

**COMMUNITIES POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY
COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 6 April 2010.

PRESENT: Mrs E M Tweed (Chairman), Mr D L Brazier (Substitute for Mr A Wickham), Mr A R Chell (Vice-Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden, Mr H J Craske, Mr D A Hirst, Mr J Ozog, Mr K Smith, Mr R Tolputt and Mr A Willicombe

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE and Mr A Sandhu, MBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mr C Bainbridge (Director of Community Safety & Regulatory Services), Mr D Crilley (Director of Community Cultural Services), Ms J Edwards (Director of Policy and Resources, Communities Directorate), Ms A Slaven (Director Youth Services and KDAAT), Mr K Tilson (Head of Finance for Policy and Resources), Mr C Beaumont (Effective Practice & Performance Manager), Miss N Harris (Kent School Games Co-ordinator), Ms L Spencer (Strategic Manager, Projects) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

47. Minutes - 12 January 2010
(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting hold on 12 January 2010 are correctly recorded and that they be signed as a correct record.

48. Portfolio Holder and Managing Director's Update
(Item B1)

(1) Mr Hill and Ms Honey updated the Committee and answered questions on the following issues:-

Kent History Centre

(2) Mr Hill stated that he and colleagues had visited the developers of the Kent History Centres French operation. The company had also expressed an interest in taking part in other ventures within the County for example the third Thames crossing.

New Skills/New Lives

(3) Mr Hill referred to the New Skills/New Lives event that he had attended on 3 March 2010 and stressed the contribution that this initiative had made to turning round peoples lives.

LGA Cultural Conference

(4) Mr Hill had attended the LGA Cultural Conference which, had not been as informative as it could have been due to it being held in the pre-election period.

Accommodation for young offenders

(5) Ms Honey referred to the report later in the meeting on the Youth Justice Strategic Plan, and explained that accommodation for Young people leaving custody was one of the priorities for the Children's Trust Board and it was hoped that it would also be a priority for the Children and Young Peoples Plan.

Apprenticeships

(6) Ms Honey mentioned that the 2010 target for apprenticeships had been achieved and there was a step change in the number of young people moving into apprenticeships. Approximately 300 young people had come into KCC on apprenticeships and there were more in the whole public sector.

(7) In response to a question Ms Honey acknowledged that the target of a 20% increase in the number of apprenticeships by 2015 was challenging, but this included the public sector and work was also being carried out with small to medium businesses.

(8) Ms Honey explained that the majority of KCC apprentices worked in administration but it was intended to have a full range of posts. She stated that 500 young people had expressed an interest in taking up apprenticeships in September 2010 as a result of the online prospectus. She confirmed that she planned to bring a paper to the next meeting of the Committee on apprenticeships. This would include additional funding for apprenticeships especially for vulnerable young people

KDAAT

(7) Ms Honey referred to an event where ex-service users have given presentations on how they had turned their lives around and the new qualifications that they had been able to achieve which would assist them in gaining employment. She reported that there would be additional funding for alcohol services in West Kent and that the Kenwood Trust would be providing tier 3 services.

Community Learning and Skills

(8) Ms Honey informed the Committee that Adult Education and KEY training had changed their name to "Community Learning and Skills".

(9) In response to a question, Mr Hill explained that there was a Learning and Skills Board which he chaired, whose role was to bring together the work being done in both the Children, Families & Education Directorate and the Communities Directorate. He undertook to provide a briefing or to bring a paper to a future meeting of the Committee on the work of the Board.

Libraries

(10) In response to a question Mr Hill confirmed that transformational ideas were being developed for the future of the library service which would be brought to this Committee at an early stage.

(11) RESOLVED that the update be noted.

49. Financial Monitoring Report: Community Services 2009/10

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Tilson presented a report on the forecast outturn against budget for the Communities portfolio.

(2) In response to a question on the late submission of invoices by the Coroners service, Mr Bainbridge stated that he had asked them to present invoices in a timely basis. He confirmed that all Coroners were now using Kent Scientific Services and the issues had been resolved.

