

POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee held in the Medway Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 5 November 2007.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Mrs T Dean, Dr M R Eddy, Mr J B O Fullarton, Mr P W A Lake, Mr R A Pascoe and Mr D Smyth

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT FOR THE CPA Corporate Assessment – Self Assessment- Mrs C Angell, Ms J Cribbon, Mr D Daley, Mr G Rowe, Mr M Vye, Mr P Carter (Leader) and Mr A King, (Cabinet Member for Policy and Performance).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Ballard (Staff Officer to the Chief Executive), Mrs S Garton, Head of Corporate Performance, Mr P Gilroy (Chief Executive), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager), Mr R Hardy (Director of Improvement and Engagement), Mrs L Miller (Development Officer – CFE), Mr J Wale (Assistant to the Chief Executive) and Mr P D Wickenden, (Overview and Scrutiny Manager).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Membership

(Item 1)

It was noted that Lord S Bruce-Lockhart had replaced Mr A Chell, Mr J Fullarton had replaced Mr M Dance and Mr J Law had replaced Mr W Hayton as Members of this Committee.

2. Minutes - 7 June 2007

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 7 June 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

3. CPA Corporate Assessment - Draft Self-Assessment

(Item 5)

(1) Mr Hardy introduced an early draft of KCC's Self Assessment for the CPA Corporate Assessment. He explained that there was a small cross-party group of Members who were being consulted on this draft in addition to getting the views of the Policy Overview Committees via this meeting. Appended to the report was the Audit Commission's Guidelines on how to produce a self assessment which set out the structure to be used. Mr Hardy invited Members comments on the draft self assessment.

(2) Mr Law stated that as a Member of the cross-party group of Members he had already submitted his written comments on this draft.

(3) A Member made a general point there being limited reference within the document to acknowledging weaknesses and expressed the view that this imbalance should be addressed. Mr Hardy explained that in relation to the issue of how the self assessment document should address the question of weaknesses. The current draft self assessment contained descriptions and needed now to have judgements incorporated into the document. Some of the better versions Self Assessment Documents came from Authorities who set out areas where they thought there was a need to improve.

(4) In response to a question on whether the Inspectors went into communities and talked to local residents. Mr Hardy explained that the Inspectors were due to visit in January and they were intending to visit focus groups and to talk to partners, services users and third parties. Officers were currently putting together an outline of their two week visit to submit to the lead Inspector.

(5) The Leader stated that the report had come to this meeting in order to get input from Members and to make sure it reflected what the Authority was about. He acknowledged that it was not a particularly exciting read at the moment, but it was a work in progress. The Chief Executive highlighted that this document had to be written to a certain framework which was constraining. The Leader emphasised that there was still a large amount of work to do to reflect the strength of the authorities and challenges and he hoped to ultimately get all party endorsement for the final version. It was important to be honest about our areas of weakness as well as our massive strengths. It was suggested that another meeting of this Committee be held in order to discuss the final draft of the Self Assessment.

(5) Members made a number of comments which included:-

- General – the report uses the word “innovative” in a lot of places. It is not necessarily helpful, to describe something as innovative. It is up to the Inspectors to decide what actually is innovative and we should assist them by giving examples
- Page 5.2 paragraph 1.2.4 – there is no mention of support for other language users or having a mini com service
- Page 5.21 – paragraph 1.2.7 – there is no mention of the target of having 5% of the top earners as women/disabled/ethnic origin, even a short sentence on this would be welcome
- Page 5.22 – paragraph 2.1.2 – this seems to assume that the Children, Families and Education Directorate deliver all educational services, this should also reflect their collaboration with schools and other partnership bodies.
- In relation to Kent’s Children’s Trust Board – could there be a mention of how this demonstrates involvement at local level
- Page 5.23 – paragraph 2.1.5 – in relation to recycling, mention should be made of joint working with district councils

