

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of A meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee held at Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 28th May, 2008.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Miss S J Carey (Substitute for Mr B R Cope), Mr J A Davies, Mr C G Findlay, Mr C Hart, Mr C Hibberd (Substitute for Mr R B Burgess), Mr L B Ridings, Mr J E Scholes, Mr J D Simmonds and Mr D Smyth

ALSO PRESENT: Mr N J D Chard and Mr G K Gibbens

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms L McMullan (Director of Finance), Mr M Austerberry (Director of Property), Ms A Beer (Director of Personnel and Development), Mr R Fitzgerald (Performance Monitoring Manager), Ms J Hill (Performance Manager), Ms A Slaven (Director Youth Offending & Substance Misuse), Ms D Smith (Policy Manager), Ms P Smith (County Manager - Supporting Independence Programme), Mr N Vickers (Head of Financial Services), Mr A Wood (Head of Financial Management), Peter Gilroy (Chief Executive) and Mr M Lemon (Head of Policy KPHD)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

87. Minutes of the Meeting held on 27 March 2008
(Item. 3)

Under Minute Number 51(5) (Draft Communication Strategy) Miss Harrison emphasised the importance of ensuring that Members had information that related specifically to their role as elected Members in hard copy, for example information from the Standards Committee.. Other information that was not so directly related to their role, ie information from Directorates should be sent by email. It was noted that consideration of how information was supplied to Members was within the remit of the current IMG on Member information.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 27 March 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

88. Financial Monitoring Report : Corporate Services 2007/08 and Business Unit Operating Plan Outturn Monitoring 2007/08
(Item. 1)

(1) The Committee considered a report which informed them of the forecast outturn against the budget for the Chief Executive's Department and the financing items budget for 2007/08. This report also included for the first time a provisional outcome analysis of the annual operating plan of each of the Chief Executive's Department Units. It was explained that similar reports on the annual operating plans would be submitted to the other Policy Overview Committee's in September.

(2) Mr Wood explained that the information provided on the analysis of the annual operating plan had been put forward by Officers and Members input was sought on how useful they found the way that the information was presented. He also stated that Officers were looking out how business plans were put together and the process for linking Best Value Performance Indicators and value for money. He stated that they were hoping to come back to Members at their September meeting with further ideas. Ms McMullan stressed that Members input into the exercise that they were going through to review the business plan was welcome.

(3) Mr Chard asked that his thanks be recorded to the Treasury Management Team for the excellent job they had done which had had enormous impact on the finances of the County Council.

(4) Members referred to the key performance indicators relating to the response to complaints. It was explained to Members that the reason this came under Democratic Services was that they acted as a post-box for Corporate complaints, and ultimately the responsibility lay with the Directorates to respond to the complainant.

(5) Prior to a report to the September meeting of the Committee on complaints across the authority, Members requested that they receive a paper setting out the process for dealing with complaints on behalf of the Chief Executive.

(6) Members asked questions around the cost of the localism agenda and the importance of balancing this against the benefits received. The Chief Executive replied that the Officer cost within Democratic Services to support this was approximately £1m but there were also Officer resources spread across Directorates as a whole.

(7) The Chairman reminded Members that in order to set the agenda for POC meetings a cross party meeting was held with himself, and the Spokespersons. If Members had any items that they would like included on the agenda they should contact their Spokesperson.

(8) RESOLVED That the projected outturn figures for the directorate as at the third quarter exception report be noted.

89. CED Risk Register *(Item. 2)*

(1) Ms Dawson presented a report which set out the refreshed Risk Register as at December 2007 for the Chief Executive's Directorate. She explained that this was an annual exercise timed to coincide with the preparation of business plans. It was intended that the register be presented to the Committee to inform Members understanding about the key risks facing the Directorate associated with objectives identified within business plan.

(2) A Local Member agreed that the medium level risk identified for the Ashford development was realistic.

