

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 7 June 2007.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Mr C J Capon, Mr M C Dance, Mrs T Dean, Dr M R Eddy, Mr W A Hayton, Mr R A Pascoe and Mr D Smyth

ALSO PRESENT: Ms D Fitch, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview), and Mr J Wale, Assistant to Chief Executive.

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr N Caddick, Resources Manager (E&R), Mr C Carter, Head of Planning and Performance (CFE), Mr D Cockburn, Director of Business Solutions and Policy (CED), Ms J Edwards, Director, Policy and Resources (CS), Mr R Fitzgerald, Performance Monitoring Manager (CED), Mrs J Hill, Performance Manager (CED), Ms J Gallagher, Project Officer (CED), Mrs S Garton, Head of Corporate Performance, Mr R Hardy, Assistant Director of Environment and Regeneration, Mrs M Hodges, Director, Strategy, Policy and Performance (CFE), Miss K Mills, Policy Officer, Business Planning (CFE), Mr T Minter, Kent Partnership Director (CED), Ms T Oliver, Head of Strategic Development Unit (CED), Mr D Oxlade, Head of Policy (CED) and Mr M Scrivener, Business Information Manager (CS).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

5. Membership

(Item 1)

It was noted that Ms A Harrison had replaced Mr R J E Parker as a Member of the Committee

6. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item 2)

RESOLVED that Ms A Harrison be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

7. Minutes – 15 February 2007

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 15 February 2007 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

8. KCC Annual Plan 2007-08

(Item 5)

(1) Mrs S Garton, Head of Corporate Performance, gave a brief introduction to this item.

(2) Mr Hotson stated that concern had been expressed by Members as to why the Annual Plan had not gone to each of the Policy Overview Committees to enable them to make specific comments in relation to their Directorate area. He stated that officers would be looking at the programming Policy Overview Committees to ensure that the Annual Plan could be considered by each of them. He informed Members that the report on the Annual Plan needed to be signed off late tomorrow afternoon and therefore if any Members had any further comments after this meeting they should contact officers directly.

(3) The introduction to the Annual Plan by the Leader and the Chief Executive and the covering report to the plan were tabled.

(3) There was a view from Members cross-party that in relation to monitoring performance it would be helpful to have at least half yearly if not quarterly reports to each of the Policy Overview Committees on their Performance Indicators within the Annual Plan.

(4) The Committee then debated the Plan during which Members asked a range of questions which covered the following topics:-

- the Kent Agreement and how the targets are set – Mr Minter explained that these were a mixture of national targets and targets that KCC and partners agencies thought should be included, for example, the Criminal Justice Board wanted one of their national targets included so that partners could assist them with it. They had now completed the two year reporting as part of a three year programme and out of the 18 outcomes only one was red. The strength of the Kent Partnership approach was that partners were able to help and support each other in meeting these targets. He stated that all involved had learned a lot which would be very helpful for the target setting for the next Local Area Agreement.
- The Kent Commitment - It was acknowledged that this was only at an early stage and therefore there was only a small section on it in this years Annual Plan.
- Apprentices – Members were informed that there were currently 65 apprentices employed by the County Council. The target was 250 and therefore good progress was being made.
- Regarding the percentage of Pedestrian Crossings with facilities for disabled people, Members were informed that officers considered that the target of 100% was realistic because as part of the routine maintenance programme work measures would be put in that would achieve this target.
- Kent Agreement - Page 5-13 in relation to the agreement it says “Some success has been achieved in agreeing Freedoms and Flexibilities with government, but, in general, there has not been as much progress as had been hoped for.” Mr Minter explained that Kent was one of the 21

pilots for this type of local agreement. Most pilot authorities asked for one or two freedoms, Kent County Council had asked for 51, which was very aspirational. Some have been achieved such as crime measurement by a more accurate survey, therefore some of these were long term issues which would take time to achieve, some were rejected and some withdrawn. Full details were in the two year report..

- It was confirmed that the two ticks symbol was the top rating.

(5) In relation to the individual Policy Overview Committee's meeting to consider the Annual Plan, Mrs Garton explained that due to the tight timescale for the production of the Annual Plan this would mean that the five Committee's would have to meet over a two day period next June.

(6) In addition to these questions a number of others were asked to which it was agreed that a written reply would be submitted to Members. A copy of the written response/list of questions is attached as an appendix to these Minutes.

(7) The Chairman thanked Members for the constructive and informative debate and congratulated Mrs Garton, Mrs Hill, Mr Fitzgerald and other officers involved with the production of the Annual Plan.

(8) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) questions and responses on the Annual Plan be noted;
- (b) in future years, the Policy Overview Committees meet individually to consider their directorates' part of the Annual Plan;
- (c) that further consideration be given to performance indicators being submitted to all Policy Overview Committees on at least a half yearly basis.

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

(1) The Overview and Scrutiny Manager submitted a report updating the Committee on the current Topic Reviews and set out priorities for the Work Programme for the period Autumn 2007 to Spring 2008 and the resources available to deliver the Work Programme.

