the Minister has decided to respond positively.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr T J Birkett to the  
Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

Could the Chairman of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee comment on the INLOGOV Seminar on Scrutiny held on 9 November in Birmingham?

**Answer**

As Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee I attended an INLOGOV seminar on the call-in process as part of the overview and scrutiny function of UK councils. At that event I reported on the fact that on two recent occasions the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee had unanimously referred decisions back to the relevant Cabinet Member. The first of these was the decision to close Hothfield Primary School and the second was the further reorganisation of the Highways Services on 27 September and 25 October respectively.

It would seem that this Council's Cabinet Scrutiny Committee has, by these two recommendations, joined a small but elite group of scrutiny committees which are prepared to forego party politics in order to provide good governance through reasoned and effective scrutiny.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr R Parker to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste**

Could the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste tell the Council how many instances of day burning street lights have been reported across the County over the last three years and how much electric power has been wasted each year?

**Answer**

- There have been approximately 3000 instances of day burning across the County each year over the past three years. There are about 110,000 street lights owned and maintained by Kent.
- Our priority when maintaining Street Lighting in Kent is to ensure they work in the hours of darkness. In many instances a fault occurs with the photo electric cell or the time clock which means the light does not work during the hours of darkness. A temporary fix is often to put the light on continually until a new part is installed. The downside of this is that the light then also becomes a day burner.
- It is difficult to assess how much energy is consumed. Day burners are often reported more than once, so the overall figure of reports will be more than actual day burners. In addition a quantity will be deliberate.
- When looking at the energy savings we must ensure a balance between the benefits of lighting communities versus the energy consumption and light pollution. A new street lighting policy document is being developed. The major priorities of this project will be energy efficiency and sustainability.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr A R Poole to the  
Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

Could the Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee inform the Council whether the Committee has examined the costs of producing and disseminating the Towards 2010 document?

**Answer**

A "pressure" of £81,000 on the Corporate Communications element of the Chief Executive's Directorate Budget was reported to Cabinet Scrutiny Committee's Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues on 12 October 2006. This overspend was "due to increased costs of surveys and publications, including "Towards 2010"". A breakdown of the £81,000 was requested and is still awaited.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr D A Hirst to the  
Cabinet Member for Public Health**

Will the Cabinet Member for Public Health please detail the plans he has in place to address the growing concern amongst the public at large about binge drinking and the problem of alcohol in general, as it affects the lives of residents and visitors to our urban centres in the evenings (especially in Canterbury and Maidstone). Misuse of alcohol is a major public health concern across Kent and how does the Cabinet Member plan to address it.

**ANSWER**

This serious concern about the dangers of excessive alcohol consumption is shared by many people including myself. Alcohol, and its abuse, will be a major issue for KCC and the new jointly appointed Director of Public Health, Meradin Peachey.

We will be working alongside the Kent Drug and Alcohol Team, Kent Police, our colleagues in the NHS and others urgently to establish the best ways to tackle this growing problem.

There is a proposal to establish an Informal Member Group to examine the problem, to be followed by a conference bringing together all interested organisations in order to produce co-ordinated and concentrated action.

Specific initiatives already underway via the Kent Drug & Alcohol Action Team within the Canterbury and Maidstone areas are as shown on the Appendix attached to this answer available outside the Chamber. We will seek to build on these.

### Maidstone

*Maidstone CDRP are leading or taking part in the following initiatives:*

- Educating young people and the Drug Intervention Support Programme
- The SNAP (say no and phone) school tour
- SNAP dance nights
- Theatre Ad which is aimed at older primary school children and has a strong anti-drugs message
- Cascade peer led education programme
- Chrysalis recovery programme aimed at young people
- Funding a 1:1 Tier 2 drugs worker
- Supporting Police anti drug operations
- The Walk Away project to promote sensible drinking in the nighttime economy. This is aimed at 18-24 year olds
- Funding a night time economy chaplain

*Treatment Commissioned by KDAAT:*

- Advice & Information is available on a drop in basis at all drug treatment centres.
- KDAAT are developing a community alcohol pilot to support Accident & Emergency departments in Maidstone and Medway. The pilot is aimed at patients who attend with a significant alcohol problem or after significant alcohol intake.