(3) The issue of whether the Council provided services to the public in the way in which the public wanted them provided was raised, and whether this should form a risk area. Ms Dawson explained that the Directorate risk looked at the risk of the business objectives for the Chief Executive's Department. There was also a strategic risk register, which would cover the issue raised this was currently being refreshed and would be considered by the Governance and Audits Committee in June 2008

(5) RESOLVED that the refreshed risk register for the CED be noted.

90. Procurement Framework

(Item. 3)

(1) Mr Vickers presented a report which updated Members on progress with the County Council's procurement framework. It was noted that in Paragraph 7.1 the figure for "MTP Savings identified from improved procurement" was £3.1m.

(2) Mr Vickers confirmed that 20% of the Kent Highways Services work had been put out to competitive tender and previously the alliance partners had been successful in tendering for a large part of this work. A new tendering exercise was underway.

(3) In response to a question on Page 50 - 12 categories of goods and services required to use the Countywide Framework contracts, Mr Vickers explained that up to until March 2007 there was no specific requirement across KCC to use Commercial Services. The spend mandate agreed last year by the Leader and the Chief Executive made use of Commercial Services or other countywide contracts mandatory for the 12 categories of goods and services. The Leader required Officers to regularly test for cost effectiveness.

(4) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

91. Consideration of the draft KCC Annual Plan 2008/09 and the process for publishing the final approved version

(Item. 4)

(1) Mrs Garton and Ms Hill introduced a report which set out the background and processes for publishing the KCC Annual Plan 2008/9. A copy of the latest draft was attached to the papers to enable Members to make any comments they thought appropriate prior to the Annual Plan consideration at Cabinet on 16 June and at County Council on 19 June. The Annual Plan would then be published by the statutory deadline of 30 June 2008.

(2) Officers made comments which covered the following issues:

- It was noted that the Appendix related to the Local Area Agreement Two targets would be included before the Annual Plan was submitted to County Council in June.

- In relation to the section on staying safe which was still to be included, this would be discussed at Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee on 3 June.
- Page 91 - Target 18 - in relation to apprenticeships, a Member asked how the KCC apprenticeships scheme fitted in with apprenticeships already ongoing across the County. It was confirmed that the figures for this were in towards 2010 report and would be supplied to Members.
- It was emphasised that the Corporate Performance Assessment was different from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment and that this should be made clear within the report.
- Mention was made of the change in title from the Children, Families and Education Directorate to the Children, Families and Health Directorate and clarification was sought on how this impacted on the Health remit of other areas of the Councils work.
- Page 105 - Managing Kent's Waste - the impact that District Council Policies on green waste could have on Kent's waste strategy was mentioned, as was the importance of County working closely with Districts in relation to this issue.
- It was suggested that it would be helpful to map where the different types of wardens were across the County.

(4) The Chairman on behalf of the Committee thanked the Officers across the Authority who had compiled the Annual Plan.

(5) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

92. KCC Health Inequalities Action Plan (Item. 7)

(1) Mr Gibbens introduced the report on the Health Inequalities Action Plan. Ms D Smith explained that this was submitted to the Committee so that they could agree the progress and development of the Health Inequalities Plan since the report was last considered at the Corporate POC on 8 November 2007. The plan had also been considered at a Cabinet Meeting on 19 November 2007. The action plan had been amended to take account of feedback received.

(2) Members asked questions and made comments which included the following:

- In relation to life expectancy a comment was made on the usefulness of having information both across Kent and also at a sub-ward level, it was noted that work was being done to produce this information.
- The map in the Kent Public Health Annual Report showing coastal towns did not include the Isle of Sheppey.
- Childhood obesity - there should be lobby against the trend for clothing manufactures to make children's clothes larger for the age range, as this normalises the trend towards childhood obesity.
- The issue of whether there are adequate resources to carry out the actions – the importance of co-ordinating existing resources at local level was emphasised for example encouraging GP's to prescribe exercise.

- The Actimobs Scheme (a project sponsored by the Department of Health) was given as an example of using resources at a local level and involving people in activities and empowering them to decide what activities they wanted to do.
- In response to a discussion on resources it was stated that there is a perspective that generally 90% of necessary resources already existed and the extra 10% was needed to make the connections and make things happen. Ms P Smith confirmed that in her view there were resources in the County for Health Inequality matters but what was needed was co-ordination at a local level.