(2) The report set out details of the recently completed Topic Reviews and the two current Topic Reviews, Alcohol Misuse and Support of Carers in Kent.

(3) Members were reminded that at their February meeting they agreed that the following topics should be given further consideration for inclusion in the work programme at this meeting:-

- (a) **Accessing Democracy;**
- (b) **Developing the creative curriculum;**

- (c) **Young people's spiritual, moral, social and cultural (SMSC) development, value-based education and behaviour;**
- (d) **Consultation and participation with children and young people (student voice);**
- (e) **Provision of activities for young people;**
- (f) **Supermarkets and outer town shopping malls/retail parks on businesses in Kent.**

(4) In relation to the **Accessing Democracy** proposed topic review, the Overview and Scrutiny Manager had met with Mrs Angell who had originally proposed this topic to consider how the County engages with hard to reach groups. This was a key area of activity where the County Council would need to demonstrate for the Corporate Performance Assessment that it had evidence to show that it did effectively engage with all members of society. Therefore it might be timely to establish a Select Committee relating to how the Council engages hard to reach groups in the Autumn.

(5) The report also included two new potential items for inclusion in the Work Programme. These were:-

- (a) **Vulnerable children;** and
- (b) **Flood risks**

(6) In relation to the NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee, the report set out potential new items for inclusion in the Select Committee Work Programme. A consultation document on the review of Health Services across Kent and Medway known as 'Fit for the Future' was due to be launched early in July. A possible subject for Select Committee within the NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee area was **Access to Health Care**, which would include proposals likely to arise from the Fit for the Future review. This would be another piece of work that would be of value to the County Council and other partner organisations. This proposal was fully supported by the Cabinet Member with responsibility for Public Health, Mr G Gibbens.

(7) The Overview and Scrutiny Manager set out the resources available to deliver the Work Programme which were 1.5 full time Research Officer in addition to the dedicated Research Officer for the NHS. The Committee were informed that the 6 monthly training post from the Graduate Development Programme would cease at the September 2007 because of budgetary constraints. This would mean that there was no guarantee that a trainee would automatically be placed with the Overview and Scrutiny Team although it was well recognised across the County Council that the opportunity to work on a Select Committee was an excellent placement opportunity.

(8) The Chairman informed the Committee that the **Accessing Democracy** and **Vulnerable Children** proposed Select Committees could start their work in the Autumn subject to the approval of this Committee. In relation to the proposal for a Select Committee on **Developing the Creative Curriculum**, due to other work going on within the Directorate, they would prefer this topic to come forward in 2008.

(9) The Chairman referred to a new proposal for a Select Committee on **Flood Risk**. Since the report had been prepared, there had been the opportunity for the extension of the secondment of one of the Research Officers. She was available to start work straight away on a short Select Committee with the aim of having completed the work by the time her extended secondment finished at the end of September.

(10) There was general support cross-party for carrying out a short piece of work on Flood Risk and Members discussed possible aspects that could be included within the Terms of Reference which included looking at Managed Retreat and the Impact on the Coastline and two new Shoreline Management Plans that had recently been published. It was also suggested that in relation to the **Developing the Creative Curriculum**, consideration should be given to whether aspects of other proposed topic reviews such as **SMSC** could also be included within this.

(11) The Chairman also welcomed suggestions for other Topic Reviews which could be put forward to the next meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee for consideration for inclusion in the work programme.

(13) Regarding the proposal for a Select Committee on the **Impact of Supermarkets and Shopping Malls**, Members felt that they needed a much clearer idea of any potential alternative reference before they agreed to programme this Select Committee. The proposer of this Select Committee agreed to withdraw this proposal.

(14) In response to a question on the monitoring of Select Committee recommendations, the Committee were informed that there was an agreed protocol, agreed by the County Council in March 2006. Members stated that they would like those Select Committees that had not been through this monitoring process to do so. Also they would like feedback from Select Committees, following their monitoring meeting, to be reported back to Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee as well as the parent Policy Overview Committee to assist with the identification of possible future topic reviews.

(15) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress of the two Select Committee Topic Reviews which are currently under way, Support for Carers in Kent and Alcohol Misuse be noted;
- (b) the Work Programme for Autumn 2007 to Spring 2008 to be started as soon as resources become available should be as follows:
 - (i) **Accessing Democracy**
 - (ii) **Vulnerable Children**
- (c) a Select Committee on **Flood Risk** be established which would aim to complete its work by the end of September 2007.
- (d) the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 27 September 2007 consider an update report on the following suggested

topics for Select Committee Reviews and consider which to include in the next phase of the 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)**
- (iv) **Provision of Activities for Young People**
- (e) the proposed Select Committee Topic Review of Impact of Supermarket and Out of Town Shopping Malls/Retail Parks on Businesses in Kent be deleted from the work programme.
- (f) a NHS Overview and Scrutiny Topic Review on **Access to Health Care** be established when resources become available.
- (g) the suggestions in relation to the monitoring of Select Committee recommendations be pursued