



## AGENDA

### POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

**Wednesday 10th September 2008 at 10.00 am**  
**Darent Room, Sessions House**  
**County Hall, Maidstone**

Ask for: **Paul Wickenden**  
Telephone: **(01622) 694486**

#### **Membership (11)**

Conservative (7): Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mr C J Capon, Mrs S V Hohler, Mr R F Manning, Mr R A Pascoe and Mr J D Simmonds

Labour (3): Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Dr M R Eddy and Mr D Smyth

Liberal Democrat (1): Mrs T Dean and Mr D S Daley (Substitute)

#### **UNRESTRICTED ITEMS**

*(During these items the meeting is likely to be open to the public)*

1. Membership  
To note Mr J D Simmonds replaces Mr C J Law on the Committee and Mr R F Manning replaces Mr L B Ridings.
2. Substitutes
3. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this meeting.
4. Minutes - 23 May 2008 (Pages 1 - 6)
5. Work Programme and Resources  
Peter Gilroy, Chief Executive will be in attendance to address the Work Programme and Resource issues
6. Minutes of the Meetings of the POCC IMG
  - a) 25 June 2008 (Pages 7 - 22)
  - b) 25 July 2008 (Pages 23 - 26)
7. Corporate Assessment Outline Improvement Plan (Pages 27 - 62)
8. Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme (Pages 63 - 66)
9. Launching and publicising Select Committee Topic reviews (Pages 67 - 70)

#### **EXEMPT ITEMS**

*(At the time of preparing the agenda there were no exempt items. During any such items which may arise the meeting is likely NOT to be open to the public)*

Peter Sass  
Head of Democratic Services and Local Leadership  
(01622) 694002

**Tuesday, 2 September 2008**

*Please note that any background documents referred to in the accompanying papers maybe inspected by arrangement with the officer responsible for preparing the relevant report.*

23 May 2008

**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL****POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE**

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee held at Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 23rd May, 2008.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison (Vice Chairman), Dr M R Eddy, Mr D Smyth, Mr G Rowe (substituting for Mrs T Dean), Mrs P A V Stockell (substituting for Mr C J Law) and Mrs E M Tweed (substituting for Mrs S V Hohler).

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P D Wickenden, Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS****17. Membership**

*(Item 1)*

The Committee noted that Mrs S V Hohler had replaced Mr P W A Lake and Mr Ridings had replaced Mr J B O Fullarton on the Committee.

**18. Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2008**

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 14 February 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

**19. Select Committee – Topic Review Programme Work Programme – Update**

*(Item 4)*

- (1) The Committee noted that the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee recommendations which had been considered by the County Council at its meeting on 3 April 2008 were already being taken forward by a Working Group established by Mr Gibbens, Cabinet Member for Public Health. Linkages had been made with the Working Group taking forward the recommendations for the Personal, Social, Health, Education (PSHE) Select Committee.
- (2) An action plan would be prepared for submission to the Corporate Policy Overview Committee in September/November and the Select Committee would be reconvened in April 2009 to receive a report on the progress with its recommendations a year after it was considered by Cabinet.
- (3) The Committee noted that a conference on Alcohol Misuse was being organised to take place at the University of Greenwich, Kings Hill, West Malling on 10 July 2008. This conference would provide a further opportunity to launch the Select Committee report.
- (4) The process for this Select Committee had used a number of innovative practices which might be appropriate for other Select Committees. These included:-

