

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### 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 Thursday, 8 November 2007.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Mr R H C Bliss, Mr R B Burgess, Mr B R Cope, Mr J A Davies, Mrs T Dean, Mr C G Findlay, Mr J I Muckle, Mr R J Parry, Mr J E Scholes, Mr J D Simmonds and Mr D Smyth

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P B Carter, Mr N J D Chard, Mr G K Gibbens and Mr R E King

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview))

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

##### **66. Minutes held on 27 September 2008**

*(Item A3)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 27 September 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman subject to the word 'all' being deleted from the first bullet point in Minute 65, paragraph (2).

##### **67. Dates of Meetings 2008**

*(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the following meeting dates for 2008 be noted:-

25 January 2008  
27 March 2008  
28 May 2008  
26 September 2008  
14 November 2008

##### **68. Financial Monitoring Report : Corporate Services 2007/08**

*(Item B1)*

*(Mr A Wood, Head of Financial Management and Mr D Honey, Finance Manager CED were present for this item)*

(1) Mr Wood introduced the report and explained that this was the first time that the Financial Monitoring Report had been brought to the Policy Overview Committees. Financial Monitoring reports would now be submitted to each Policy Overview Committee, broadly on a quarterly basis to give Members good base

information to help them in their budget process considerations. It was intended that the Policy Overview Committees would receive the latest quarterly monitoring report that had been received by the Cabinet.

(2) Mr Wood stated that the Chief Executive's Directorate Budget was a low risk Budget despite there being significant income attached to this Budget. Unlike the Budgets of Directorate such as Adult Social Services it was not subject to the vagaries of demand. He highlighted the variations to the Budget within his report.

(3) Members then were given the opportunity to ask questions or made comments on the quarterly monitoring report, which included the following issues:-

- Regular quarterly monitoring reports to all the Policy Overview Committees were welcomed.
- In response to a question on how confident we were that we would achieve a reasonable level of Capital Receipts and avoid the risk that the 5% top slice of those actually achieved would be insufficient to meet the capitalised revenue costs of property groups disposal activity Mr Wood stated that £14 million would be needed to meet this 5% cost. However, if they were below £14 million then there would be a need to look at how to fund the deficit in the current year.
- Members were informed that at the auction in September some properties sold and some did not. However, KCC had taken a realistic but cautious approach to property disposal.
- It was confirmed that the receipts forecast was still on target.
- Members were informed that the home computer initiative issue was a technical accounting issue and not a real funding problem.
- Regarding outdoor advertisements the contract was about to be signed, this would enable the use of our roundabouts and libraries etc for advertisements and it was a contract that Commercial Services were negotiating on behalf of the County Council.
- In relation to computing it had been said at a staff conference in Ashford that only half of KCC staff had access to PCs in work time. The Leader confirmed that work in progress to address this and a report on investment in technology would be submitted to the next meeting of this Policy Overview Committee before it was considered by the Cabinet.
- An explanation was sought for the underspend in public health which was apparently due to a delayed start. It was explained that in relation to Health Check there was a need to re-tender at the end of the first two year contract. A delay in re-tendering had been caused by the need to evaluate the first scheme. It was agreed that an explanation would be circulated to all Members of the Policy Overview Committee on how this delay in re-tendering had occurred.

- It was confirmed that the underspend for public health would be spent, part of the issue was working in partnership with two Primary Care Trusts and the logistics of drawing resources together. There were exciting activities planned for the next year and therefore it would be good to have money to roll forward. Mr Gibbens undertook inform the Policy Overview Committee Members how the additional £150,000 rolled forward would be spent.
- Although Policy Overview Committees would now be receiving their own quarterly monitoring reports for their specific POC Members felt that there was still a need for the Budget Issues IMG to meet on a more regular basis to look at the County Council's budget as a whole.

(4) RESOLVED that :-

- (a) the projected out-term figures for Chief Executive's Directorate as at the first quarter and the comments made by Members be noted; and
- (b) a report would be submitted to the next meeting of the Policy Overview Committee on ISG Technology Investment

#### **69. Medium Term Plan 2008-09 and 2010-11**

*(Item B2)*

*(Mr A Wood, Head of Financial Management and Mr D Honey, Finance Manager CED were present for this item)*

(1) Mr Wood presented a paper which updated the Committee on the autumn budget statement report to Cabinet on 17 September 2007 and any later announcements by government departments. In addition it provided Members of the Committee with an opportunity to consider suggested service pressures and to develop savings proposals for the Directorate.

(2) All Policy Overview Committees were being asked to consider what they would recommend should be done if the County Council had to deliver 1%, 2% or 3% of savings on the assumption that efficiency savings will be required.