### Canterbury

*Information from Kent Police:*

- Safer Kent activities to prevent young people binge drinking
- Day to day policing activity
- Multi agency licensing visits to prevent under 18s buying alcohol
- Walk Away project to promote sensible drinking in the nighttime economy. This is aimed at 18-24 year olds
- 'Carry the Can' this project is designed to deter 14-18s from drinking alcohol
- Advertising campaigns to try to combat the culture of drinking too much too quickly
- Safer socialising campaign which has been rolled out to several areas in Kent

*Treatment Commissioned by KDAAT:*

- Advice & Information is available on a drop in basis at all drug treatment centres.
- Mount Zeehan service (provided by the Kent and Medway Partnership Trust) provide structured counselling in a range of localities in East Kent enabling people to address their alcohol misuse.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mrs A Allen to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Would the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please give the latest update on the situation with regard to the proposed increase of 50% to the tolls on the Dartford Crossing.

May I also draw his attention to questions asked on 6 November 2003, 18 December 2003, 19 February 2004 and finally 28 April 2005.

**Answer**

The Government has announced it will launch a consultation this month on proposals to increase the tolls for private cars using the Dartford Crossing from £1 to £1.50 between 6am and 10pm from January 2008. Drivers buying a Dart Tag in advance will pay £1 per crossing.

The County Council response to this consultation will oppose the proposed increase. There is no concession made for local people who have to use the Crossing regularly and from the profits made at the Crossing (in excess of £50m per year), only £1m of 'supported' borrowing is made available to the County Council for transport projects in the local area. As a floor authority, the County Council is not fully covered for this additional borrowing and will continue to press for 100% grant funding from the Dartford Crossing profits.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr R Pascoe to the  
Cabinet Member for Finance**

Would the Cabinet Member for Finance please tell me the financial implications of the Government's treatment of supported borrowing for floor authorities, such as KCC, and what he is doing to influence a change in Government policy.

**ANSWER**

There is a simple but painful answer to this question. Whilst on the floor the "supported borrowing" ends up effectively being anything but supported and the whole of the cost of borrowing can end up falling on council taxpayers.

In theory "supported borrowing" is meant to be supported by government revenue grant to cover the cost of debt charges. Unfortunately government has changed the way it takes into account the "supported borrowing". It used to top up the minimum funding for the additional cost of debt charges. It now no longer does this.

The value of the extra total revenue grant due to be given to KCC under the floor guarantee is £6.0m for 2007-08. If we take up all of the supported borrowing allocations, however, the additional revenue cost of servicing that debt will be £6.8m in 2007-08. That means the amount we have to spend on revenue, other than paying for debt, goes down by £0.8m or 0.4%. The position becomes even worse if we bear in mind the government uses a notional calculation to determine the floor payment. Our cash grant will only increase by £2.5m for 2007-08. We also have to bear in mind the effects of inflation on our purchasing power. The RPI in September was 3.6% so we would need an extra £8.1m just to stand still in real terms. In real terms, therefore, we get plus £2.5m in cash, lose £8.1m due to inflation and have £6.8m diverted to pay for extra debt charges due to the additional supported borrowing. That makes a net loss of £12.4m or 5.3%.

I have set out my concerns directly to the Minister for Local Government and Community Cohesion and to individual government departments who issue substantial supported borrowing approvals (e.g. DfT, DfES). I have urged government to switch capital funding support from supported borrowing to grant until this morass is sorted out and have urged a radical rethink prior to the publication of Comprehensive Spending Review 2007 which will set spending control totals for the following three years. I have also shared my concerns with other Counties at the County Council Network, and the LGA in order to seek to build a consensus. I will continue to raise the matter with government until commonsense prevails.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr M Harrison to the  
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence**

Would the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence agree with me that one of the county's main strengths is our rural economy? If so would he also agree as to just what an adverse effect the delayed Agricultural Single Payment 2005-06 is having upon both the urban and the rural economy of Kent. Is there anything that KCC can do to assist them?

**Answer**

Kent's rural areas and businesses are an important asset to the county. Rurally-located businesses comprise more than a third (36%) of Kent's total businesses – and represent 17% of the 107,000 rural businesses in the South East.

Today's rural economies, however, are less dependent on land-based industries. Kent currently has 5,511 registered farm holdings, which equates to around 2,000 farm businesses and represents 8% of Kent's rural businesses. Nevertheless, agriculture and the land-based industries remain a critical rural sector with land-based industries contributing almost £600 million per annum to the rural economy.

