

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 24 January 2007.

PRESENT: Mr D S Daley (Substitute for Mrs T Dean), Mr J B O Fullarton, Mr C Hart, Mr E E C Hotson, Mr P W A Lake, Mr C J Law, Mrs M Newell, Mr R J E Parker, Mr J E Scholes, Mrs P A V Stockell and Mr C T Wells

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr J Wale, Assistant to the Chief Executive, and Mr S C Ballard, Head of Democratic Services.

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

46. Minutes - 13 December 2006
(Item. A2)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 13 December 2006 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

47. Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues - 11 January 2007
(Item. A3)

RESOLVED that the notes of the meeting of the Informal Member Group on Budgetary Issues held on 11 January 2007 be noted.

48. Cabinet Scrutiny Committee - Standing Report to January 2007
(Item. A4)

RESOLVED that the report on the actions taken as a result of the Committee's decisions at previous meetings, and on progress with Select Committee Topic Reviews, be noted.

49. Implications of the Local Government and Public Involvement in Health Bill for the Overview and Scrutiny Functions of KCC
(Item. A5)

Mr M Ayre, Senior Policy Manager, Corporate Policy Unit, attended the meeting for this item.

(1) As an update, Mr Ayre reported that the Government had published its Implementation Plan for the Local Government White Paper on the day before the meeting. This showed that the Community Call for Action (mentioned in the White Paper but not the Bill) and the extension of Councils' powers to enable them to scrutinise the actions of other public bodies would be implemented with effect from 1 April 2008, and that the Department for Communities and Local Government would consult on the detailed arrangements from April 2007 onwards.

(2) Members discussed the following issues:-

- the proposals in the Bill for Councils to establish independent Local Involvement Networks (LInKs) to replace the Public and Patient Forums which currently represented public and patient interests in NHS Overview and Scrutiny;
- the resources required to enable Members to undertake their new local responsibilities relating to Community Call for Action (CCfA) and the overview and scrutiny of other public bodies, and to enable the Council to handle the additional work that this would inevitably involve;
- the seeming inconsistency whereby the generic CCfA provisions in the White Paper and the Bill would enable residents to refer matters for action equally to both district and county councillors, whereas the CCfA powers in the Police and Justice Act 2006 in respect of crime and disorder issues were limited to referring such matters to the local CDRP via district councillors only;
- whether the proposals in the White Paper and the Bill actually gave additional powers to Councils or whether they simply paid lip-service to localism.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Mr Ayre be thanked for attending the meeting to discuss his report with Members;
- (b) the report be noted and referred to the Going Local Informal Member Group for consideration.

50. Commission for Social Care Inspection - Annual Performance Review Report for Adult Social Care

(Item. C1)

(1) Mr K G Lynes, Cabinet Member for Adult Services; Mr O Mills, Managing Director, Adult Services; and Mr N Sherlock, Performance Manager, Adult Services Directorate, attended the meeting to answer Members' questions on this item.

(2) In an introductory statement, Mr Mills asked the Committee not to lose sight of Adult Services' achievement in achieving a three star rating (the maximum possible). KCC was one of only four authorities which had achieved a three star rating for adult services for five years running.

(3) Mr Mills went on to describe the process by which CSCI carried out its annual performance assessment of Adult Services. He explained that Part 2 of the Performance Assessment was essentially a working paper for CSCI. It contained personal references and was written in a very informal way. With hindsight, he questioned whether it should have appeared in the public domain. He had included it in the report to Cabinet only because CSCI had already published it on its website.

(4) Members' questions covered the following issues:-

Data Shown as “Missing” in Part 2 of the CSCI Assessment

(5) In answer to a question from Dr Eddy, Mr Mills explained that the County Council had provided all the information which CSCI had requested. However, as an excellent authority, KCC was exempted from providing certain information. Unfortunately, the CSCI assessment document was a generic template which was completed automatically. As a result, if data was not supplied by any council, even though it was not required to be supplied, it was shown as “missing” in Part 2 of the assessment.

(6) Mr Mills said that, as a matter of good practice, Adult Services had provided CSCI with an Information Pack containing all relevant information. *(Copies of the Information Pack were circulated at the meeting and can be inspected on request).*

Support for Swindon Borough Council

(7) In answer to a question from Mr Lake, Mr Mills explained that KCC had a three-year partnership with Swindon designed to move that Council up from zero stars to two stars in both Adult Services and Children’s Social Services. Swindon had achieved one star in the first two years. 2005/06 was the final year but the results would not be known until November. All KCC’s costs for the Swindon partnership were met by Government.

Direct Payments

(8) In answer to a question from Mr Lake, Mr Mills said that the number of clients on direct payments had trebled since the end of 2004/05 to 1,200. The target was 1,400 by 31 March 2007. This demonstrated that the change to direct payments was permanent and sustainable.

(9) Mr Lynes said that direct payments had attracted a number of new clients because of the choice which the new system offered. This had created some budgetary pressures. There were also challenges around the distinction between social care and medical care when clients used direct payments.

Discharges from Hospital

(10) In answer to questions from Mr Lake and Mr Daley, Mr Mills said that KCC was responsible for only 10-11% of delayed discharges from hospital at present. Nevertheless, as CSCI had identified, the reduction in beds in acute hospitals and local (convalescent) hospitals was likely to lead to patients being discharged from hospital at an earlier stage, thus requiring a higher level of input from Adult Services. The Government’s intention was that, as this happened, the savings made by the NHS would be transferred to intermediate care provided by councils and GPs. Mr Lynes said that, although there was good partnership working between the NHS in Kent and Adult Services, he was concerned at the risk that the NHS would retain its savings in order to cut costs, leaving councils with an additional burden.

