

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 26 November 2007.

PRESENT: Mr P B Carter (Chairman), Mr N J D Chard, Mr M C Dance, Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr G K Gibbens, Mr R W Gough, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr K G Lynes and Mr C T Wells

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R A Marsh

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Gilroy (Chief Executive), Mr G Badman (Managing Director of Children, Families and Education), Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mr O Mills (Managing Director - Adult Social Services), Mr A Wilkinson (Managing Director - Environment and Regeneration), Ms M Peachey (Kent Director Of Public Health) and Mr N Vickers (Head of Financial Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes of the Meeting held on 15 October 2007
(Item. 1)

The Minutes of the meeting held on 15 October 2007 were agreed as a true record.

2. Kent Children's Trust Governance Framework
(Item. 3 - Report by Mr Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills (CFE), Mr Chris Wells, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Standards, Mr Graham Badman, Managing Director for Children, Families and Education)

(1) The development of Children's Trusts is part of a national programme of change to improve outcomes for children and young people in line with the Every Child Matters framework. Through the Children Act 2004 a number of bodies and services have a duty to co-operate to improve outcomes for children and young people. As the Children's Services Authority, Kent County Council has a lead role to ensure that services comply with this duty and that arrangements for integrated planning and working are effective. Accountability for Children's Services rests with the Children's Services Authority and is secured through the Lead Elected Member and Director of Children's Services.

(2) Mr Clive Hart, Mr Mark Fittock, Mr Tom Maddison, Mr Ray Parker and Mr Derek Smyth all spoke on this matter as local County Members.

They each said they considered local Members needed to have more direct involvement in this area of work. Local Members had obvious local knowledge of their areas and that knowledge and experience could be used in this area of work to greater advantage. Having input through Local Boards would not be enough as those meetings were not frequent enough and their agendas often full with other

matters. What was needed was a mechanism which allowed local Members to have a direct say at a local level in the workings of the Trusts.

(3) Mr Carter said he believed that through a combination of local Members developing a closer understanding with the Chairman of the Trust for their area coupled with the arrangements being made for reports to be made through the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee that would give sufficient opportunity to engage in this work. Therefore there would be no changes to the current proposed arrangements although this could be reviewed in light of working practice.

(4) Following further discussion, Cabinet:-

- agreed to the principles of the Kent Children's Trust Governance Framework as set out in the Cabinet report;
- agreed to extend the membership of the Kent Children's Trust County Board to include one representative from each main opposition party in addition to the Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational (CFE) Achievement and the Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills (CFE);
- agreed scrutiny arrangements for the work of the Kent Children's Trust through:-
 - (a) the existing Kent County Council Scrutiny Committee; and
 - (b) the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee and the Children's Champions Board.
- agreed that a local scrutiny function could be established to consider the work of local operational structures either through Local Member Boards or another mechanism to be determined by Kent County Council.
- approved the Governance Framework for the Kent Children's Trust as set out at Appendix 1 to the Cabinet report.

3. Summary of Kent Safeguarding Children Board Annual Report for 2006/07

(Item. 4 - Report by Mr Mark Dance, Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills (CFE), Mr Chris Wells, Cabinet Member for Children, Families and Educational Achievement (CFE) and Mr Graham Badman, Managing Director for Children, Families and Education)

(1) This report provided a summary of the Annual Report of Kent's local Safeguarding Children Board which came into operation on 1 April 2006. The report also set out the achievements from the previous year, the work programme for the current period and also provided detailed statistics on child protection for 2006/07.

(2) In the course of discussion Cabinet noted that the Board had focused on ensuring that the membership and structures required for an effective and robust

service were put in place. Whilst some of the structures would continue to evolve there were firm foundations to ensure that the Board would serve children, young people and families within Kent well. Mr Gilroy said that the area of work covered by the Board was a key priority and he was pleased to see the report and the favourable trend lines.

(3) Cabinet then noted the 2006/07 summary Activity Report of the Kent Safeguarding Children Board.

4. Select Committee - Flood Risk

(Item. 5)

(1) Mrs S V Hohler (Chairman of the Select Committee) together with Mr J I Muckle and Mr M J Vye attended for this item.

