

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, 27 September 2007.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Mr R H C Bliss, Mr B R Cope, Mrs T Dean, Mr R J Parry and Mr D Smyth

ALSO PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens and Mr A J King, MBE

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

61. Membership

It was noted that that Mr C Findlay has replaced Mr J Fullarton and Mr J Simmonds has replaced Mr A Marsh as Members of this Committee

62. Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2007 (Item A3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 12 July 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

63. Matters arising

It was agreed that the minutes from meetings of this POC would be sent out to Members of the Committee for information as soon as possible in addition to being despatched with the next agenda

64. "Towards 2010" (Item B1)

(Mrs S Garton, Head of Corporate Performance, Mr R Fitzgerald (Performance Manager), Mr N Vickers (Head of Financial Services), Ms T Oliver (Head of Strategic Development Unit), Mr M Lemon (Policy Manager), Mr N Moon (Social Inclusion Officer) were present for this item).

(1) The Committee considered a report which set out the process for finalising the first *Towards 2010* Annual Report prior to approval by County Council on 18 October 2007. Included with the report were the eight corporate-related targets for Members' comment.

(2) Mr King emphasised that this was an opportunity for Policy Overview Committee Members to comment on the targets.

(3) Mr Vickers circulated additional information in relation to target 5 and explained the new procurement environment for KCC.

(4) Mrs Garton explained that a few Performance Indicators for the targets were still being developed by lead officers and that as information was collected over the next 12 months others would come on stream.

(5) Members were invited to make comments and ask questions on the targets which included the following:-

a) General

Members welcomed the targets and commended officers for doing an excellent job. It was emphasised that it was essential that the targets were both measurable and achievable. It was pointed out that five of the targets had no measurable indicators and it was suggested that the process was being done the wrong way around in that the Towards 2010 targets were set without regard to how they would be measured. It was noted that the 2010 target delivery process was only at the end of year one. Next year there would be evidence that the Cabinet Members had moved forward with the targets.

b) Target 5 – Ensure Kent County Council uses its significant purchasing power to allow fair and open competition

- It was agreed that a presentation would be given at a future meeting of the POC on KCC's new procurement framework.
- It was confirmed that the "VFM Price Book " was work to benchmark the quality and unit price of 21 services across the 14 Councils in Kent.
- Consideration should be given to the significant bearing that Small/Medium Industries could have on Rural post offices being kept open.
- In response to a question on whether we were able to exert influence to ensure that local jobs go to local businesses, Members were informed that as every contract over £8,000 needed three competitive tenders and a large amount of liability insurance was required it was difficult to do this.
- It was suggested that Members should be made aware of contentious issues arising from KCC's market regulator role. Further consideration would be given at the next agenda discussion meeting as to whether to establishing a sub group of this Committee to have an overview of KCC's market regulator role.

c) Target 8 - Develop Kent as a major venue and location for film, television and creative industries to benefit the Kent economy

- It was noted that KCC did not make investment in the Film and Television Board (other than cost of meetings). The Kent Development

Fund was something which KCC was hoping to develop with partners like SEEDA so that in future KCC could attract more film and television investment into Kent. There was currently not a Development Fund.

- It was agreed that mention would be made of the important role of Maidstone studios
- In future, KCC would try and obtain written agreement where possible for KCC's investment to be mentioned in the credits for films and TV programmes that used the film offices services.

d) Target 9 - Through our Kent Supporting Independence Programme, work towards reducing the number of people dependent on welfare benefits

- The people element should form part of the measurable indicators for this target
- It was difficult to balance the effects of encouraging people to take up benefits that they were entitled to and moving people away from dependency on benefits
- It was noted that the Kent NOW programme was aimed at supporting recipients of incapacity benefit to return to work

e) Target 21 - Launch and market a new website, "*What's on in Kent?*", that will list sports and leisure activities and local organisations for all age ranges in the county.

- noted

f) Target 24 - Find new and innovative ways of communicating with the public, including trialling webcast TV

- It was noted that a paper on the appointment of community representatives to Kent TV's Board of Governors would be considered at the first meeting of the Board in November.
- It was important to ensure that Kent TV looked at issues impartially as they related to the people of Kent and avoided party politics
- Consideration should be given to allowing Members to have an electoral division page.
- Although the viewing figures could be broken down into locality it was not possible to use this to get information on the demographic make up of the audience.

g) Target 29 - Continue to develop 'gateway' one stop shops that give easy access to services provided by county and district councils and other public service bodies

- The involvement of Lloyds pharmacy in the Ashford and mobile gateway was as a free pilot offered by the company
- In relation to the mobile gateways, adequate publicity in the local areas that they visit was essential. Also consideration should be given to how they could assist with the provision of post office services in rural areas.

h) Target 48 - Increase opportunities for everyone to take regular physical exercise
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49 - Enter into practical partnerships with the NHS, sharing resources to combat obesity and encourage people of all ages to take responsibility for their health and wellbeing

- It was agreed that Members would receive more information on School Playing Fields and their informal use by their communities outside of school hours, especially how security measures taken by schools could hinder this.
- It would be helpful to have figures for GP referrals.
- In relation to encouraging cycling in rural areas, Ashford had a good cycle route network whereas Maidstone did not, more should be done to address these differences in facilities

i) Target 50 - Introduce a hard-hitting public health campaign targeted at young people to increase their awareness and so reduce the damaging effects of smoking, alcohol, drugs and early or unprotected sex

- **noted**

(6) **RESOLVED:-** That comments and responses to question from Members on the Towards 2010 targets that came within the remit of this Committee be noted.

65. Response to the Questionnaire on Overview Committees

(Item B2)

(1) Mr King introduced the paper from the Leader which gave his response to the questionnaire of all Policy Overview Committee Members. Mr King stated that Cabinet Members wanted to improve and develop their dialogue with Policy Overview Members and to develop a stronger partnership with them. There should be a balance between questioning and challenging Cabinet Members who should be able to have the backing of their Departmental officers. This was an important partnership. He believed that none of the Policy Overview Committees had fully explored all their powers and this was a matter for Policy Overview Members. He re-affirmed that Cabinet Members or Lead Members would attend Policy Overview Committee meetings and be held accountable and would take the lead in responding to Members with officer support..

(2) Members made the following comments:-

- Good Chairmanship was essential. All POC Chairman should receive Chairmanship training.
- Officers should assume that Members had read the report and therefore there was no need for them to give a summary of it at the meeting
- Question time at POC's and setting agenda meeting a year in advance was welcomed
- It was good to see that POC's were now taking on a scrutiny role as well
- An informal meeting between the Chairman, Vice-Chairman and Liberal Democrat Spokesman to discuss the powers of POC's was welcomed.
- Cabinet Members should invite POC's to comment on policy documents/strategies prior to them being approved.

(3) RESOLVED:- That the comments made by Members on the Leaders report be noted.