

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 30 July 2009.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr D S Daley (Substitute for Mr I S Chittenden), Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr P J Homewood, Mr J A Kite, Mrs J Law, Mr K Pugh, Mr K Smith (Substitute for Mr R W Bayford), Mr M V Snelling, Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute for Mr J R Bullock, MBE), Mr B J Sweetland and Mrs E M Tweed

ALSO PRESENT: Mr M J Angell and Mr K G Lynes

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Executive Director, Strategy, Economic Development & ICT), Mr R Hallett (Directorate Finance Manager), Mr N Smith (Head of Development Investment) and Miss T Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Vice-Chairman

(Item A2)

Mr M C Dance proposed and Mr M V Snelling seconded that Mr I S Chittenden be elected Vice-Chairman of the Committee.

Agreed without a vote

2. Minutes of the final meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee, 31 March 2009

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the final meeting of Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee, held on 31 March 2009, are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairmen.

3. Minutes of the first meeting of the Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview Committee, 25 June 2009

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the first meeting of the Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview Committee, held on 25 June 2009, are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

4. Dates of Meetings for 2009 and 2010

(Item A6)

(1) The Democratic Services Officer reported that the date listed for the committee in November 2009 had since been swapped, and this committee would now meet on Thursday, 12 November 2009 instead of 5 November 2009, as listed.

(2) RESOLVED that, subject to the change above, the dates listed for the committee's meetings in 2009 and 2010 be noted.

5. Suggested areas of Scrutiny from which the Committee can later develop its Terms of Reference

(Item A7)

(1) The Chairman introduced a list of suggested areas for scrutiny, which had been circulated to Members, and asked Members to give him their comments and thoughts on its contents. Two amendments were proposed at the meeting, as follows:-

- (a) an addition to point 7 to make it read "To ensure that the Cabinet Member *and the Directorate* for Regeneration *are* making use of resources available to *them* as efficiently and effectively as possible"; and
- (b) add in the consideration of economic development activity undertaken by district councils, as this is an important part of the overall picture of economic development activity in the county.

(2) RESOLVED that the list of suggested areas be noted, and the amendments suggested above, with any others sent to the Chairman following the meeting, be taken into consideration when the terms of reference are drafted.

6. Kent Spatial Vision

(Item B1)

(Mr E Dreyer, Urban Design Director, Farrells, Mr M Bodkin, Head of Urban Regeneration, and Ms V Hyland, Regeneration and Projects Manager, were in attendance for this item at the invitation of the Committee)

(1) Mr Bodkin explained that, with the abolition of the Kent and Medway Structure Plan, spatial planning for the county was now at a crossroads and there is an opportunity for the County Council to do something new. Mr Dreyer presented a series of slides, setting out the countywide Spatial Vision which Farrells had been commissioned to develop, and stressed that it was being developed in a collaborative way through a series of workshops held with stakeholders in Kent over the course of the last two months. A paper which summarised the outcomes of these workshops was circulated. These draft summaries were currently being shared with those who had taken part in the workshops.

(2) Mr Bodkin and Mr Dreyer responded to questions and comments from Members, as follows:-

- (a) Members welcomed the Spatial Vision and the innovative way in which it addressed the identity of the county and the relationships and links between different areas;
- (b) “Locate in Kent”, the inward investment agency for the county, together with other bodies such as Ashford’s Future and South East Trains, are promoting the use of High Speed 1 to businesses located in London and Kent;
- (c) some negative responses to the concept of a Spatial Vision had been noted at workshops but this was by no means the main reaction to it. Mr Dreyer said that Farrells had been impressed by the energy and depth of comments coming from the workshops, but Members added that some communities were understandably weary of seemingly endless consultations;
- (d) following the publication of a draft Spatial Vision in the Autumn, there will be a wider stage of engagement including the people of Kent. This is likely to take the form of focus groups to investigate and address the issues raised rather than a set-piece public consultation programme. Members suggested engaging the Youth Parliament and Youth Advisory Groups in these focus groups, as the input of young people was very important;
- (e) in response to Members’ concerns about the role of strategic housing targets in the Spatial Vision, Mr Bodkin acknowledged that the setting of housing targets is an emotive issue. The figures identified in the emerging Spatial Vision are those which are identified in the recently adopted South East Plan and which the district councils and the Medway Unitary Council are required to carry through into their Local Development Frameworks. Members commented that, although KCC was able to comment on the mix and location of new housing provision, it did not produce or own these targets;
- (f) re-skilling was an important part of the regeneration agenda, and the Spatial Vision would need to link to and work with education and training providers;
- (g) the Spatial Vision presented an opportunity for Kent to make the most of its diversity, but to do this local authorities would have to work together;
- (h) Kent could develop a central cultural attraction, perhaps somewhere with sufficient transport links to support it; and
- (i) Mr Dreyer invited Members to submit any further comments they wished to make to him and had included his contact details on the workshop summary document circulated.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information given in the presentation and in response to Members' questions be noted, with thanks, and
- (b) Members send any further comments they wish to make following the meeting direct to Mr Dreyer at Farrells.

