KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 25 September 2009.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mr R W Bayford, Mr D L Brazier, Mr J R Bullock, MBE, Mr R B Burgess, Mr B R Cope, Mr R Frayne, Mrs J Law, Mr R J Parry and Mr M V Snelling

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A H T Bowles, Ms S J Carey, Mr R W Gough, Mr R A Marsh, Mr M J Northey, Mr J D Simmonds and Mr B J Sweetland

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Ballard (Staff Officer To The Chief Executive), Mr D Cockburn (Executive Director, Strategy, Economic Development & ICT), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview)), Mrs S Garton (Head of County Performance and Evaluation Manager), Ms J Hill (Performance Manager), Mr M Lemon (Head of Policy), Ms C McKenzie (Greener Kent Manager), Ms L McMullan (Director of Finance), Mr D Shipton (Finance Strategy Manager), Ms D Smith (Policy Manager) and Mr P D Wickenden (Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

13. Membership
(Item A1)

The Committee noted that that Mr R Parry has replaced Mr N Northey as a Member of this Committee

14. Minutes - 8 July 2009
(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 8 July 2009 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

15. Financial Monitoring Report : Corporate Services 2008/09
(Item B1)

(1) Mr Shipton introduced the first quarter's budget monitoring report for 2009/10 which was reported to Cabinet on 14 September 2009.

(2) The Chairman explained that last year the Committee had set up an Informal Members Group (IMG) to consider the Medium Term Plan (MTP) for the Chief Executives Department, which had worked very well and a number of the suggestions made had been incorporated into the final budget. He undertook to contact Members to see if they wished to participate in a cross party IMG to consider the MTP with the remit of this Committee.

(3) RESOLVED that the projected outturn for the Chief Executive's Department and finance items for 2009/10 based on the first quarter's monitoring report to Cabinet be noted.

16. Draft Towards 2010 Annual Report
(Item B2)

(1) Mrs Garton presented a paper which set out the process for finalising the third Towards 2010 Annual Report prior to approval by County Council on 15 October 2009 and attached a draft of the report (concerning the eight corporate-related targets). Lead officers, or their representatives, responsible for each of these targets gave a brief overview and invited comments from Members.

(2) Members comments and responses to questions included the following:-

(Target 5)

- Ms McMullan undertook to provide Members with the actual number of invoices paid outside of the 20 day period.
- Regarding the relationship between the County Council and small/local business Mr Gough stated that Commercial Services had been independently audited and had received a clean bill of health. He assured Members that Cabinet Members and officers were working to ensure that the maximum amount of County Council work possible was going to Kent businesses.

(Targets 8, 21 & 29)

- It was agreed that Ms Oliver would provide the following information in writing to Members:-
    - (Target 8) – "Begin initial investment in film and television productions." – When and how much?
    - (Target 21) – What are the number of website hits on "What's on" to date in 2009/10?
    - (Target 29) – Thanet Gateway footfall figures – do these include library visits?
- The importance of ensuring that KCC Directorates fully participated in the Gateways was emphasised. There was also an issue with some other public sector bodies still needing to be encouraged to have a presence at the Gateways.

(Targets 48 & 49)

- The importance of, where possible, there being outcomes shown for public health work, which it was acknowledged tended to have a medium to long term impact and which were often difficult to quantify, was emphasised, especially when there was pressure on public spending.

(Target 50)

- The HOUSE project was commended. A view was expressed that this appeared to be the type of youth service that young people liked and that,

although some youth clubs were successful, there maybe a re-think of services needed.
- A Member asked that consideration be given to HOUSE visiting Sevenoaks.
- The balance between, the young peoples anonymity and knowing which groups of young people were visiting HOUSE was mentioned.
- Ms Smith stated that HOUSE cost £150k per year.

(3) It was noted that there would be a report on Kent TV to the November meeting of this Committee.

(4) Mrs Garton stated that she understood that the successor document to Towards 2010 would be going to County Council in February 2010 for approval.

(5) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members as set out in the Minutes be noted.

(Mr Burgess declared a personal interest as a Member of the Federation of Small Businesses in item B2 – Target 5 of Towards 2010 and remained in the meeting and took part in the discussion).

17. Draft Annual Performance Report 2008/09
(Item B3)

(1) Mrs Garton introduced a report which provided an overview of the draft Annual Performance Report 2008/09 (APR) and an up to date draft of the report was circulated. Members comments included the following:-

- The report would benefit from having more figures in it, it should also identify the areas where more work was required rather than just the successes, and consideration should be given to making it shorter next year.
- Mrs Garton explained that the amount of officer time to produce the report was minimal, as the majority of the content was taken from other documents.
- A view was expressed that this was a useful document which could give Members an overview of the County Councils work.