We have been deeply concerned over the impact of the delays by the Rural Payments Agency in administering and making payments following the introduction of the Single Farm Payments in England. This has been discussed at the meetings of the Kent Rural Board, and we have a continuing dialogue with the National Farmers Union on the situation. Our understanding is that the Rural Payments Agency (RPA) and Defra are continuing to hold weekly meetings with key stakeholders (including the NFU) until the situation is resolved.

At a recent meeting (20<sup>th</sup> November) with the South East Director of the NFU and the Kent Chair of the NFU we discussed the continuing impact on Kent Farmers. At this stage, the NFU does not have definite figures for the impact for farmers in Kent and the amounts outstanding. They appreciate our concern and value the opportunity to maintain a dialogue with us. They will seek further support if felt necessary at a later stage.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr J F London to the  
Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste**

Will the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste please say how much in the last two years has been received in speeding fines by the Kent and Medway Road Safety Camera Partnership and how that money has been spent?

**Answer**

Revenue collected by the Partnership from speeding offences in the periods 2004-05 and 2005-06 was £6.7 million and the trend shows a gradual reduction in offences which is encouraging. Over the same period, the Partnership spent £5.7 million which is taken directly from the fines collected. The surplus is retained by the Treasury.

The Partnership activities are dictated by the DfT's strict guidelines restricting spending to functions relating only to speeding and red light running. Funding is used to cover staff costs and safety camera purchase and maintenance. Allowable activities also include an extensive range of publicity, education and communication aimed at informing drivers of the risks of speeding and changing their behaviour. All costs incurred in the legal processing of the offences are also covered through fines revenue.

Detailed information is available on [www.kmscp.org](http://www.kmscp.org). The Kent and Medway Safety Camera Partnership will also be delighted to facilitate a tour for any Member wishing to know more about how it operates.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr R E King to the  
Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence**

Will the Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence update the County Council about the progress that is being made to encourage Eurostar to reverse their decision to make cuts to the international passenger services from Ashford International Station and, in particular, to reinstate a direct Ashford service to Brussels? The importance to Kent of the passenger services, in particular to Brussels/Lille, from the Ashford International Station cannot be underestimated.

**Answer**

The County Council continues to work with partners, particularly Ashford Borough Council, Shepway District Council, Michael Howard MP, Damien Green MP and SEEDA, to press Eurostar to retain a service between Ashford and Brussels/Lille. This group has formally met Eurostar twice and there have been three further meetings of some of the participants to discuss details with Eurostar. Eurostar has released commercially sensitive information to this group and this is being analysed. The County Council will continue to stress the need to retain a service between Ashford and Brussels given the uncertainties of forecasting rail passenger flows. Additional uncertainties are the effects of congestion in the Ebbsfleet area, particularly on the M25, and the road works which will be still be in progress after Ebbsfleet opens next November on the M25 between Swanley and Dartford; the A2/A282, M25 interchange at Dartford and the A2 between Pepperhill (Gravesend) and Cobham. For these reasons, the County Council considers that services between Ashford and Brussels/Lille should be retained, at least for a trial period, beyond November 2007.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Ms A Harrison to the  
Cabinet Member for Public Health**

Would the Cabinet Member for Public Health please inform this Council what new initiatives are being taken by Kent County Council to improve public health on the Isle of Sheppey?

**ANSWER**

KCC is working with colleagues in Eastern and Coastal Kent PCT and Swale district on a number of initiatives for all age ranges. Many of these form part of the Kent wide strategy designed to combat the rising levels of obesity in the general population. For example, plans are in hand to encourage more people to take physical exercise as part of their daily lives at work or travel as well as through organised sports. This is linked to other measures designed to improve people's diet through eating more fruit and vegetables.

In general, good health in early years is being promoted in conjunction with partners in Surestart schemes and other voluntary agencies as well as health visitors and midwives. There is a particular concentration on the need for healthy diets and giving up smoking as well as exercise and breastfeeding.