7. Unlocking Kent's Potential - Kent County Council's Approach to Regeneration *(Item B2)*

(1) Mr Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development, presented a series of slides, which were circulated to Members, which updated Members on developments since the Committee's March meeting on the inter-related threads of the Regeneration Framework. He emphasised the links between the Regeneration Framework and the Local Democracy, Economic Development and Construction Bill would start its remaining stage on 13 October and the key role played by partnership working.

(2) Further education was of particular importance to Kent's economy and work was going on with Backing Kent Business, the Kent Universities and local businesses to develop a graduate portal to encourage graduates to stay in the county.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information given in the presentation be noted, with thanks;
- (b) Members send any comments they wish to make direct to Mr Lynes; and
- (c) further presentations to the Committee will update Members on the new work emerging now, such as the graduate portal.

8. Update on Major Projects *(Item B3)*

(Mrs T Bruton, Interim Head of Regeneration Projects, was in attendance for this item)

(1) Mrs Bruton introduced the report and explained that the projects listed were a sample of key projects in which KCC were involved and where POC had previously expressed a specific interest in being kept apprised of progress. In addition, the report listed the Kent regeneration partnerships and their headline projects in which KCC had a key interest but did not necessarily lead. Since writing the report, a decision had been made on Regional Infrastructure Funding (referred to top of page 18 of the report) and £15.1m had been allocated by the government on the condition that it be spent solely on redeveloping the M20 Junction 9 and the nearby Drovers Roundabout.

(2) Mrs Bruton invited Members to say what they wished to see in future reports and the following views were expressed:-

- (a) the status and progress of different projects would change frequently and rapidly. To be truly up to date, Members would need more detailed information more often;
 - (b) some projects would inevitably be easier to progress than others and KCC needed to be pragmatic and focus its backing and energy on schemes which were most likely to work within a shorter timescale;
 - (c) in a difficult and rapidly changing economic and political climate, KCC needed to be realistic about what it could achieve, as the success of schemes relied on government decisions. The list should be shorter and carefully prioritised;
 - (d) the inclusion of indicative costings for each project and a ranking mechanism would both help identify priorities;
 - (e) the list of projects could be linked to the Spatial Vision for Kent; and
 - (f) resurrecting the former Project Approval Group would help to prioritise projects, which could then be submitted to the Leader of the Council to be signed off. All projects would need to be supported by a robust business case to make the process rigorous and transparent.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
- (a) information in the report and given in response to Members' questions be noted, with thanks;
 - (b) Members' comments listed in paragraph (2) above, be taken into account in the future development and listing of projects; and
 - (c) a further report reviewing the progress of all projects be presented to the Committee in Autumn 2009

9. Regeneration and Economy Unit Financial Outturn and Unit Operating Plan Outturn for 2008/09

(Item B4)

(1) Mr Hallett introduced the report and explained that the information included some figures from the period before the portfolio was split into Environment, Highways and Waste and Regeneration and Economic Development. The Revenue budget had a very small underspend and the Capital budget had some slippage. Mr Hallett and Mr Cockburn responded to Members' comments and questions, as follows:-

- (a) the redevelopment of the former coalfields was noted as not being commercially viable (page 32 of the report) as sites had been closed, backfilled and landscaped when they previously ceased to be commercially viable, so re-opening them now to power coal-fired power stations was not a workable option;

- (b) the contract relating to Rushenden Relief Road site (page 32 of the report) had now been signed, as previous problems around financing had been underwritten by the KCC so the project could go ahead; and
- (c) the 'non-food crops' referred to on page 33 of the report under Rural Regeneration were bio-fuels and other alternative energies.

(2) RESOLVED that the information in the report and given in response to Members' questions be noted, with thanks.

10. Regeneration Fund

(Item B5)

(1) Mr Hallett introduced the report and explained that the regeneration fund of £1m revenue and £2.5m capital per annum had formalised the allocation of regeneration monies, using it in a variety of ways, including pump-priming and match funding. Regular reports would be made to the Committee on the allocation of funds and the progress of projects.

(2) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information in the report be noted, with thanks; and
- (b) regular reports be submitted to the Committee on the allocation of funds and the progress of projects.