(3) The Leader, Cabinet Members and officers answered questions from Members on issues including:-

- Gateways – whether there was any scope within Gateways, which were an excellent facility, to be subject to possible ongoing minor cutbacks if necessary.
- The impact of Kent TV on the amount of paperwork sent out and produced by the County Council. In relation to rationalising the amount of publications that KCC produces there was now a dedicated post in Corporate Communications to look at this particular issue. A report on progress and potential saving should be available in 6-9 months time.

- Accommodation savings at County Hall resulting from increased hot-desking and home working by staff
- In relation to the 3% efficiency targets it was confirmed that negotiations with government were around the ability of authorities to carry forward any additional efficiencies above the 3% to count towards the following year's efficiency savings.
- It was explained that the new pressure figure on pay of £2.8m for 2010/11 as set out on page B2:3 was an estimate for pay award of £0.8m and a possible re-evaluation of pension fund contributions of £2m, to increase the employer contribution. Confirmation that this re-evaluation would not be required was anticipated but could not be guaranteed.
- A note on the Kent Renewal Scheme will be provided.
- It was emphasised that Members should receive a copy of the draft Budget in January before it was issued at the press conference.
- When the mobile Gateway was sited outside County Hall it was noticeable that there was nothing on the outside of the Gateway to explain what it was.
- Concern was expressed that by using advertising on Kent TV and in Kent on Sunday (Kent Highways) KCC information was being delivered to a more limited audience. It was important to focus on giving people information in the way that they wanted to receive it.
- It was suggested that Members should be part of the discussion on the new Corporate Communications Unit. The Leader undertook to share the job description for the Head of Corporate Communications with Mrs Dean and Dr Eddy.
- Health inequalities should be one of KCC's top priorities.
- In response to a statement that Kent was the 7<sup>th</sup> largest borrowing authority it was stated that this was to do with a number of factors including its massive growth agenda.
- It was agreed that there would be an item to the next meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee on proposals for Corporate Communications over the next five years.

(4) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the national and local context within which this Medium Term Plan would be set be noted; and
- (b) the comments made by Members as set out above be noted

(c) there would be an report to the next meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee on proposals for Corporate Communications over the next five years.

## **70. CED Risk Register**

*(Item B3)*

*(Mr A Wood, Head of Financial Management was present for this item)*

(1) Mr Wood presented a report on the 2007/08 Chief Executive Department's Risk Register which had been presented to the Governance and Audit Committee on 7 March 2007.

(2) Members were given the opportunity to ask questions on the Risk Register which covered the following issues:-

- Confirmation that bespoke systems were being removed or upgraded to supportable levels across the authority.
- In relation to Item 6 – Reputation – Corporate Inspection for CPA in Jan/Feb 2008 it was confirmed that the likelihood of KCC getting a poor result was perceived as low but that if we did the impact would be high.
- It was suggested that in future rather than listing a named officer the post should be listed instead.
- Regarding risk 3 – Property Portfolio – it was confirmed that there would be an oral update at the meeting of Children, Families and Education Policy Overview on the adequacy of the schools maintenance budget, Members requested that this be a written update if possible.

(3) RESOLVED that the report, annex and comments made by Members be noted.

## **71. European Affairs Update**

*(Item B4)*

*(Mrs M Danecourt-Caverner was present for this item)*

(1) Mrs Danecourt-Caverner presented a report which provided an overview of benefits to Kent of previous European Structure Funds in 2000-06, an update on the development of the new structure funds programmes (2007-13) including current issues around these, overview of other EU funding opportunities from “thematic programmes” and an update on actions regarding the issue of Eurostar stops at Ashford.

(2) Mr King and Mrs Danecourt-Cavener then answered questions from Members on issues which included the following:-

- There was a request for a briefing for Members on EU/International Affairs as they related to Kent. Mr King stated that he would be happy to arrange this but would want to be assured that there was enough interest/availability of Members to make this worthwhile. It was suggested that if a seminar was held on the EU, this be recorded so that Members who could not attend could access it.
- It would be helpful to have a very simple guide for Members on how KCC's work in Europe and internationally benefits our residents was requested so that Members could champion KCC's international role.
- It was noted that the KM Business News Supplement carried a spread in its August/September/October editions about the work that KCC was doing internationally.
- The European Office produced a by-weekly newsletter which Members could have on request.
- Concern was expressed about the proposed reduction by the EU of the number of local Interreg Officers who would work with project leaders to develop good quality projects.
- It was noted that the EU Commission had raised the ceiling for funding to 75% which was a response to pressures from the UK and French Governments.
- The possibility of other operators using the lines that Eurostar currently use when the monopoly goes in 2010 was something that KCC would watch with interest.
- It was confirmed that in relation to influence on the Selection Committee for funding, KCC had a high level of influence because of all the work they had been doing in the EU and were resisting any attempts to take away local authority responsibility for projects.
- It was confirmed that any Member who happened to be in Brussels would be very welcome to visit the International office.
- Mrs Dean would be supplied with information outside of the meeting on the progress made to transfer freight from road to rail and the prospect of any international funding for this.