- Page 5.25 – second paragraph – the sentence which starts “Councillors provide clear leadership on linking service improvements with value for money, ...” this sentence is need to be clarified.
- Page 5.26 – paragraph 2.3.3 second paragraph – there is no explanation of who comprises the residents panel and how the panel is selected.
- Page 5.27 – paragraph 2.4.1 – Work Force Strategy Board – it should be made clear whether this is a Board that covers all of the Council’s services –
- Page 5:34 - Paragraph 3.1.5 (i) – there is no mention of Connexions in this paragraph
- Page 5.35 – paragraph 3.1.5(iv) – the paragraph on Kent Works needs strengthening
- Page 5.36 – paragraph 3.2.4 – this paragraph could be enlarged as Housing is not the only partnership issues with District Councils.
- Page 5.45 – paragraph 3.5.8 – the last sentence needs rewording
- Page 5.26 – paragraph 2.3.3 – penultimate paragraph – in relation to the Member-led Local Boards, care how the way that Local Boards engage with their local community and enhance the Localism agenda is worded as not all Members would agree with the way that this is currently expressed.
- Page 5.23 – paragraph 2.1.4 – the three core principles could be improved by using the core principles which are being submitted to the Communities Policy Overview Committee on 7 November 2007
- Page 5.16 – Overview and Scrutiny – this paragraph talks about what Overview and Scrutiny can do collectively, it does not reflect KCC’s system of having Cabinet Scrutiny which has its limits, for example it cannot establish Select Committees and having Policy Overview Committees which do not examine decisions that have been taken by Cabinet. What seems to be set out in the document is what is in the Local Government Act 2000 and does not reflect the structure in Kent
- Page 5.26 – paragraph 2.3.3 – last paragraph – it is stated that residents would soon be able to e-mail and text their views during councils meetings – this needs to be checked to confirm that this was correct
- Page 5.17 – paragraph 1.1.1 – it states that Towards 2010 contains a series of 63 individual commitments, maybe this should be amended to read 63 aspirations and individual commitments
- Page 5.31 – paragraph 5.5.4 – there is no mention of the Brussels Office within the section on International Links, this section needs to be expanded

- Page 5.47 – paragraph 5.67 – the reference to free health-checks should include Chlamydia and this should not just be for young people but also for the 40+ age group who were often entering second relationships

(4) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the comments made on the CPA Corporate Assessment – Draft Self Assessment be noted; and
- (b) that a meeting of this Committee be convened to consider the final draft of the Self Assessment.

4. Select Committee – Topic Review Programme Work Programme – Update (Item 6)

(1) The Overview and Scrutiny Manager introduced a report which updated the Committee on the current Select Committee Topic Reviews and set out priorities for the Work Programme for the period Autumn 2007 to Autumn 2008, including how the programme should be resourced.

(2) The report set out details of current and recently completed Topic Reviews on **Flood Risk, Carers in Kent** and the soon to be completed report on **Alcohol Misuse**

(3) In relation to the Select Committee Topic Review on Alcohol Misuse, he explained that there were a number of external agencies involved with this subject area. If the recommendations were to add value and have impact it was essential to ensure that these organisations were signed up to them. On behalf of the Select Committee he asked this Committee to extend the timeframe for this review to enable the extra work to be done with external agencies. If this was agreed the report would be submitted to Cabinet in the first quarter of 2008.

(4) The Overview and Scrutiny Manager referred to the unique process which the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee had piloted which was holding a round the table discussion with a number of the stakeholder organisations, facilitated by the Director of Public Health.

(5) Members discussed whether the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee should be allowed to have extra time in order to engage with external agencies before finalising its report. Although there was a recognition that it was essential that Select Committee Topic Reviews were time limited, it was also acknowledged that only a short extension of time was requested to resolve specific issues arising from the nature of this topic

(6) Members were reminded that at their meeting on 7 June 2007, they had agreed that the following two topics should be started as soon as resources became available:-

- (i) **Accessing Democracy**
- (ii) **Vulnerable Children**

(7) In addition, he informed the Committee that he would like to use the dedicated NHS Overview and Scrutiny Research Officer resource to carry out a piece of work on **Access to Healthcare**.

(8) He informed the Committee that the Accessing Democracy Topic Review could start its work as soon as resources were available now that the Carers in Kent topic review had been completed should the Committee agree to extend the timescale of the Alcohol Misuse Topic Review then the Vulnerable Children Select Committee would be slightly delayed until resources became available.

(9) He also highlighted the challenges that had occurred with trying to accommodate Select Committee Topic Reviews during late July and August period which had impacted on the work of those Select Committees.

(10) In relation to resources, he reminded Members that he had 1.5 full time equivalent research officers to cover Select Committees put forward by five Policy Overview Committees. In relation to support from the Graduate Trainee Programme, as Democratic Services no longer funded a placement, there was no guarantee that a graduate trainee would be allocated to the Overview and Scrutiny team. There was currently no graduate trainee allocated to Overview and Scrutiny.

