

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 3 December 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), 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 A Wood (Head of Financial Management)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Revenue and Capital Budgets, Key Activity and Risk Monitoring
(Item. 2 - Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Finance, and Mr Andy Wood, Head of Financial Management.)

(1) This was the second full monitoring report to Cabinet for 2007-08. The first report was presented to Cabinet on 17 September 2007 and since then there has been a change to the portfolio structure which was detailed in the report. Mr Chard said that the net projected variance against the combined portfolio revenue budget was currently an underspend of £0.9m. However, the revenue projection, before management action, was a pressure of £9.149m, the breakdown of which on a portfolio basis was detailed in the Cabinet report. On the Highways Capital Maintenance Budget, the County Council had lost some £5m of grant which could only be made up through supported borrowing. On the Capital Budget there are a number of good reasons why some projects had not yet proceeded and these were detailed in the Cabinet report. Mr Woods said that the pressures identified within the budget are being dealt with through management actions with other pressures being identified for inclusion in the Medium Term Plan. Mr Ferrin said that as a result of the Local Transport Plan Settlement, the County Council had not been able to afford to take up some £2.1m of supported borrowing and that next year it was expected that would increase to some £7.m.

(2) Mr Carter said that a joint independent report had been commissioned on Asylum and that would be submitted to Government in January 2008. In the meantime a helpful letter had been received from Government and he was hopeful that there may be a resolution to this issue by the end of January 2008.

(3) Cabinet:-

- (a) noted the latest monitoring position on the revenue and capital budgets; and

- (b) the changes to the capital programme and agreed the revenue virements as detailed in Section 3.6 of the report.

2. Select Committee: Carers in Kent

(Item. 3 - Report of the Select Committee with a covering report by Mr K Lynes).

(Mr L Christie (Chairman of the Select Committee) together with Mr D Hirst and Mr G Koowaree were present for this item)

(1) Mr Lynes paid tribute to the work of all carers, particularly young carers, and also thanked the Select Committee for its report and its recommendations which he said needed to be considered very carefully.

(2) In introducing the report of the Select Committee Mr Christie paid thanks to Members of the Committee and to the officers who had supported it in its work. He said some of the Select Committee's recommendations, could be taken forward immediately but some were more strategic and would require Government support. Carers themselves had identified a number of needs as crucial and fundamental in supporting them so they can continue to care. These included breaks from caring, adequate respite care for the person being cared for (the client) better services from both the local authority and health authority, access to information and greater involvement in decision making relating to the client. Mr Christie spoke in particular about the impact of being a young carer and the significance that can have only a small proportion of young carers in Kent access the young carers projects and it was estimated that only a small proportion of young people accessing these projects are known to services. It was therefore important to recognise that other than education, young carers may not access services provided by local authorities and could lack the knowledge about the services which were available. Of the range of recommendations put forward in the report, Mr Christie highlighted Recommendation 5 which speaks about district social services teams helping to overcome issues around core management and helping to bring about improvements to response and accessibility of team members. Recommendation 8 talks about the need for having a multi-agency adult carers strategy and for that to be progressed as a priority. Issues around young carers were addressed specifically in Recommendations 9, 10 and 11 and these spoke about the need to ensure that awareness was raised within schools to increase the understanding of what it meant to be a "young carer" and to find ways to identify and support these young people and also to have a clearly identified lead professional for young carers. There was also a need to ensure that there were clear responsibilities and referral pathways for young carers between Kent Adult Social Services, and the Children, Families and Education Directorate and other agencies to ensure that protocols were developed as a matter of urgency. In finalising his comments, Mr Christie said that the role of carers in the community had come to the top of the political agenda and he wanted to see KCC actively contribute to the Government's Green Paper and wished to see the establishment of a cross-party group which could take that work forward. In their statements both Mr Hirst and Mr Koowaree supported Mr Christie in his thanks for the work and support which the Select Committee had received and also emphasised the need to give further support to carers and in particular, young carers. Mr Badman said that he welcomed the report and highlighted a number of actions some of which were already in place which he believed would go some way to addressing the issues highlighted particularly in relation to young carers. Mr Wells said that moving responsibility for children into the Children Families and Education Directorate had made it easier to

identify young carers and to support them in their role and he very much welcomed the report and its findings. Mr Mills also said that he welcomed the report and its timing was right as it came at a time when the County Council was moving positively forward with its partners to develop appropriate strategies to support carers.

(3) Mr Gilroy said that he welcomed the report and said that its message about access to services and support was critical. The whole issue of carers was one of great importance and the problems around these issues needed to be addressed by radical solutions. He said the Government needed to re-think expenditure in this field and give individuals and families their own purchasing power. On the particular issue of young carers, Mr Gilroy said he very much supported the view that there needed to be easy access to professional help and advice 24 hours a day and agreed with Mr Christie that that needed to be taken forward in partnership with the Government.