(2) In introducing the report of the Select Committee Mrs Hohler said that this had been a short and focused piece of work on what was a very complex issue. She said that in the report the Select Committee suggested some small steps that could be taken to contribute to the overall reduction in flood risk and the better management of it. The Select Committee believed that it was crucial that great care was taken when looking at sites for new developments; flood defences were maintained to a good standard and measures put in place to make buildings more flood proof and communities more resilient. As importantly there had to be a constant focus on flood risk and the Select Committee suggested that an oversight should be provided by a standing Flood Risk Committee together with multi-level involvement through Flood Liaison Advice groups which could bring together experts, including those from the local community.

(3) From the 30 recommendations which the Select Committee had put forward Mrs Hohler spoke in particular about the need for there to be adequate ring-fenced direct government funding for flood risk management and reassurance given to the public that vital plans, strategies and flood defence work would not be compromised by competing financial demands within DEFRA or elsewhere. Mrs Hohler also said that because of its expertise the Fire and Rescue Service should be included as an active partner in the planning process for new developments and that KCC should lobby government to produce a set of building regulations for use in flood risk areas so that planners can be supported by increased but nationally consistent obligations to assist developers with a high level of flood proofing/mitigation. Also urgent action had to be taken to ensure that people are made more aware of the risk, and to be aware of what is being done to protect them and what they can do for themselves. In concluding her remarks Mrs Hohler placed on record her thanks to the Members of the Select Committee and to the officers who had supported it in its work.

(4) Mr Muckle spoke about the growth areas within Kent and development generally and the need for these to be planned and phased in such a way that any potential flooding issues were robustly addressed from the outset. The planning experts and others such as the Environment Agency had to provide the guidance needed on building developments and the best way for these to be taken forward. It was possible for developments to be carried out on flood plains but that had to be done in the right way in order to ensure peoples' safety. Mr Vye said that the

County Council had a duty to Kent's residents along with District Councils to take a lead role in ensuring that all that could be done was being done in order to protect from flooding. Mr Vye referred in particular to Recommendation 10 of the Select Committee's report which said that Kent Highway Services and the Environment Agency should seek to reconstitute the Flood Liaison Advice Groups in Kent (ideally catchment based) with representation from the insurance industry and local communities. Mr Vye also referred to Recommendation 21 which says that the Environment Agency should encourage input to local strategies and schemes from local authority and Internal Drainage Board experts. Also the Internal Drainage Board should be represented on the Southern Regional Flood Defence Committee in order to optimise the benefits to be gained from local knowledge. Mr Vye also referred to Recommendation 18 which speaks about KCC specifically allocating funding for road gully cleansing work to go ahead and where necessary to enable the condition and capacity of highway drainage systems to be improved, with the location of gulleys and their characteristics being recorded on GPS.

(5) Mr Ferrin said that he welcomed the report and said that he would seek to meet with the representatives of the Environment Agency to discuss the recommendations and any concerns it may have. He also said that he saw marine flooding as being a particular issue and he wanted to make sure that Kent received its fair share of the funding being allocated in the South East. The County Council had already begun mapping the drainage system although this would be a lengthy and expensive process. Mr Chard said the changes that had taken place in local structures had hampered the ability of Members to be involved in decisions at the local level. He therefore wanted to see a discussion take place around how local Members can engage more with the Environment Agency about decisions being made in their areas. He also said that with funding for flood defences now being allocated more on a regional basis Kent had done less well in obtaining money for local schemes.

(6) Mr Hill said that he also welcomed the report and was glad to see that the Environment Agency already appeared to be taking on board its recommendations. He also spoke about the effects of global warming and the fact that this could amongst other matters increase the incidents of flash flooding. He also welcomed the comments and recommendations in the report regarding emergency planning and the role and work of the Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Service and the Kent Resilience Forum. He said he would like to see if the County Council's Community Wardens could also play a part in this work and with the appointment of a new head of Emergency Planning now was a good time to refresh the County Council's input. Mr Gilroy said that he welcomed the report and in order to take this work forward wanted to link its findings to the work which was already ongoing with district colleagues, the Police and the Fire Service. He said that consideration should be given to having a seminar on these issues with involvement from all those who had an interest in flooding issues, particularly district councils, bodies such as the Environment Agency, the Fire and Police Services and the armed services.

(7) In concluding the discussion Mr Carter said that he also very much welcomed the report and its recommendations and the importance of working with the County Council's partners and other agencies in taking these important issues forward. He said he also welcomed the fact that the report would be discussed by the County Council at its meeting in January 2008.