23 May 2008

- (a) A facilitated discussion with young people from the Marlowe Academy in Ramsgate to enable the Select Committee to understand the experiences of this group of young people regarding the use and misuse of alcohol; and
  - (b) in the final preparation of the report the Select Committee ensured that all the partner organisations who had contributed to the report (and for some would have responsibility for implementing the recommendations) were involved in their preparation before being agreed.
- (5) At its previous meeting the Committee had agreed that the Work Programme for Autumn 2007 to Spring 2008 should be:-
- (a) Accessing Democracy;
  - (b) Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
  - (c) Access to Healthcare (a Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Topic Review).
- (6) The Committee concluded that as soon as resources became available the next Select Committee after those set out above would be "Provision of Activities for Young People".
- (7) The Committee noted that an additional Policy Overview Research Officer post had been added to the Overview and Scrutiny team to support the Select Committee Topic Reviews. It was hoped that an officer would be in post by July/August. This would enable a review to be started early in the autumn.
- (8) The Committee noted the progress with the Accessing Democracy Select Committee which was due to finish its evidence gathering phase by the end of June 2008. This Select Committee was using a number of methods in addition to the established hearing session mechanism. These included insight gathering exercises, forums, meetings, conducting interviews as rapporteurs and reporting back.
- (9) Preparatory work for the Select Committee on Autistic Spectrum Disorder was well advanced and an inaugural meeting of the Select Committee would take place in June.
- (10) The Committee noted that the dedicated resource to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would, when time permits, undertake a Topic Review on Access to Healthcare. The Committee noted that the pressure on the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Work Programme was enormous and as a consequence representations have been made by the Chairman and Members of the Committee to the Leader and Chief Executive to increase the resources available to the Committee.
- (11) It was also clear that during recent discussions between the Chairman of the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and the Chairmen and Chief Executives of the two Primary Care Trusts across the administrative county of Kent that they would like to see this piece of work started as soon as possible. The Primary Care Trusts had indicated that they would contribute what they could in the way of resources to assist this process.

- (12) Since the agreement of the Programme at the Committee's last meeting the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee had asked to establish a Select Committee to refresh the work undertaken by a Select Committee which included representatives of Medway Council on the Channel Tunnel Rail Link (CTRL) Domestic Services in 2003 and to update the work of the Committee to identify the best rail passenger services solution for Kent both in terms of:-
  - (a) the immediate benefits of the solution in terms of journey times and improved services to London around Kent and mainland Europe; and
  - (b) the long term benefits of the solution in terms of the regeneration of Kent and the impacts on the wider rail network and transport in the County.
- (13) Programming and refocusing of the topics which Members wish to review continues to present a challenge.
- (14) A suggestion was made that it might be helpful if once a Topic Review has been agreed by the Committee that a cross-party group is identified to undertake in conjunction with the Research Officer the preparation of the terms of reference, the scope for the Review and the potential witness lists so that the Review is narrow and focussed which often is difficult to achieve.
- (15) Members were reminded that the Parliamentary Select Committee model is to look at a topic narrow and deep rather than broad and all embracing.
- (16) The Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager currently had 1 ½ FTE Research Officers supporting the Select Committee Topic Review Programme, which will increase by 1 FTE when a new officer is recruited. In addition, the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager had one Research Officer whose time was entirely dedicated to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.
- (17) In addition to the Research Officer resource there were three Democratic Services Officers to support the Policy Overview Committee and Select Committee activities.
- (18) The Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager proposed that subject to the agreement of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee that a further Democratic Services Officer to work specifically for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee would be useful.
- (19) At the last meeting of the Committee there was a discussion on the way forward for building capacity for the Policy Overview Committees. It was a challenge for the Policy Overview Committees to exercise their terms of reference fully and to conduct their business effectively in five one day meetings per year.
- (20) This is a particular challenge for the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee. The Committee noted that the Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee were due to receive a report at their next meeting which would suggest the establishment of an IMG on Building Schools for the Future. The Committee were invited as the Comprehensive Performance Assessment was due to be published in early June to discuss this issue along with

the recommendations from the CPA at the Committee's next meeting on 10 September.

(21) As an interim measure which might assist Members in focussing the work of Policy Overview Committees officers preparing reports for a Policy Overview Committee were being asked to identify which part of the Policy Overview Committee terms of reference the item was seeking to address:-

- (a) Policy Development;
- (b) Performance Monitoring; or
- (c) Responding to consultation?