(4) Discussion concluded with Mr Carter thanking the Members of the Select Committee for their report which would be discussed further at the County Council meeting on 13 December 2007.

3. KCC International Activities Annual Report 2006/07

(Item. 4 - Report by Mr Alex King, Deputy Leader and Mr Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive)

(1) Mr Marsh said that International Activities Annual report 2006/07 covered a diverse range of international work in which KCC was involved. The International Unit may be a small one but its work left a large footprint of activity which KCC could justifiably be proud of. Mr Gilroy said that as the report demonstrated how KCC was actively involved in international activities not just within Europe but also in America where it continued to grow and develop its partnership with the state of Virginia. KCC was also developing links with China where the economic and social drivers behind its rapid and ongoing development meant there were significant opportunities for KCC. A strategy for engagement would be developed and implemented during 2008.

(2) Following further discussion, Cabinet noted the contents of the 2006/07 Annual Report and approved the draft International Strategy as appended to the Cabinet report.

4. Kent's Pledge for Children and Young People in Care

(Item. 5 - Report by Mr Graham Badman, Managing Director, Children, Families and Education)

(1) This report described the work that had been undertaken to develop Kent's Pledge for Children and Young People in and leaving care, which had been undertaken by a multi-agency/professional working group on behalf of the Looked After Children Review Steering Group.

(2) Following discussion Cabinet agreed to the commitment outlined in the Pledge and noted that the Pledge would be implemented from 1 April 2008.

5. Strategy for Staff

(Item. 6 - Report by Mr Paul Carter, Leader of the County Council and Amanda Beer, Director of Personnel and Development)

(1) Amanda Beer said that this report set out information on KCC's Strategy for Staff, charted the progress which had been made and outlined the current key priorities and challenges. She particularly highlighted the work which is being undertaken in order to ensure continued improvement in the Council's People Management Framework and to developing the Reward Strategy and strengthening the link between performance and reward. She also said that KCC was committed to having a confident and high performing work force which reflected the population served and clear action plans were being put in place in order to achieve that. She also spoke about the partnerships which KCC continued to develop in this area and the increasing work with HR partners in other public sector organisations aimed at delivering workforce solutions for Kent, not just KCC.

(2) During the course of discussion, Mr Carter said he very much welcomed this report and the very clear policies which were being developed to the benefit of KCC and its staff.

(3) Cabinet then noted the achievements against the Strategy for Staff objectives, endorsed the key priorities identified in paragraph 3 of the report and noted that the latest version of the Strategy for Staff as appended to the Cabinet report would now be circulated.

6. Draft Proposal for a Public Health Observatory for Kent

(Item. 7 - Report by Mr Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Meradin Peachey, Director of Public Health)

(1) This report detailed the steps being taken to establish a Kent Public Health Observatory in liaison with the South East Public Health Observatory. This would improve health intelligence to the NHS and KCC as an integrated service. Mr Gibbens said that establishing this service would contribute to the health improvement and reduction of health inequalities by ensuring that Kent had the most efficient and effective provision of public health intelligence and knowledge management services and was an example of the way KCC was leading on these issues with its health partners. Through the establishment of the Observatory, information would be available about health issues down to ward level and would help identify pockets of need and health inequalities. He said this was very much work in progress and a phased approach was proposed to allow for the early establishment of the service to gain short term benefits, but also for allowing for future developments to enhance the service and realise its full potential. The service would be closely aligned with KCC priorities and strategic objectives and link closely with public health across Kent.

(2) Cabinet note the report and agreed to the establishment of the Kent Observatory of Public Health and its implementation as described in the Cabinet report.

7. KCC Health Inequalities Action Plan

(Item. 8 - Report by Mr Graham Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Public Health and Meradin Peachey, Director of Public Health)

(1) Mr Gibbens said that this report was first submitted to the County Council's Corporate Policy Overview Committee at the beginning of November as "work in progress" and that comments and amendments arising from that meeting had been included in this current report, and the Action Plan would continue to develop in consultation and collaboration with all Directorates and Districts. Health Inequalities was a key aspect of the IDeA Peer Review and this was the first opportunity to present the Action Plan to Cabinet. Meradin Peachey said that the intention of the Action Plan was not to incur any new targets or initiatives but to focus attention on the range of activities and programmes already in existence and to achieve that through close partnership working with district councils and health colleagues.

(2) Following further discussion, Cabinet agreed the draft Health Inequalities Action Plan and noted that there would be further reports to Cabinet as this work evolved.