11. A Summary of Plans to Review the Kent Partnership's Environment Strategy

(Item B6)

(Ms S Shattock, Environment Strategy Project Manager, was in attendance for this item)

(1) Ms Shattock introduced the report and explained that the Committee was being given an early chance to comment on the review of the environment strategy before the start of a public consultation period.

(2) Members made the following comments:-

- (a) there was concern that many businesses avoided dealing with environmental issues as they saw them as costly. Environmental schemes could be difficult to sell to partners and stakeholders, so KCC would need to be able to present some persuasive examples of good projects;
- (b) a strong approach to environmental issues was needed to support good regeneration;
- (c) environmental issues linked not just to regeneration but to any speciality within the KCC, and this committee would need to work with other POCs to address large cross-cutting issues;

- (d) similarly, KCC needed to work with district councils to put environmental issues at the top of the agenda, county-wide; and
 - (e) there was huge untapped public interest in and energy for environmental issues, and KCC needed to capture and build on this.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
- (a) the information in the report be noted, with thanks;
 - (b) the plans to review the environment strategy be approved; and
 - (c) Members' comments, set out in paragraph (2) above, be taken into account as part of the consultation process.

12. Data Quality Audit 2007/08 *(Item B7)*

(Mr R Fitzgerald, Performance Manager CED, was in attendance for this item).

- (1) Mr Fitzgerald introduced the report and said that the assessment of KCC Data Quality had been generally 'good'. A Member commented that problems experienced were not with the quality of the data but with the availability of it, as information was sometimes supplied too late to be of much use.
- (2) RESOLVED the information in the report be noted, with thanks.

13. Living Later Life to the Full: A Policy Framework *(Item B8)*

(Mr M J Angell, Deputy Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services and the KCC's Older People's Champion, was in attendance for this item at the invitation of the Committee).

- (1) Mr Angell introduced the report and commented on how much of the vision set out in "Unlocking Kent's Potential" (Item B2 on today's agenda) covered what the Living Later Life to the Full framework sought to achieve. He emphasised the cross-cutting nature of the Framework and said that it had been reported to all POCs for comment and endorsement.
- (2) Members made the following comments:-
- (a) the reporting of the Framework to all POCs for comment and endorsement was welcomed;
 - (b) the later years are a time when health and care inequalities are most noticeable and pronounced. People have very diverse needs which are often very expensive to meet;
 - (c) a different approach to ageing has emerged in recent years, and attitudes are still changing. Older people now expect and seek an active life and involvement in public life. They have much to offer and

expect to be able to put their time, energy and skills to good use. Alongside the health and care provision problems which come with age, it is important also to emphasise the positive side and show a balanced picture;

- (d) although restricted in the number of hours of paid employment they can take on, older people can contribute much on a voluntary basis;
- (e) some opportunities, however, are restricted by costs or regulations. For example, car insurance for those over 70 can be very expensive and over 75s are required to retake their driving test every three years;
- (f) although an ageing population brings problems and challenges, it also presents an opportunity to rethink how we provide care and explore new opportunities, e.g. Telehealth and Telecare;
- (g) older people with experience of bringing up a family can be a great support as mentors and advisers to young parents, teaching them tried and tested home and parenting skills;
- (h) inter-generational work is a challenge but could be very rewarding for both young and old. Older people could pass on life skills and young people could teach older people how to use and benefit from new technology;
- (i) it is important that KCC does not assume that it knows what older people want and aspire to, but must always ask them. It is particularly important to embrace equality and diversity and let BME communities tell KCC what they want rather than rely on assumptions; and
- (j) older People's Forums across Kent empower older people to become involved in public work.

(3) Mr Angell thanked Members for their valuable contributions and invited them to send any further comments they wish to make direct to him or to the report authors – Deborah Exall and Tim Woolmer.

(4) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the information in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks;
- (b) Kent's Policy Framework for Later Life be endorsed; and
- (c) Members' comments, set out in paragraph (2) above, be taken into account as part of the consultation exercise.

14. Select Committee Update

(Item C1)

(1) The Chairman reported that, following the suggestion of a piece of work on the role of quangos, it had transpired that work was already in hand elsewhere in KCC and it would be useful to input into this rather than duplicate work.

(2) The Democratic Services Officer reported that, since publication of the papers for the meeting, a proposal had been submitted for a Select Committee Topic Review on Section 106 Developer Contributions.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

(a) the information in the report be noted; and

(b) any further suggestions for Select Committee Topic Review work be passed to the Democratic Services Officer for consideration by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee at its next meeting.