RESOLVED that the Committee:-

- (a) noted that the Select Committee on Alcohol Misuse had presented its final report and commended its innovative processes which will be used where and when appropriate for future Select Committees;
- (b) agreed to establish a cross-party Informal Member Group (1:1:1) to consider:
  - (i) the development of a protocol/communication strategy for publishing Select Committee reports;
  - (ii) whilst the Committee was sympathetic to the request of the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee to conduct a piece of work on Passenger Rail Services the Committee did not have the resources to deploy. It therefore suggested that the Environment and Regeneration POC should explore with the Environment and Regeneration Directorate and the Leader's office resourcing this piece of work;
  - (iii) how mini reviews and a rapporteur scheme could be developed to build capacity for the Policy Overview Committees including the Cabinet's views on how the reviews can be launched in a more positive manner for the County Council;
  - (iv) a report setting out the views of this Informal Member Group be considered at the Committee's next meeting.
- (c) noted the progress of the Select Committee Topic Review for Accessing Democracy and Autistic Spectrum Disorder;
- (d) agreed that the Select Committee on Provision of Activities for Young People will start its work when the new Policy Overview Research Officer is in post;
- (e) noted that the dedicated Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee Research Officer will shortly undertake a review into the transport aspect of 'Accessing Healthcare';
- (f) noted that a bid had been made for a graduate from the Graduate Development Programme offering a place from 1 October 2008 and ask that

23 May 2008

the Chief Executive be invited to attend the next meeting of the Committee on 10 September 2008 to discuss with the Committee the ongoing issues around resources;

- (g) a business case be prepared for a dedicated Democratic Services Officer for the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee; and
- (h) a small cross-party group of Members be established when a topic review has been identified to work with the Research Officer to focus the terms of reference for the review.

**20. The Policy Overview Committees – Timetable 2009**

*(Item 5 – report by Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)*

- (1) The Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager reported that he was preparing a draft paper for the Policy Overview Committees Timetable for 2009 and that further work had been undertaken in preparing a discussion paper by the Director of Finance on improving the Budget timetable to give greater opportunity and time to Policy Overview Committees and Cabinet Scrutiny Committee to scrutinise, investigate, challenge and comment upon Cabinet's Budget and Medium Term Planning process.
- (2) There were also issues for the programming of the Policy Overview Committees to ensure that when the Committees are receiving financial monitoring information it is as up to date as possible for the Policy Overview Committees following consultation by the Cabinet.
- (3) There was also the issue of competing pressures on the Policy Overview Committees timetable for consideration such as Towards 2010 and maybe the replacement for the Annual Plan and the new Comprehensive Area Assessment.
- (4) To take this work forward in advance of the Committee's next meeting the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager sought the Committee's agreement to share this information with the Chairman, Vice Chairman and Liberal Democrat Spokesman of the Committee and invite comments from all Committee Members and then to report back to the Committee the action taken.
- (5) Dr Eddy requested that the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee's involvement in these processes should also be considered.

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**KENT COUNTY COUNCIL**

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**POCC IMG**

MINUTES of A meeting of the POCC IMG held in Swale 3 - Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 25th June, 2008.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison and Mr G Rowe

ALSO PRESENT: Mr C J Law and Mr D Smyth

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview)), Mrs S Garton (Head of Corporate Performance), Ms L McMullan (Director of Finance), Mr P D Wickenden (Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager) and Mr A Wood (Head of Financial Management)

**UNRESTRICTED ITEMS****1. Programming of Meetings 2009**

*(Item 2)*

(1) At the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 23 May 2008 it was agreed that an Informal Members Group (IMG) would be set up to look at the issue of programming of Policy Overview Committee meetings in 2009. The Members of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee IMG: Budget Issues had also been invited to attend to contribute to the discussion on the programming of the January Budget cycle which included Cabinet Scrutiny.

(2) Members were reminded that the Constitution stated that Policy Overview Committees should, if the business dictates, meet from 10.00am to 4.00pm.

(3) Each of the specific timetabling issues for each of the five cycles of meetings was discussed.