(11) The Overview and Scrutiny Manager reminded Members that there were four proposed Select Committee Topic Reviews which had been put forward some time ago and were still on the programme. He invited Members to consider whether they wished to retain these in the programme and to consider at a later date allocating them into the work programme or whether they wished to remove them or ask for further information. These topics were:-

- (i) **Developing the Creative Curriculum**
- (ii) **Young People's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development Values based Educational Behaviour**
- (iii) **Consultation and Participation with Young People (Student Voice)**
- (iv) **Provision of Activities for Young People.**

(12) Members discussed each of these potential topics and there was a view that in relation to **Developing the Creative Curriculum** and **Young People's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural Development Value based Educational Behaviour**, these topics had been on the potential work programme for some time and that if they were still relevant, then a further bid for these should be submitted. Regarding the **Student Voice** potential topic, there was a possibility that this could form part of the Accessing Democracy Topic Review although it was acknowledged that the potential scope of this review was large and would need to be closely focussed. It may well lead to a suite of reviews around the broad area of Accessing Democracy. In relation to the final suggested topic, **Provision of Activities for Young People**, it was acknowledged that this was a topic which should be considered further at the next meeting with an updated proposal to enable Members to consider whether this should remain in the work programme and be allocated a time slot.

(13) Mrs Dean raised the issue of the PSHE Advisory Group which had been established following the PSHE Select Committee report. She asked that Members be given a briefing note on the work of Advisory Group was doing and what its remit

was. The Overview and Scrutiny Manager undertook to request the Chairman of the PSHE Advisory Group, Mrs Hohler to speak directly with Mrs Dean

(14) Members discussed the need to look at the resources for Overview and Scrutiny and possibly consider changing the balance of resources to give more strength to the scrutiny side, this was a debate that Members needed to have with the Leader. Mr Hotson stated that he was meeting with Alex King to discuss how Overview and Scrutiny could be strengthened and he would then discuss this with Dr Eddy and Mrs Dean.

(15) Although the paper that went to County Council in October referred to Policy Overview Committees, Members felt that there was a need to look at the way in which Overview and Scrutiny worked and to question its effectiveness including Cabinet Scrutiny. The Committee were informed that the Corporate Policy Overview Committee at its January meeting would be having a report on Democratic Services and this could include resources for Overview and Scrutiny.

(16) In relation to the monitoring of Select Committee recommendations, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager stated that he was providing information for a report to the County Council meeting in December on how the outcomes from all of the Select Committee Topic Reviews since the Select Committees were introduced in 2001 had been taken forward.

(17) The Overview and Scrutiny Manager informed Members that a paper was being produced on Health Scrutiny in the light of the developing Links and Localism agendas and there was an opportunity to look at NHS Overview and Scrutiny and to re-focus it as Health Scrutiny but this would have impacts for Adult Social Services, Children's Social Services etc.

(18) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress of the Select Committee Topic Reviews, **Carers in Kent, Alcohol Misuse** and **Flood Risk** be noted;
- (b) the extension of the time-frame for the **Alcohol Misuse** Select Committee to enable it to report to Cabinet in the first quarter of 2008 be approved;
- (c) as soon as resources become available, **Accessing Democracy** should be the next Select Committee Topic Review to be stated and then as resources become available in early 2008, the **Vulnerable Children** Select Committee should be commenced;
- (d) it be noted that the dedicated NHS Research Officer resource would be supporting a review into aspects into **Accessing Health Care**;
- (e) when setting the Select Committee Work Programme, the period from the County Council meeting in July to the end of August be not included within the Programme, although it was acknowledged that this period could be used for drafting reports and carrying out research;
- (f) the following Topics be removed from the Select Committee Work Programme:-

- (i) **Developing the Creative Curriculum;**
- (ii) **Young People's Spiritual, Moral, Social and Cultural (SMSC) Development, Values Based Educational Behaviour;**
- (iii) **Consultation and Participation with Young People (Student Voice);**

if these Topics are still current and relevant, a bid for these should be made to the February meeting of Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee

- (g) the potential Topic of **Provision of Activities for Young People** be considered further at the February meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee with an updated assessment form;
- (h) it be noted that a report updating the Council on how the recommendations of Select Committees have been taken forward, was to be presented to the County Council on 13 December 2007; and
- (i) this Committee strongly requests the Chief Executive to ensure that a Graduate Trainee from the Programme is always given a placement within Overview and Scrutiny.