(3) Mr Bainbridge explained that KCC was one of only two providers of professional development training for Trading Standards officers, which showed the impact of the recession and he was concerned about the impact that this reduction would have for the future of the service.

(4) In response to a question on funding brought in by the Arts Unit Mr Crilley undertook to let Mr Chittenden have figures on the grants which the Arts Unit attracted.

(5) RESOLVED that the report be noted and the Committee request that consideration be given to the underspend on the Supporting Independence programme being allocated to support additional apprenticeships

50. Turner Contemporary Update

(Item B3)

(1) Mr Hill introduced a report which updated the Committee on the latest position regarding the construction of the gallery, operational developments and transition to the Turner Contemporary Trust.

(2) Mr Hill confirmed the transfer to the Turner Contemporary Trust on 1 April 2010. KCC's revenue funding for the gallery of £1m a year had been in the Medium Term Financial Plan for a long time and was part of the agreement with the Trust. There was also significant annual revenue funding from the Arts Council England (ACE).

(3) The capital funding from the County Council, ACE and South East England Development Agency (SEEDA) is in place and the Turner Contemporary Art Trust (TCAT) was confident that it will raise the remaining funding.

(4) Mrs Tweed referred to the joint visit to Margate, including Turner Contemporary, with the Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee which was currently being arranged.

(5) That the Committees thanks to Mr Morsley be recorded for keeping the project on course despite the challenges of the inclement winter weather.

(6) RESOLVED that the latest developments on the Turner Contemporary project be noted.

51. The Kent Youth Justice Strategic Plan 2010/11

(Item B4)

(1) Ms Slaven presented a report which provided the context for and an introduction to the core objectives of the Kent Youth Justice Strategic Plan for 2010/11. It identified the resources which the County Council was providing for the multi agency Youth Offending Service. The Plan would be reported, for approval, to the County Council on 13th May 2010. Members were invited to make comments and ask questions to which Ms Slaven and Mr Beaumont responded. These included the following:-

- In response to question on the barriers to accommodation for Young people leaving custody, Mr Beaumont explained that local authorities with Social Services responsibilities had the responsibility to ensure accommodation was provided for these young people, working in partnership with local housing authorities. Another important issue was the need to have a range of accommodation which included appropriate support and floating support to maintain young people in families. Ms Slaven explained the importance of the Supporting Independence programme in assisting with this issue. It was also important that there was not a concentration accommodation for these young people in certain areas.
- The issue of young people gaining a substance misuse problem in custody was raised. Ms Slaven stated that Kent had 40 young people in custody at Cookham Wood at anytime, and although the risk of substance abuse in prison for adults was an issue it had not been identified as such in Cookham Wood. In relation to data on young people offending and alcohol use, this was provided by the police at the point of arrest. When a young person entered the youth justice system an assessment of needs was carried out.
- In response to a request for feedback on how successful restorative justice had been, Mr Beaumont explained that there were three mediation services across Kent, and that the County Council funded six visiting liaison officers. He stated that the more serious the offence the more successful the outcome was likely to be and the less chance there was of re-offending. Ms Slaven stated that Kent Police had launched a restorative justice model with schools and it would be important to look at the impact of that.
- It was suggested that it would be helpful to have a baseline study of 16-19 year olds showing where they are and what they were doing. Reference was also made to County Councils new role following the disbanding of the Learning and Skills Council which covered 16-19 year olds, where as young offenders were 16-25 year old. Ms Slaven referred to the New Skills/New Lives model. In relation to the work previously carried out by the Learning and

Skills Council there were strong links via the Head of the 14-16 unit and the County Manager for the Supporting Independence programme. She agreed that this could be made more explicit in the Plan.

- The importance for working with the Police to encourage them to take a greater role in prevention was emphasised.

(2) RESOLVED that the objectives of the Kent Youth Justice Strategic Plan and the comments on the contribution the County Council is making with respect to improving both public safety and the life chances of those both at risk of entering the youth justice system and those who have offended be noted.

