

## ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 27 September 2007.

PRESENT: Mr R Truelove (Vice-Chairman, in the Chair), Ms S J Carey, Mr C Hibberd, Mr R F Manning, Mr R J E Parker and Mrs P A V Stockell

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R Gough, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr A St Clair Baker (Engagement & Improvement Manager), Mr N Caddick (Resources Manager), Mr A Wilkinson (Managing Director - Environment and Regeneration) and Mrs C Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### 44. Membership

*(Item A3)*

RESOLVED that Mr M J Angell had replaced Mr J B O Fullerton be noted.

#### 45. "Towards 2010"

*(Item B1)*

(1) Members of the Committee received a report on the progress for finalising the "Towards 2010" annual report that included an early draft of the report and the targets which the Environment and Regeneration Directorate contribute prior to its approval by the County Council on 18 October.

(2) The Committee agreed to take all the targets with in Mr Gough's Portfolio first. Members made comments and asked questions which were as follows:-

(3) **Target 1:** Substantially increase the number of new jobs by increasing the number of companies investing in Kent and the number of businesses starting up or expanding.

- How is KCC helping to create new jobs, highly valued jobs with aspirations?
- What is KCC doing regarding two-tier working with the District Councils?
- Do we track companies that leave Kent?
- What is the balance on employment and building land?
- There was concern raised that business parks had become unofficial depots for lorries which could hinder selling the sites.

(4) **Target 2:** Concentrate on the Regeneration of Kent's deprived areas and support business growth in these areas, seeking maximum funding from Government

and the EU to support the necessary infrastructure, including roads, utilities, telecoms and other services.

- Target 6 has some influence in Target 2.
- To attract businesses, Kent needs to have people with sound skills who are reliable and self-disciplined.
- The infrastructure alone does not create jobs.
- Targets for 2007/08 could be broken down district by district.
- The issues of 30-50 year olds quality of training needs to be addressed as some areas receive better training than others.
- It was felt that too many targets would be difficult to monitor and become spurious.
- The measurable indicators and targets for 2007/08 needed to be reviewed.
- The targets needed to be within the County Council's control.
- Did the bid for INTERREG funding include Folkestone?
- There was a clear push to regenerate coastal areas putting in new industry but there seemed to be no aim to give support to existing businesses.
- Has the new Sheppey bridge provided opportunities?
- The new infrastructure on the Isle of Sheppey on its own did mean that regeneration would follow; there needed to be improvement in the education, especially in secondary schools on the island.

(5) **Target 3:** Support a programme of town centre regeneration.

- What progress has been made on the Turner Contemporary Gallery, Margate?
- It was suggested that there needed to be clarity on what the Turner Contemporary Gallery was, to give justification for the County Council's capital investment. Was this a cultural or a regeneration project? *(Mr Gough advised that it was both and that SEEDA, who are providing substantial funding for the project, recognised this.)*
- As a regeneration project was it more a Margate issue and not a Thanet issue?

(6) **Target 4:** Support rural businesses and communities to build a strong entrepreneurial culture.

- There is no mention of Sittingbourne in this target. Will it be included next year?
- It was felt that this was a broad heading and could have the spirit of two-tier working.
- Concern was raised about the major negative impact out of town developments, such as Bluewater had on Town Centres.. It was suggested that this issue should be a target next year. *(The targets were in the Kent Structure Plan. The Member asked for this message to be passed to Kent Highway Services)*
- Concern was raised on what assistance was given to the Rural Business Sector whose businesses brought in revenue which Kent benefited from unlike businesses that served Kent and banked money in London which eventually went out of the country.
- What were the County's language skills?

- A Member felt that this was not an aspirational target.
- What was a “business” under the statement “rural enterprises”?  
(*Definition of “business” comes from the Kent Rural Delivery Framework*)
- Could KCC do some work on a priority list regarding the proposed closure of 59 post offices?

Targets 7, 8, 38 and 39 were agreed with no comment.