(2) RESOLVED that the draft report and the comments made by Members be noted.

18. Corporate Services Connecting with Communities - Annual Report to Policy Overview Committee.
(Item B4)

(1) Mr Gough and Ms Hill introduced a report which updated Members on developments regarding consultation, engagement and involvement within the Chief Executives Department. The report provided the national and local policy context and a summary of the key activities undertaken by the Chief Executives Department during 2008/09 and the activities planned for 2009.

(2) RESOLVED that the information contained in the report be noted.

19. Chief Executives Department Annual Complaints, Comments And Compliments Report
(Item B5)

(1) Mrs Hill presented a report which provided Members with information about the operation of the Chief Executives Department's complaints comments and compliments procedure between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009.

(2) RESOLVED that the contents of the report be noted.

20. Kent Healthy Weight Strategy
(Item B6)

1. (1) Mr Lemon introduced a report on the Kent Strategy that provided a coherent framework for multi agency work around obesity including the key targets. The report acknowledged the work of the KCC Select Committee on obesity which had informed the production of a Healthy Weight Strategy by PCT colleagues that was drafted in the second half of last year. The strategy presented to the Committee was a higher level summary and distillation of that document which provided a framework for KCC and other organisations to work within when designing and planning interventions designed to address issues of healthy weight and promote healthier lifestyles.

(2) In response to a question Mr Lemon explained that nationally work was being done with supermarkets and food manufactures in relation to portion size and food labelling. However, supermarkets were driven by demand and therefore it was important to ensure that the public demanded healthier food.

(3) RESOLVED that the Healthy Weight Strategy for Kent be endorsed.

21. A Summary of progress in delivery of KCC's environmental commitments including climate change and the implementation of the KCC Environment Policy - 6 Monthly Update.
(Item B7)

(1) Ms McKenzie introduced a paper providing a six monthly update of KCC's progress in fulfilling its sustainability and climate change commitments, including implementation of the KCC Environment Policy and the Kent Environment Strategy.

(2) It was suggested that the expertise gained by the Members who had served on the Select Committee on Climate Change should be utilised. Also Members should look at ways that technology and the localism agenda could help support the Environment Strategy.

(3) The possibility of a lead POC being identified for Climate Change was mentioned.

(4) RESOLVED that the progress to date and the general shape of the Sustainability and Climate Change Action Plan going forward be noted.

22. Communicating with Kent Residents

(Item B8)

(1) Miss Clarke presented a paper which gave an update on progress made over the last six months in the following areas; a more responsive website, a single Kent wide publication for the public sector, reduction in the number of publications produced by KCC, press releases which contain sound and video clips, use of social media by KCC, Twitter, the Kent and Medway Citizens Panel and an interactive council chamber.

(2) Members commended the saving of £228k on KCC publications. The pilot scheme of having a joint Council magazine with Dover and Swale District Councils was supported.

(3) Mr Gough undertook to explore the possibility of the new Kent.gov website being available for Members to view on County Council day (15 October 2009).

(4) Mr Northey agreed to invite Mr Parry to join the group of Members assisting with the development of the new Kent.gov website.

(5) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by members be noted.

23. The Potential to Refocus and Restructure the Overview and Scrutiny Function

(Item B9)

(1) Mr King introduced a discussion paper which would be considered by each of the Policy Overview Committees (POC's), the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee prior to a report being submitted to County Council on 15 October 2009.

(2) Members comments and suggestions were invited which included the following:-

- The importance of ensuring that scrutiny was carried out in a constructive way in line with its critical friend role was emphasised.
- In order to assist the Overview and Scrutiny Committees to plan their work programmes it was essential to have a Forward Plan that was constructive, and covered a period longer that the statutory 3 months
- Cabinet/Cabinet Members making use of the policy development role of POC's was highlighted.
- Members felt that the Select Committee process added value and worked well.
- Ensuring that Cabinet Members were engaged with the work that POC's were doing was mentioned.

(3) RESOLVED that the views expressed by Members be noted.

24. Select Committees - update
(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the process for approving the Select Committee topic review work programme. All topic reviews, where an assessment form had been received, would be considered by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on 16 October 2009.

(2) RESOLVED that the process for agreeing a Select Committee topic review programme, and the suggested topics put forward by Members of this Committee be noted.