(3) RESOLVED That:-

- (a) the report and comment made by Members be noted.
- (b) the actions taken so far be endorsed and the ongoing work to resolve the key issues outlined in the report be supported; and

(c) a report be submitted to a future meeting detailing the progress made on key points contained within this report.

(d) an update on KCC's relations with Indo/China be submitted to the next meeting of the Committee.

## **72. Strategy for staff update**

*(Item B6)*

*(Ms A Beer, Director of Personnel and Development was present for this item)*

(1) Ms Beer presented a paper which provided background information on the next stage of development of KCC Strategy for Staff, a draft of the revised strategy was attached to the paper. Ms Beer gave a presentation to the Committee which put the staff strategy in context.

(2) Ms Beer then answered questions from Members on the draft strategy which included the following issues:-

- It was confirmed that a good indicator of whether KCC's staff strategy was effective was that recruitment and retention rates were good, which they were.
- In relation to a question on ensuring adequate breaks for people using PC's all day, Ms Beer assured Members that KCC had an aggressive health and safety process to ensure that Kent was a safe place to work, there were regular equipment checks and training sessions for staff.
- On page B.66 last bullet point under Communication and Engagement, it was suggested that it be amended to read:-

“maintain a constructive relationship with Trade Unions and recognised employee representatives”.

Ms Beer undertook to take this suggestion back to the Workforce Strategy Board.

- It was confirmed that the New Leadership Programme, was open to all Members *and Ms Beer undertook to provide the costs for this to Members.*
- In relation to the apprentice scheme, the difficulties of somebody who was receiving other benefits, such as child benefits, who would lose these if they went onto an apprentice scheme was emphasised.
- Information was requested possibly by postcode, to provide a reassurance that apprenticeships were being offered and taken up in

areas of deprivation. Ms Beer undertook to liaise with the Supporting Independence Programme to provide this information.

- It was confirmed that a lot of work had been done to get rid of the requirement for a basic level of qualification for applicants for posts on Kent Scale 1-6 unless the business need required this.
- It was confirmed the most common reasons for people leaving KCC were personal reasons, for example, partner moving to a job in another area, or to further their career prospects, although within such a large organisation as KCC, it was hoped that most people would be able to find career development within the organisation.
- It was suggested that Members or a Member should be involved in inductions for new staff. It was confirmed that Democratic Services gave a presentation on Governance and the Democratic Process to officers the suggestion of having a Councillor at these inductions would be taken forward.

(3) Ms Beer confirmed that the Staff Strategy would be considered at the Workforce Strategy Board next week and the final draft would then go to Cabinet and Personnel Committee.

(4) RESOLVED that the Draft Staff Strategy and the comments made by Members be noted.

### **73. Vice Chairman in the Chair**

*(Item )*

In the absence to the Chairman, Ms A Harrison took the Chair for the remainder of the meeting.

### **74. Equality Strategy**

*(Item B5)*

*(Ms A Beer, Director of Personnel and Development and Mr C Lever, Equalities Officer, were present for this item)*

(1) The Committee received a report which gave the background to the Equalities Strategy which had been approved by Cabinet by 16 April 2007 and asked Members to consider particularly how this strategy was being implemented within the Chief Executives Department.

(2) Ms Beer and Mr Lever answered questions from Members on the strategy

(3) In relation to a question on what would be needed to achieve Level 4 or 5 rather than our current Level 3, Members were informed that that Level 4 was about how we monitored the results of the impact of the strategy and assessed the effects

in some parts of the organisation. Level 5 was about how we acted on what we had learnt following the introduction of the strategy and related to the monitoring process.

(4) Regarding the training of Managers in diversity issues in relation to recruitment and selection process (page B5:18), Members were reminded that it had been agreed at Personnel Committee that this training would also include elected Members who were involved in recruitment and selection. This was noted by Ms Beer who undertook to inform the Strategic Equalities Board.

(3) RESOLVED that Members comments on the new Equalities Strategy to inform the evolution of the Strategy and Action Plan be noted.