(3) It was emphasised by Officers that they welcomed Members input into this area and the sharing of their local knowledge and experience. Ms Smith confirmed that contributions should be submitted by 15 July 2008 so that the report and plan could be published and shared as guidance and be an informative resource.

(3) RESOLVED that comments made by Members on the KCC Health Inequalities Action Plan be noted:

93. IDeA Healthy Communities Peer review: 10 - 12 October 2007
(Item. 8)

(1) Mr Gibbens and Mr Lemon introduced a report which updated the Committee on progress against the eleven recommendations made by the IDeA Peer Review of healthy communities in October 2007. The report also listed the contributions to public health and wellbeing identified by KCC Directorates.

(2) Members asked a number of questions which included the following:

- In response to a question on how this KCC compared with other County Councils on these issues, Mr Lemon replied that no other comparative reviews has been produced yet but the initial review team would be coming back in the Autumn to see what progress had been made
- It was emphasised by Officers that the Observatory was not an additional body but brought together and focussed information that already existed within the Authority.
- Page 215 - Paragraph 2.7 refers to District Councils, voluntary and community groups, it was suggested that Parish/Town Councils were also a useful source of information.
- It was confirmed that Healthwatch was not included within this as it was not a mainstream public health activity. It lay within the Directorate but was not seen as a public health intervention.

(3) RESOLVED that the progress made since the IDeA Peer Review be noted.

94. Corporate Policy Overview Committee Select Committee on Alcohol
(Item. 9)

(1) The Committee received a report informing them of progress towards implementation of the recommendations of the Alcohol Select Committee.

(2) Mr Gibbens explained that a cross party Steering Group had been established to oversee progress on the implementation of the Select Committee report recommendations. He was the Chairman of this Steering Group which had held its first meeting.

(3) The Chairman informed Members that the issue of publicising Select Committee reports, and in particular this report had been discussed at the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 23 May 2008. Members at that meeting wished a more proactive approach to be taken to publicising such excellent reports so that they could reach a wider audience.

(4) Mr Gibbens informed Members that there would be a launch/conference event on 10 July which would be held in partnership with GOSE, Kent PCT's, District Councils, Kent Police, a school and KCC. It was part of the new partnership arrangements formed to tackle alcohol issues called Kent Action on Alcohol.

(5) Ms Slaven answered questions from Members and gave more details of the event of 10 July.

(6) It was agreed that all Members of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee would be invited to attend the Kent Action on Alcohol event on 10 July 2008.

(7) RESOLVED that the progress on the implementation of the Alcohol Select Committee Report and the approach proposed be agreed.

95. New National Indicator Set
(Item. 5)

(1) Mr Fitzgerald presented a report which informed Members that 2007/08 was the final year for Best Value Performance Indicators. They had been replaced by a new National Indicator set from April 2008. He submitted a report which sought to provide background information for Members on the development of the new National Indicator set as well as setting out those indicators which fell into the remit of this Committee.

(2) In response to a question from a Member on what was being done about the elected Members Community Cohesion target. Mr Fitzgerald confirmed that civic participation information included a list of things involved within it which included work by voluntary organisations, Members of the Council etc.

(3) A Member emphasised the importance of co-ordination of different groups, for example there were stronger, safer, communities groups, some districts had Ward Walks which involved Officers, Members and Partners, the Police had PACTs.

(4) The importance of the Olympic Games in relation to increasing volunteering was mentioned.

(5) RESOLVED that the report be noted

96. Property Disposals

(Item. 6)

(1) Mr Austerberry presented a report which covered three areas of property disposal, the different types of disposals and the processes for handling them including, the consultation process in relation to local Members and Councils and an outline position for the year just ended and a commentary on the wakened market for disposals in the current year. Questions were invited from Members.