*January cycle*

(4) In relation to the January Budget cycle of meetings, Ms McMullan set out in her discussion paper a suggested timetable which would give Members longer between the launch of the Budget papers by the Cabinet and the respective meeting of the Policy Overview and Cabinet Scrutiny Committees. Members emphasised the importance of having an adequate gap between the last Policy Overview Committee Meeting and Cabinet Scrutiny Committee, so that key issues arising from the Policy Overview Committees could be reported and considered by the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee. There was agreement that the meetings of the Policy Overview Committees should be held between 13<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> January 2009, it was noted that the budget timetable was subject to approval by Cabinet.

*March cycle*

(5) Regarding the March 2009 cycle of meetings there were no key issues that affected the programming of these meetings and Members were content to leave them as set out in the draft programme circulated with the agenda papers.

### *June cycle*

(6) Mrs Garton informed Members that although there would not be a need to produce an Annual Plan in 2009, which had affected the timetabling of the Policy Overview Committees in June 2008, guidance was awaited which would set out what would replace the Annual Plan and when it would need to be produced. She stated that she did not believe that it was likely that the replacement for the Annual Plan would need to be produced by the end of June 2009. However, if this did prove to be the case then there was the option in 2009 to revert to having this document considered by the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee. Ms McMullan and Mr Wood explained that in order to give Members the most up to date financial monitoring information they would like to see the meetings of the Policy Overview Committees held in early July 2009. This would also fit in with the County Council elections if they were moved to June 2009 to align them with the European Elections.

### *September cycle*

(7) Regarding the September Policy Overview Committees, Mrs Garton stated that these were specifically timetabled to enable Members to make comments on Towards 2010 before it was received by Cabinet and County Council. She pointed out that last year the contributions made by the Policy Overview Committees had been extremely valuable. Ms McMullan and her colleagues were content to leave these meetings in their current position in September 2009, for the purposes of Financial Monitoring.

### *November cycle*

(8) Members accepted the programming of meetings from 5<sup>th</sup> to 17<sup>th</sup> November at the suggestion of Ms McMullan.

### *Financial Information*

(9) The meeting then considered how financial information could best be dealt with by Policy Overview Committees. There was general agreement that the Policy Overview Committees should, if they felt that it would be more conducive to the conduct of their business, establish an IMG to consider the financial monitoring reports. This would enable the reports to be considered at the most appropriate time and any key issues highlighted for more detailed consideration by the Committee. It was suggested that the IMG should be chaired by either the Chairman or Vice-Chairman of the Policy Overview Committee.

(10) RECOMMENDED that :-

- (a) the attached draft calendar of meeting for the Policy Overview Committees in 2009 be put forward for approval;
- (b) it be made clear to Members of Policy Overview Committees that when key financial matters such as the draft Budget or the Medium Term Plan are on the agenda it is very likely that the meeting will take the full day allocated.

- (c) Policy Overview Committees should, if they feel that it is conducive for the conduct of their business, form an IMG to consider financial reports. The Policy Overview Committees should be able to agree the size of the IMG based on the number of Members interested in being involved. The practice of ensuring that the Chairman of the Policy Overview Committee was a Member of the IMG was commended, and
- (d) on behalf of the IMG a formal request be made to the Leader to approve the proposed Budget timetable for the January 2009 in relation to the Policy Overview and Cabinet Scrutiny Committees.

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**January 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
29	30	31	1 BANK HOLIDAY	2
5 BUDGET LAUNCH & PRESS RELEASE	6	7	8	9
12	13 POC	14 POC	15 POC	16 POC
19 Keep Free for Cabinet Members Meeting	20 POC	21 CABINET SCRUTINY (Ordinary)	22	23
26 CABINET SCRUTINY (Budget)	27	28	29	30

\* All dates are provisional

**February 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2	3	4	5	6
CABINET (Budget)				
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
			COUNTY COUNCIL	
23	24	25	26	27