## **75. Local Involvement Network in Kent**

*(Item B7)*

*(Mr M Ayre, Senior Policy Manager and Ms R Gardner, Kent Graduate Programme Management Trainee were present for this item)*

(1) Mr Gibbens presented a report which informed Members of the work being done on developing the Local Involvement Network for Kent (LINK). The LINK was due to be established from April 2008 and it would replace the Patient and Public Involvement Forums which had been set up to look at the Health Service since 2004. The remit of the LINK would include looking at both healthcare and social care. He emphasised that KCC's role in LINK was to issue a tender document and therefore it was essential that KCC ensured that this tender document was robust and met the requirements of the people of Kent. The report set out a précis of the current situation and sought Members views as stakeholders on the possible attributes for creating a successful LINK and the right to host organisation to support it.

(2) In response to a question from a Member Mr Gibbens confirmed that the priority was to get the tender document right even if that meant that the 1 April 2008 deadline was not achieved.

(3) Mr Ayre gave some background to the development of LINKs and also brought Members up to date with the current situation. He stated that it would be very challenging to achieve the set up of the LINK by 1 April 2008. It was helpful to have provision within the Act to set out a fall back date if necessary. Members would be kept informed of progress and notified if the implementation date was to slip.

(4) Ms Gardner gave details of the draft Residents Panel Survey which was being compiled and ways that feedback and views were being sought to inform the establishment of LINKs. The importance of getting the views of hard to reach or seldom heard groups, in relation to the establishment of the LINK was emphasised by Members.

(5) Members were invited to ask questions and give their views. These included the following points:-

- Although officers had looked at the nine early adopter authorities and would adopt any best practice that could be relevant to the Kent setting, the early adopter programmes were very diverse and internal advice in relation to procurement was different between different authorities. It was too early to assess how well the early adopters had performed as most had not set up their LINKs yet.
- It was confirmed there was no role for Members as part of the LINKs although could have a role as an individual on a LINK.
- It was essential to have host organisation for the LINKs who had a track record of listening to others.
- Concern was expressed that due to the short timescale, there was a danger that it would not be possible to encourage a wider spread of people to get involved with LINKs.
- It was confirmed that LINKs would have the power of entry and viewing which the PPIF previously had. The power of inspection would still rest with the Healthcare Commission.
- It was suggested that as LINKs would also have social care responsibilities, the questionnaire which was being sent out should also go to social care organisations.
- Officers would attempt to produce a simple short document for Members about LINKs before the first of the district-based meetings were held.

RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members be noted.

## **76. KCC Health Inequalities Action Plan** (Item B8)

*(Mrs D Smith, Policy Officer was present for this item)*

(1) Mrs Smith introduced a paper which invited Members to discuss and make comments on the KCC Health Inequalities Action Plan which was currently being developed to support the Kent County Council's Public Health Strategy. A copy of the latest draft of the Health Inequalities Action Plan 2007 was circulated with the papers.

(2) Members asked questions and made comments which included the following points:-

- Page B8:6 – “reduce the number of poorer people who smoke” - should there be some definition of “poorer”? It was confirmed that this was intended to relate to people in deprived wards.

- Regarding air quality a Member pointed out that this was usually measured over a 24 hour period and therefore very rarely showed dangerous levels which may occur for a very short period of time during that 24 hour period.
- In relation to working with health authority colleagues it was confirmed that some Choosing Health money and Department of Health money did go to the local authority to work in partnership. KCC would like to see the emphasis on this money being used in the community and not for treatment.
- B8:27 – car sharing – it was important for Members to lead by example and when a number of Members are going to a meeting outside of County Hall they should where possible car share.
- It should be recognised that even within affluent wards there were pockets of deprivation and it was important that help was given to address this inequality. Often, if areas of deprivation were contained within affluent wards, it was difficult to access funding for these areas. It was confirmed that KCC were obtaining real and appropriate data from within wards to identify these pockets of deprivation.
- It was acknowledged that partnership was essential to delivering the health inequalities agenda.
- It was essential that references to housing were strengthened and that evidence was obtained from district councils about what they were doing to improve their housing stock and access to it.
- Although the document was very aspirational it was also important to have set outcomes from this.
- One emerging outcome from the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee was that £9 out of every £10 spent on assisting addiction was targeted to drug addiction. There was a need for this to be refocused to be 50:50 between alcohol and drug addiction support.
- More mention needed to be made of the role of the Youth Service in working with young people to help with health inequalities.

RESOLVED that the comments made by Members on this Action Plan be noted.

## **77. Select Committees - update**

*(Item C1)*

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the current Alcohol Misuse Select Committee and the Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme following the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 5 November 2007.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress of the Select Committee on Alcohol Misuse and the extension of its timescale be noted;
- (b) the update on the new Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme be noted; and
- (c) if necessary the Overview and Scrutiny Manager in consultation with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Liberal Democrat Spokesman on the Policy Overview Committee be given delegated authority to approve the Terms of Reference of the Select Committee on Accessing Democracy.