(2) It was clarified that once a piece of land was declared surplus to Highway requirements the next stage was for a decision to be made in relation to marketing the land.

(3) It was confirmed that the final decision on selling a piece of land was taken by the portfolio holder, Mr Chard, in consultation with the relevant offices. It was pointed out that the majority of sites sold were under the remit of the Children, Families and Education Directorate.

(4) The Chairman commented on the favourable outturn in 07/08 and asked in relation to the small parcels of land which KCC disposed, what had been learnt from this process. Mr Chard acknowledged that this had been contentious in some cases. Initially the consultation period had been set at four week, but this had been extended to six weeks to make sure that Parish Councils who, often met on a four weekly basis, had the opportunity consider the proposal.

(4) RESOLVED that the report be noted

97. Staff Survey - CED - Presentation

(Item. 10)

(1) Ms Beer gave a PowerPoint Presentation on the 2008 Kent County Council Employee Opinion Survey as it related to The Chief Executives Directorate. The presentation included methodology, objectives, response rates, results relating to external benchmarking, KCC comparison, trend comparison and concluded with the next step.

(2) In relation to the issue of openness and honesty in communication, Ms Beer informed Members that the majority of staff felt that the dialogue was open and honest most of the time. Work would be done with staff and focus groups and they would be encouraged to give real time examples. She stated that many staff recognised that it was not practical to be open all of the time but they expected honesty.

(3) In response to a question on what Members could do to help improve these results, Ms Beer stated that communication was important to ensure that Members gave their views and feedback to Officers who work with them. It was also important that this feedback covered positive outcomes as well as areas for improvement.

(4) In response to a question, Ms Beer confirmed that the result had been submitted to the Corporate Consultative Forum and that staff would be formally notified of the outcomes and feedback taken into teams. This would not feed into appraisals as it was the collective view of staff but it was important that there were team discussions relating to this.

(5) In relation to the written survey of all staff which was going to be undertaken it was confirmed that many of the questions would be similar but would cover all staff. As it was a new survey it would not be bound by questions asked in previous surveys. Although some areas of questions would be the same, some questions would be different, this would form a new baseline set of trend-data.

(6) It was confirmed that the new questionnaire would take account of the new performance indicators.

(7) It was acknowledged that an interesting question to ask staff responding was whether they had actually worked for any other employers, as this sometimes changed their perception of the organisation which they were working for. Some employees who may have worked for KCC for the majority of their career may have unfounded perceptions of, for example, reward packages in other organisations.

(8) It was also important to identify the age range of the respondents and relate this to the views expressed.

(9) RESOLVED that the presentation and the comments made be noted.

98. Select Committees - update

(Item. 1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the Select Committee Topic Review Programme relating to this Policy Overview Committee. This included the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee and the Accessing Democracy Select Committee.

(2) In relation to the meeting with the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 23 May 2008, the Chairman updated Members on the following issues:

- Mr Gilroy had been invited to attend the next meeting to discuss the issue of resources for Overview and Scrutiny.
- It had been proposed that when a Select Committee was established an IMG would be set up to scope the Select Committee Review at an early stage.
- The next Select Committee would be Activities for Young People under the remit of the Communities Policy Overview Committee.

- In relation to proposed review on domestic rail services it was acknowledged that there was not currently any available resources in the overview and scrutiny team to support a Select Committee topic review on this issue. Therefore Environment and Regeneration Directorate and the Leader were going to be asked to accept a focussed piece of work which could feed in to a larger piece of work at a later date.
- An IMG had been established to look at the process of launching Select Committees and the timetabling of the Policy Overview Committees in 2009.

(3) A Member raised the issue of looking at resources for Members across the organisation. The Chief Executive confirmed that there was going to be a review of all Staff Officer resources, both for Politicians and Officers across the organisation to ensure they were being used to the best effect.

(4) It was mentioned that training for new Members should be the time-tabling so that Members had the key training that they needed for their work as Elected Members. An example in relation to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee, it was essential that the induction training was held before the first meeting of the Committee.

(5) RESOLVED that the update be noted.