\* All dates are provisional

**March 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25 POC	26 POC	27 POC
30 CABINET	31 POC	1	2	3

\*All dates are provisional

**April 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
30	31	1 POC	2	3
6	7	8	9	10 GOOD FRIDAY
13	14 EASTER MONDAY	15	16	17
20 CABINET	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	1

\*All dates are provisional

**May 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
27	28	29	30	1
4 BANK HOLIDAY	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18 CABINET	19	20	21	22
25 BANK HOLIDAY	26	27	28	29

\* All dates are provisional

**June 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22 CABINET	23	24	25	26 COUNTY COUNCIL
29	30	1	2	3

\*All dates are provisional

**July 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
29	30	1 POC	2	3
6	7 POC	8	9	10 POC
13 CABINET	14 POC	15 POC	16	17
20	21	22	23	24
27	28	29	30	31

*\*All dates are provisional – new dates need to be checked*

**August 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31	1	2	3	4
<b>BANK HOLIDAY</b>				

\*All dates are provisional

**September 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
31	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
CABINET			POC	POC
21	22	23	24	25
	POC		POC	POC
28	29	30	1	2

\*All dates are provisional

**October 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
28	29	30	1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12 CABINET	13	14	15 COUNTY COUNCIL	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

\* All dates are provisional

**November 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
2	3	4	5 POC	6
9	10	11 POC	12 POC	13 POC
16	17 POC	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30 CABINET	1	2	3	4

\* All dates are provisional

**December 2009**

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
30	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	1

\*All dates are provisional

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### POCC IMG

MINUTES of a meeting of the POCC IMG held in the Medway Room - Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 25 July 2008.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison and Mr G Rowe

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P D Wickenden (Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview))

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **2. Notes of the meeting on 25 June 2008**

*(Item 2)*

(1) Mr Wickenden reported that the Leader had approved the budget timetable in relation to Policy Overview Committees and Cabinet Scrutiny Committee as proposed by this IMG at its meeting on 25 June 2008.

(2) RESOLVED that notes be approved.

#### **3. Publicising Select Committee Topic Reviews and Launching Select Committee Topic Review reports**

*(Item 3)*

(1) The IMG considered a report from the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager and discussed the way in which the Select Committee Topic Review could be publicised and when published launched.

##### *Publicising Select Committee Topic Review*

(2) Members emphasised the importance of the issuing of a press release when the Terms of Reference, scope etc of a Select Committee had been agreed. This press release should be cross-party from Members of the Select Committee setting out the aims and scope of the Select Committee and the timetable for the review. The press release would welcome input from the public and interested parties. Any input received as a result of this could form part of the evidence for the review.

##### *Launching of Select Committee Topic Reviews*

(3) Members emphasised the importance of an effective launch for Select Committee Topic Reviews which engaged the Select Committee Members, Partners etc who had been involved with the review and the public.

(4) It was suggested that the best time to launch Select Committee reports was at a County Council meeting when the majority of County Councillors would be present. It was suggested that this should be a very early item on the County Council agenda after Questions and the report by the Leader of the Council. The Select Committee item should last an appropriate amount of time dependant upon the topic. It was anticipated that this would probably be approximately two hours but could be longer. It was suggested that the Chairman and other cross party Members from the Select

Committee should have input into that part of the County Council agenda to determine who should be invited to come along to speak and to agree the length of time that this item should take. This item should be led by the Select Committee Chairman and Members rather than the Cabinet Members.

(5) Members also stressed the importance to use Kent TV to launch Select Committee Topic Reviews and to publicise them. Other opportunities to engage the public such as displays at Gateways, libraries etc, depending on the subject of the review, should also be considered.

#### *Publicising Select Committees*

(6) It was agreed that the Greater London Assembly (GLA) press release example was a good one. Members particularly liked the idea of involving third party comments to gain a wider interest. It was agreed that the use of this model should be further explored.

(7) RECOMMENDED that the examples of the GLA Press Release and the Protocol for Public Relations and Scrutiny from Telford and Wrekin Council, along with the comments made by Members, form the basis of a draft protocol to be submitted to the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 10 September 2008 for consideration.