52. Youth Advisory Group Review

(Item B5)

(1) Mr Baker introduced a paper which outlined the review of Youth Advisory Groups (YAGs) undertaken during 2008/9. The review was informed by extensive consultation with existing Youth Advisory Groups. It was also designed to ensure that the new arrangements formed an integral part of Children's Trust arrangements in Kent; becoming a key focus for the planning and delivery of integrated youth services in localities. The full review report was attached as an appendix to the report. Members were invited to ask questions and make comments which included the following.

- The issue of encouraging young people to chair or co-chair meetings of the YAGs was raised. Mr Baker explained that a lot of work was done with young people outside of the meeting to ensure that they felt able to make a valuable contribution to the meeting. The establishment of the new Groups provided the opportunity to promote chairing or co-chairing of meetings by young people. He believed that the co-chairing YAG meetings was an excellent practise which would be encouraged.
- It was suggested that the review provides a good opportunity to write to all Members to encourage them to attend meetings of their YAG.
- The importance of the link between YAGs and the Local Children's Trusts Partnerships was emphasised.
- Mr Baker was congratulated on a good review.

(2) RESOLVED that the review and the comments made on the recommendations outlined in the report be noted.

53. Kent School Games

(Item B6)

(1) Miss Harris invited the Committee to watch a short DVD on Kent School Games and then presented a paper which brought Members up to date with the progress of the Kent School Games heats, trials and area competitions for the 2010 Games. It also outlined preparations that were in place for the Finals in June and July 2010. Members were invited to made comments and ask questions which included the following:-

- Miss Harris explained that at primary level the games were about the children having fun and enjoying themselves, it was at secondary level that the sporting element was taken more seriously.
- In relation to the cultural element of the games, Miss Harris explained that the opening ceremony would be an event at which there would be five dance groups selected from schools and also the Kent Music School were putting together a Samba band, this would engage young people and schools which excelled in arts rather than sports.
- It was suggested that as the County Council now had responsibility for young peoples education up to the age of 19 the age range of the games should be expanded from 16. Miss Harris explained that after the 2010 games there would be an evaluation and all comments would be considered.
- Mr Kit Smith asked that a timetable for the games be supplied to CFE POSC Members.

(2) The Committee expressed their support and thanks for the work that had been undertaken on the Kent School Games. Members were encouraged to attend the Kent School Games events.

(3) RESOLVED that the progress and comments made on the preparations for the Kent School Games 2010 be noted.

54. Kent History and Library Centre

(Item B7)

(1) Mr Crilley and Ms Spencer presented a report which updated the Committee on progress made on the Kent History and Library Centre since the last report to Communities POSC on 11th November 2009 and outlined the future timeline and key activities over the next eighteen months. It also describes the benefits that the new centre would deliver to the people of Kent. Members were invited to ask questions which included the following:-

- Congratulations were expressed to the officers for bringing this project to fruition.
- The need to ensure that there was adequate parking on site was raised. Ms Spencer confirmed that discussions were on going with Maidstone Borough Council and Kent Highways on this matter. Preliminary discussions had also been held with Maidstone Football Club to explore the possibility of using their parking facilities. Mr Crilley confirmed that officers were committed to resolving the parking issues.
- Concern was expressed about the pedestrian route from the town to the new Centre and the problems that it might cause for young mothers and older people.

(2) RESOLVED that the progress on the Kent History and Library Centre and comments made by Members be noted.

55. Suggestions of items for future meetings

(Item B8)

The Chairman invited Members to email to her any suggestions for items for future meetings

56. Select Committees - update

(Item C1)

(1) This Committee received a report which updated Members on the progress to establish the Select Committee on Extended Services and also invited Members to put forward suggestions for future Select Committee topic reviews.

(2) RESOLVED that the terms of reference of the Select Committee on Extended Services be endorsed and that the Democratic Services Officer be advised of any items that they would like to suggest for inclusion in the Select Committee topic review programme