8. KCC Environment Policy

(Item. 9 - Report by Mr Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste and Amanda Honey, Managing Director Communities)

(Carolyn McKenzie was present for this item and spoke during the course of discussion)

(1) Mr Ferrin said that the Council's Environment Policy covered its own estate, operations, activities and decision making. It was therefore related to but separate from the Council's wider commitments to protect and enhance Kent's environment as a whole. The policy reflected key strategic KCC policy issues, but it was also driven by the pace and speed of the agenda being set by the Government. The Government was setting its own targets and imperatives which would impact on the work which the County Council was undertaking and it may be that its own policies would in time need to go further than those currently being proposed. Amanda Beer said that the policy demonstrated the way KCC was leading by example within its own organisation and was a clear statement as to its commitment to improving its corporate environmental performance. Carolyn McKenzie highlighted the range of work and activity which was being undertaken within the Council which she said would be regularly reviewed and reported to Cabinet on an annual basis.

(2) Cabinet noted and supported the contents of the report, agreed the KCC Environment Policy and delegated authority to the Managing Director for Communities in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste to approve the revised waste target.

9. Free Travel for 11 - 16 Year Olds

(Item. 10 - Report by Mr Keith Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste and Mr Adam Wilkinson, Director of Environment and Regeneration)

Mr David Hall of the Environment and Regeneration Directorate was present for this item together with Mr Oliver Rowlinson of the Kent Youth County Council)

(1) This report set out the progress to date in the introduction of freedom travel for 11 to 16 year olds and suggested a programme of additional implementation in 2008. Mr Ferrin said that the two free travel pilot schemes called the Kent Freedom scheme were introduced in Tonbridge/Tunbridge Wells and Canterbury in June 2007. These pilot areas were chosen on the basis of complexity of the transport arrangements to the secondary school catchment areas and the high levels of congestion which was evident at peak times. The scheme had proved very popular in the pilot areas and survey results showed that 27% of users previously travelling to school by car now used the bus which was most encouraging. Impact studies on congestion were being measured and would be reported when meaningful results were be available. There was also, evidence that students were using Freedom passes for travel at weekends and evenings which was a key aspiration of the Kent Youth County Council. Additional bus capacity had also been provided by bus operators in the pilot areas to cope with the extra demand and doubts expressed at the outset about child behaviour had not materialised. Therefore, the key aspirations of the scheme had been met in that there had been reductions in peak hour congestion, there has been improved social inclusion through improved mobility of young people outside schools hours and there were encouraging signs that young people were making longer term use of public transport. The Scheme had there been successful and well received and this success was underpinned by the partnership working which had been between the bus operators and the County Council. Mr Ferrin said that the County Council had been asked to consider extending the scheme to cover 16-18 year olds but there was not sufficient funding to do that so a pathfinder bid had been submitted to Government.

(2) Mr Oliver Rowlinson said that the Kent Youth Council very much welcomed this project which since its inception in the pilot areas had proved to be a considerable success. On behalf of the Youth Council he paid thanks to Kent County Council and Kent Highways Services for taking this initiative forward and said the Youth County Council was pleased to note that a bid had been submitted for Pathfinder funding. Mr Hall said that the pilot schemes had proved very successful and were both being run to budget.

(3) Mr Carter said he looked forward to the expansion of the scheme to other pilot areas and said that as a direct result of its work in this area Kent County Council had been awarded the prestigious Transport Authority of the Year Award. He therefore placed on record his congratulations on behalf of Cabinet to all who had been involved in this achievement.

Cabinet agreed:-

- (a) an extension to the pilot scheme in June 2008;
- (b) to the principle of pump-priming the introduction of smart cards;
- (c) officers be asked to consider how efficiencies could be gained once the Freedom scheme was rolled out countywide; and
- (d) rail be not included in the additional 2008 scheme.

10. Cabinet Scrutiny and Policy Overview

(Item. 11 - Report by Mr Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive)

(1) This report provided a summary on the outcomes and progress on matters arising from the meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held on 24 October 2007. The work programme for Select Committee Topic Reviews was reviewed by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee at its meeting on 5 November 2007 and the revised programme and current status of each Topic Review was set out in the report.

(2) At the conclusion of the meeting, Mr Carter placed on record his congratulations to KCC staff who had been working with Swindon Council over the past four years which had now obtained two stars for its Adult Social Services. In addition, KCC's own Adult Social Services had once again received the highest rating of three stars and it was hoped that the recent review of its Supporting People Commissioning Body services would be favourable.

11. Building Schools for the Future: Update on Evaluation of Final Bids
(Item. 13)

Before the commencement of business the Chairman announced that Item 13 on the agenda – Building Schools for the Future had been withdrawn and there would be a report to the meeting of Cabinet on 17 December 2007.