Specifically however, much of the work being undertaken on Sheppey is through the KCC Local Area Agreement via community plans (Priority Swale) and Local Strategic Partnerships. A mapping exercise has recently identified initiatives such as Nutritional advice to Seashells Children and Family Centre in Sheerness; a step-o-meter scheme involving Swale Forward (the local regeneration partnership) and Sure Start; inclusion of activities for Sheppey within the Swale Obesity sub group; Sexual health and teenage pregnancy drop in centres at the Healthy Living Centre in Sheerness and at Sheppey College; and other Healthy Living Centre activities for older people at that facility. In addition to these, a Health Equity Audit for Swale (including Sheppey) is currently being completed to inform planning and development.

Services for Sheppey's children and young people are included in an Integrated Service Improvement Plan for Health, with an emphasis on improved preventative and early intervention services, in a wider range of local settings including the Island's schools via the Healthy Schools Initiative. Examples include a new joint School Nursing Framework, and a planned Child and Adolescent Mental Health Outreach Service for the Island. Specific joint development proposals for implementation in 2007/8 will be published in March.

I am looking forward to expanding these initiatives and building others along with my Director of Public Health and the Director of Health for Children and Young People over the next few years.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr M Fittock to the  
Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee**

Would the Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee inform this Council what progress has been made to provide the new community centre in Edenbridge which was promised by Kent County Council to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and local residents several years ago?

**Answer**

It is some considerable time since the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee considered the future of this site in Edenbridge.

Kent County Council intends to develop this site for a mixture of community and housing uses. Unhappily, proposals to move the primary school to the site and for the primary school site to be developed for retail had to be abandoned in 2004. There have been subsequent negotiations between this Council and officers of Sevenoaks District Council to find a use for this site, and I understand that the Cabinet Member for Community Services has also met with the Leader of the District Council.

I also understand that a planning application is likely to be forthcoming early in the new year.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr R Burgess to the  
Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement**

Would the Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement please update Members on the current position with regard to the apprenticeships for young people?

**ANSWER**

The County Council has undertaken, in Towards 2010, to introduce a Kent Apprenticeship scheme offering at least 1000 new Apprenticeship opportunities across the private and public sectors. 250 of these Apprenticeship opportunities will be within Kent County Council.

Following on from the successful pilot scheme, Kent Success was launched in October this year. KEY Training, part of the Kent Youth Service, along with Kent's Supporting Independence Programme team is delivering Kent Success across the County.

Kent Success will enable young people post 16 years to achieve an accredited Apprenticeship qualification in a supported work placement across a wide range of vocational skill areas. In addition the programme will provide young people with an extensive range of life-skills, employability skills and an apprenticeship contract of employment with KCC. The programme will raise the self-esteem, knowledge and skills of all the apprentices and empower young people to move positively into employment and independent living.

KCC will offer a diverse range of apprenticeship opportunities across the organisation including business admin, health and social care, childcare, customer service, hospitality and catering.

Kent Success is providing much more than just a placement in which the young person can achieve their qualification. A support package is being developed that will include peer support, mentoring, access to KCC training and a clear progression route into permanent employment within KCC.

There are currently 25 Kent Success Apprentices placed in Thanet, Maidstone, Canterbury, Whitstable and Ashford undertaking Apprenticeships in Business Administration, Childcare, Customer Service and Health and Social Care. KEY Training is currently recruiting more young people to become Kent Success

Apprentices in the New Year to fill the 33 placements that have been offered across the organisation. There will be 28 young people starting in January.

The Supporting Independence Programme team will be meeting with members of the Kent Public Service Board and other public and private sector employers in early 2006 to engage them in the Apprenticeship Programme. Links are also being made with the vocational 14-16 education programme to ensure that those young people taking vocational courses are able to move into work based learning if that is the most appropriate route for them.

In addition, the 14 to 16 vocational developments in our educational programme currently include the introduction of apprenticeship opportunities.

Currently there is a one year pre apprenticeship programme being piloted at Westlands schools with Carrillion.

KCC's vocational development team will be submitting bids to the learning and skills council before December for young apprenticeships and modern apprenticeship places in construction and motor vehicle trades. This will be in partnership with MHS homes for construction and Carter and Carter for Motor Vehicle trades who work with the main car dealers in Kent.

The number of apprenticeship places will be expanding in line with the increase of vocational learners on the 14 to 16 programme. We are currently meeting up with a wide variety of Kentish employers to further develop our links and programmes.