#### **4. Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme**

*(Item 4)*

##### *Passenger Rail Services Select Committee*

(1) In relation this Committee, which was being supported by officers from the Environment and Regeneration Directorate, Mr Wickenden stated that the Committee report was due to be submitted to Cabinet in December 2008. The Select Committee would start its work shortly.

##### *Kent Graduate Programme*

(2) At the last meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee Members had requested Mr Wickenden to submit a bid to host a placement. Mr Wickenden had been informed by Mr Gilroy that he did not regard supporting a Topic Review to be an appropriate use of the Kent Graduate Programme. Mr Wickenden therefore contacted Mr Fairburn to discuss using individuals from the Talent Management Pool to support a Topic Review. The allocation of an officer from this source to support the proposed Accessing Healthcare Select Committee was being explored. Mr Wickenden would update Members at the next meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on progress with this review and how it was to be resourced.

##### *Select Committee –Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)*

(1) The Select Committee on ASD had requested an extension of time for the review to enable them to submit their report to the January 2009 Cabinet meeting. Concern was expressed that the Select Committee were not tightly focusing on the area of Adult Social Services and the Select Committee appeared to have widened its remit and was looking at Children's Services which was not part of the original proposal.

(2) Ms Harrison requested the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee to reach an agreement on how many topic reviews are to be running at one time as there was an issue of the availability of Members to sit on Select Committees with the increasing demand for Members to serve on other Sub-Committees and IMGs.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- (a) the update on the Passenger Rail Services Select Committee and the Kent Graduate Programme be noted;
- (b) Mr Wickenden report back to the next meeting on progress with identifying additional officer resources to support Select Committee Topic Reviews; and
- (c) Mr Wickenden report back to the members of the IMG on the focus of the ASD Select Committee before a decision was made on whether to allow an extension of time for the review.

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By: Paul Carter, Leader of the Council  
Robert Hardy, Head of Performance Improvement and Engagement

To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee 10th September 2008

Subject: CPA Corporate Assessment outline improvement plan

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## **1. Summary**

In response to the CPA Corporate Assessment report, published on June 3<sup>rd</sup> 2008, a draft Performance Improvement Plan (PIP) following the comments and conclusions of the CA report will be considered by the Corporate Policy Overview Committee on September 26<sup>th</sup>. That report (as amended following the meeting) will then be considered by the full County Council meeting in December.

A copy of the Corporate Assessment report is attached as Appendix 1.

## **2. Overall assessment**

Despite the CPA Corporate Assessment framework having been made a 'harder test' by the Audit Commission, Kent County Council emerged with an overall score of 4 out of 4 – one of only two County Councils to have done so in both rounds of Corporate Assessment – Hampshire being the other. The Lead Inspector from the Audit Commission stated that in effect a 4 in 2002 was worth only a 2 under the 'harder test', so KCC's 2008 score is a reflection of continued improvement over the last 6 years.

The Executive Summary of the report begins with:-

*Kent County Council (KCC) is performing strongly. It has, with its partners, been early and active in developing clear and appropriate ambitions and priorities to meet the strategic challenges facing the county. The Council often leads beyond the norm for local government and is an outstandingly effective advocate for Kent at all levels including internationally. Well-established partnership work is bringing real improvements to quality of life for local people. Ground-breaking recent pilot projects embrace new technology and aim to personalise services. The Council has for ten years been seeking excellence and its organisation is impressive, high-quality, responsive and gives good value-for-money.*

Throughout every section of the report there are comments and conclusions on the strengths of KCC, of the vision, drive, ambition and delivery, not just of KCC but of its work with partners. Nevertheless there are always ways in which KCC can improve what it does, as was acknowledged in KCC's self assessment and in the evidence shared with inspectors.

## **3. Building on Success: the Performance Improvement Plan**

The draft PIP will set out in summarised form the inspectors comments and the proposed response, including the means of monitoring future progress. It will not confine the 'areas for improvement' solely to those shown on page 8 of the report

under that heading, in reflects comments made throughout the body of the report (in each case referring back to the specific paragraph in which the comment is made).