(7) **Target 9:** Through our Kent Supporting Independence Programme, work towards reducing the number of people dependent on welfare benefits.

(*Mr N Moon was present to answer questions*)

- A member shared his experiences of trying to encourage and offer work to people living on the street and sleeping in doorways. The few who did turn up for work could not or did not know how to mentally and physically work.  
(*There was a raft of evidence on LAA targets stopping people from working. Trust needed to be built up. In the last year we have built up to 200 people who were all engaged*).

(8) **Target 35:** Work with bus and train providers and lobby Government to improve public transport services in Kent.

- Members questioned how KCC could have a target to achieve trains arriving within 5 minutes of scheduled time when this was not in the County Council’s control.
- A suggestion was made that KCC looked at congestion and parking regarding CTRL.
- It was suggested that there needs to be control over the number of lorries and cars on the road.

(9) **Target 40**

- A request was made for the language in the target to be made tighter.

(10) **Target 44**

- The reference to “December 2006” needed to be corrected.

(11) Following on, the Committee agreed to discuss the targets under Mr Ferrin’s Portfolio. (*Mr A Wilkinson and Mr N Caddick were present to answer questions*).

(12) **Target 30:** Work towards introducing a Kent Youth travel card entitling all 11-16 year olds to free public transport in the County, subject to the outcome of two district pilots.

- It was suggested that the Measurable Indicator should be “for further pilot areas to be set up, as well as continuing the scheme in the already piloted areas”.

(13) **Target 31:** Pilot staggered school hours to relieve rush hour congestion.

(*Joint target with the Children, Families and Education Directorate*).

- It was felt that the culprit for the congestion in town centres was the school run and this was due to where schools were located and this needed to be

addressed by the Children, Families and Education Directorate in their planning of the locations of new schools.

- There needed to be measurable indicators and targets for 2007/08 added.
- It was suggested that KCC needed to continue dialogue with the utility companies for them to work to the County Council's schedule.

(14) **Targets 32, 33, 34 and 36 were agreed without comment.**

(15) **Target 37:** Improve the way we repair roads and pavements.

- A Member gave his congratulations on this target.

(16) **Target 42:** Reduce the impact of KCC's buildings and vehicles on the environment, including trailing the use of bio-fuels and other new technologies.

- It was queried whether the date "2010" was correct for the target.

(17) **Target 43:** Expand the Clean Kent Programme to tackle the top 20 fly-tipping hot spots and increase the capacity to prosecute fly-tipping offenders.

- There was a request for the number for successful prosecutions to be included.

(18) **Target 46:** Lobby Government, the water companies and developers to ensure that house building programmes do not threaten Kent's water supplies.

- Are we lobbying the South East water suppliers and if so, what response has there been?

(19) **Target 59:** Work with our partners to reduce the number of deaths and serious casualties from road accidents.

- It was highlighted that not all areas in Kent had a Parish Council and consideration should be given to working with other local partners.

(20) Mr Wilkinson gave an assurance that he would pull together the strands of all the targets to give better cohesion.

(21) RESOLVED that each of the Environment and Regeneration led targets and Measurable Indicators for 2007/08 be reviewed taking into consideration the comments detailed in paragraphs 44(3) – (20) above.

#### **46. Response to the Questionnaire on Overview and Scrutiny**

*(Item B2)*

(1) The Committee considered the response by the Leader of the County Council to a questionnaire, he commissioned in July 2007 on all the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees (POCs).

(2) Members of the Committee were given the opportunity to make comments which were as follows:-

- Members needed to be reminded that they should be contributing to the agendas.
- The POCs are a Member and not Officer Committee.
- The POCs are not a decision-making Committee.
- It needed to be clear when a decision was being made in the meetings.
- It was considered that too much meeting time was taken listening to progress reports.
- Members requested written reports before the meetings.
- Members of the Committee felt that the Cabinet Members should be in attendance at all POC meetings although this was not always the case.
- Site visits should be arranged only when necessary.

(3) RESOLVED that the report and comments in paragraph (2) above be noted.