**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14 December 2006**

**Question by Mr G Rowe to the  
The Cabinet Member for Community Services**

In the light of the overwhelming endorsement of the motion put by members of the Kent Youth County Council at our last Council meeting that KCC will offer fair and equal opportunities to all young people no matter what their background ability and behaviour, will the Cabinet Member for Community Services agree that the Kent Youth Service should be reviewed to reflect the needs and wishes of all young people by setting up a Select Committee on Kent's Youth Provision on which young people representing the KYCC would be invited to sit as co-opted members?

**Answer**

This County Council holds its Youth Service in the highest regard. The contribution made by KYCC members in submitting and debating two motions at the last Full Council meeting demonstrated some of the excellent work undertaken by the Youth Service in engaging with the county's young people. On that note I am pleased to be able to inform members that the number of young people who voted in the KYCC elections in November this year reached a new, record number of 28,804.

One of the aims of the County Council, in establishing the Communities Directorate, was to ensure that a clear strategic focus and direction was given to front-line community services such as the youth service, libraries and adult education. I appreciate Mr Rowe's interest in the future of youth provision in Kent and the value he places on KYCC as a forum for consulting young people on their needs and wishes. However, the establishment of a Select Committee on this topic is not a matter for me to decide, but for the Chairman and members of the Communities POC to put forward, and then for consideration by the Policy Overview Coordinating Committee. In fact, I understand that at their next meeting in February the POCC will be considering the proposal to examine this topic.

However, I have already discussed with the Head of Youth Service the need to re-affirm a clear strategy for the Service, building on the Best Practice Review of the Service that was undertaken six years ago, and set in the context of the Service's location within the Communities Directorate. Other factors that will influence this strategy include the establishment of Children Trusts, our Local Area Agreements with District Councils, the Youth Matters Next Steps proposals and the Education and Inspection Act. In developing this strategy the Youth Service will consult widely with young people - including members of KYCC. When the draft strategy has been sufficiently well developed to serve as a basis for further discussion and debate, a decision will be made as to how best to progress this.



**COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING**

**14-December 2006**

**Question by Mrs M Featherstone to the  
Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement**

Will the Cabinet Member for Education and School Improvement please inform the Council what is KCC's policy on the use of fingerprint systems in Kent schools, and what advice or guidance is being given to ensure that any such system is properly introduced and managed, with appropriate safeguards in place?

**Answer**

Children's rights in relation to the use of fingerprint recognition software are safeguarded by the Data Protection Act (DPA), the Education Act 2002 and the Human Rights Act 1998. In particular, the DPA states that all data (including biometric data) collection and storage by schools must comply with the eight stated principles.

The data must be:

1. Processed fairly and lawfully
2. Processed for specified purposes
3. Adequate, relevant and not excessive
4. Accurate and up-to-date
5. Held no longer than is necessary
6. Processed in line with individuals' rights
7. Kept secure
8. Transferred only to other countries with suitable security measures.

The decision to use fingerprint recognition software rests with the school's governing body. Ensuring the schools properly apply the DPA is the responsibility of the Information Commissioner's Office.

Governors have access to two sets of guidance on their obligations and responsibilities under the Data Protection Act: -

- The guidance published by the British Educational Communications and Technology Agency in 2004.
- KCC's data protection guidance available at [http://www.clusterweb.org.uk/Policy/dpfoi\\_data.cfm](http://www.clusterweb.org.uk/Policy/dpfoi_data.cfm)

Furthermore, KCC provides training on request to Governors on the DPA.

It is my understanding that the Information Commissioner's Officer is in the process of drawing up specific guidance on the use of fingerprints for purpose other than law-enforcement. As far as I am aware this guidance will consider how fingerprint recognition software is applied: whether it is reasonable and proportionate.

The DfES and KCC have, as yet, not published any specific guidance on the use of biometric systems.

I understand four schools in Kent (Hillview School, Maplesden Noakes School, St Philip Howard RC Primary School, and Swan Valley Community School) currently use some form of fingerprint recognition software. These schools use fingerprint recognition software in either their libraries to track books or in their canteens as a way to pay for school dinners. As for registration/recording attendance, this is done through swipe cards not fingerprints.

It is important to note that the fingerprint software is never recorded rather the software constructs a number based on the scan of the thumb and it is this special encrypted numerical code, not the print that is stored in the database. I believe all schools in Kent use technology supplied by 'Micro Librarian System' that have publicly stated that the numerical fingerprint code is immediately deleted when a child leaves school.