Care Staff

(11) In answer to a question from Mrs Newell, Mr Mills said that Adult Services had just entered into a contract with South Kent College for the training of carers and care staff and this should help bring about the required improvement in training for independent sector care staff.

(12) A new national recruitment campaign for care staff had just begun and Adult Services was working with the independent sector to try to make social care work a more attractive career.

(13) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Mr Lynes, Mr Mills and Mr Sherlock be thanked for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions;
- (b) the Committee place on record its thanks to staff of the Adult Services Directorate for their hard work and dedication which had helped secure for the County Council a three star rating for adult social care for the fifth year running;
- (c) the Managing Director, Adult Services be asked to pursue with CSCI the Committee's concerns about publication of Part 2 of the Record of Performance assessment, as follows:-
 - (i) while the document was useful for Members and officers, the personal references and conversational tone made it inappropriate for wider publication;
 - (ii) use of the word "missing" in relation to the provision of information by KCC Adult Services was misleading and gave readers the incorrect impression that Adult Services was failing to meet CSCI's requirements for the provision of information;
 - (iii) in view of this CSCI be asked to remove Part 2 of the Record of Performance Assessment from its website forthwith.

51. Replacement of Service at Dymchurch, Horsmonden and Whitfield Libraries (Decisions 06/00903-5)

(Item. D1)

(1) Mr P M Hill, Cabinet Member for Community Services; Mr D Crilley, Director of Libraries, Youth, Culture and Sport; and Ms S Sparks, Strategic Manager, Libraries and Archives, Communities Directorate, attended the meeting to answer Members' questions on this item.

(2) At the outset, Mr Hill outlined the strategy for libraries. He said that there had been a significant increase in book issues (bucking the national trend), and increased customer satisfaction, particularly in those libraries that had been refurbished. However, some libraries had been considered unfit for their purpose because of poor premises or under use. These libraries were being reviewed on a case by case basis. The reviews of Dymchurch, Horsmonden and Whitfield libraries had concluded that the only way to improve the service was to close the existing premises and replace the service with a mobile library.

(3) The Committee went on to consider each of the three libraries separately.

Dymchurch

(4) Mr Crilley and Ms Sparks explained that Dymchurch library was housed in rented accommodation which was inadequate as a library or for any other KCC use, not least because it had no water supply. The local Member, Mr Wood-Brignall, understood the problems and believed that the proposed new mobile

library service would be an improvement. The local Parish Council had been invited to comment but had not done so.

(5) The possibility of re-locating the library to the local primary school had been explored but rejected because of security concerns. Shepway District Council had been approached but had no suitable premises in the area which could accommodate the library.

Horsmonden

(6) Mr Crilley and Ms Sparks explained that Horsmonden library was housed within the local primary school. OFSTED and the school's governors had expressed concern about the possible impact of the library on the safety of pupils and, as a result, the library's opening hours had been restricted. The possibility of relocating the library within the school had been explored but it had proved impossible to overcome the safety concerns. The local Member, Mr A J King, accepted that the safety of school pupils was paramount and that the library should be replaced by a mobile service. There had been a great deal of helpful discussion with the local Parish Council but this had not led to the identification of any alternative site within the village. The Parish Council had originally supported the alternative service proposal but had now suggested some other options, which would be explored.

Whitfield

(7) Mr Crilley and Ms Sparks explained that Whitfield library was housed in the village hall. The local Member, Mr Cope, supported the proposal to replace the library with a mobile service. The local Parish Council had been invited to comment but had not done so. The Village Hall Management Committee regretted that the library might close. The possibility of relocating the library elsewhere in Whitfield had been fully explored but without success.

(8) In response to suggestions from Members of the Committee, Mr Crilley agreed to incorporate additional information in any future reports on changes in the libraries service.

(9) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Mr Hill, Mr Crilley and Ms Sparks be thanked for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions;
- (b) the agreement by the Director of Libraries, Youth, Culture and Sport to incorporate in future reports on changes in the libraries service:-
 - (i) the views of the local Member;
 - (ii) the views of the local Parish Council;
 - (iii) greater range of usage statistics (eg footfall, membership, visitors per hour, etc);
 - (iv) greater details of survey of users, etc (eg copy of survey and number sent to individual library users,be welcomed;

- (c) the Director of Libraries, Youth, Culture and Sport be asked to explore alternative means of enabling people affected by the closure of Dymchurch, Horsmonden and Whitfield libraries to use public access computers (eg mobile library vehicle equipped with PCs).

52. A229 Royal Engineers Way/Stacey Street Roundabout, Maidstone (Decision 06/00916)
(Item. D2)

(1) Mr K A Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Mr D Hall, County Transportation Manager, Kent Highway Services, attended the meeting, and in answer to the issues raised by Members, made the following points:-

- the proposal to remove the bus lane had been made because it did not meet the relevant criteria and was ineffective. A left-turn lane for all traffic would have a more beneficial effect on reducing congestion;
- neither full implementation of the Maidstone UTMC, nor redevelopment of Maidstone East Station (with its improved public transport interchange) was likely to change the balance of advantage for removal of the bus lane;
- the local bus operator, Arriva, had not objected to removal of the bus lane;
- the existing planter and tree would, regretfully, have to be removed for highway safety reasons;
- the cost of the works would be met from the highway maintenance budget. The costs was justified by the contribution which the works would make to reducing congestion.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) Mr Ferrin and Mr Hall be thanked for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions;
- (b) the report and the information provided at the meeting be noted without comment.