In the majority of cases, the proposed actions and monitoring relate to existing commitments and processes so as to avoid additional bureaucracy solely for the purpose of responding to the report.

Many of the inspectors' comments reflect issues which KCC identified as requiring improvement and the PIP provides a simple means of tracking progress. Detailed implementation will be set out in the relevant service unit business plan or strategy, with overall progress monitored via the PIP.

The PIP will be set out under a number of themes and in each case distinguish between improvement work which is established or ongoing and areas where fresh action is required.

In the most cases, action under the themes listed below will support preparations for the introduction of the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) from April 2009 and so the PIP is not simply reacting to the Corporate Assessment, it anticipates the demands of CAA.

#### Areas for Improvement

The comments and recommendations of the inspection team are grouped under seven themes:-

1. **Community engagement**
2. **Communications**
3. **Relationship management**
4. **Member roles**
5. **Workforce development**
6. **Corporate practice/processes**
7. **Service improvement**

In 6 of the 7 themes the comments and actions do not relate to a single service Directorate, they require action by KCC as a whole, led sometimes by the Chief Executive's Department, sometimes by one of the services Directorates.

In each theme the PIP tables distinguish between:-

- |                        |  |
|------------------------|--|
| <b>A - Monitoring</b>  | <i>Work currently being done where the changes suggested affect how that work is monitored</i> |
| <b>B - Improvement</b> | <i>Work currently being done that needs improving to be more effective</i>                     |
| <b>C - New</b>         | <i>Work that isn't currently underway or planned</i>   |
| <b>D - In hand</b>     | <i>Work that KCC already has underway or has completed since the assessment took place</i>     |

Throughout the PIP there will be a commitment to increased reporting on performance, progress and impact to the relevant POC, although detailed proposals in relation to this will need to take account of the reports of the Informal Member

Group on Information to Members and of the Select Committee on Accessing Democracy.

As the preparations for CAA develop there will also be further proposals on the role of KCC POCs in relation to the performance of the Kent Partnership and its Working Groups, which as this stage are not proposals in the PIP as the final framework for CAA is still under consultation.

#### **4. Recommendations**

Members are asked to note this report

Contact details

Robert Hardy September 2008

Tel 01622 22**1343**

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# Corporate Assessment

**Kent County Council**

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## Introduction

Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA) is the means by which the Audit Commission fulfils its statutory duty under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003 to make an assessment, and report on the performance, of local authorities. Corporate assessment is one element in the overall assessment that leads to a CPA score and category.

The purpose of the corporate assessment is to assess how well the Council engages with and leads its communities, delivers community priorities in partnership with others and ensures continuous improvement across the range of its activities. It seeks to answer three headline questions which are underpinned by five specific themes.

What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

- Ambition
- Prioritisation

What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

- Capacity
- Performance management

What has been achieved?

- Achievement

Considered against the shared priorities of:

- sustainable communities and transport;
- safer and stronger communities;
- healthier communities;
- older people; and
- children and young people.

Corporate assessments are normally aligned with a joint area review of services for children and young people (JAR). In practice this means that the Council's achievements in relation to children and young people are assessed using the evidence provided from the JAR. In addition, examples of outcomes and activity, which are relevant to the other themes and which are identified through the JAR, are considered within the corporate assessment.

The JAR covers specific services for children and young people that are directly managed or commissioned by the Council, as well as relevant health and youth justice services provided by other bodies. It focuses on the contributions made by services to improving outcomes especially concerning safeguarding; services for looked after children; and services for children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. The separate JAR report also covers the leadership and management of services for children and young people and, in particular, the way that such services work together to improve outcomes. The description and judgement in respect of children and young people in this report is summarised from the JAR report and the most recently published Annual Performance Assessment from Ofsted which covers all of the Council's children services.

## Executive summary

- 1 Kent County Council (KCC) is performing strongly. It has, with its partners, been early and active in developing clear and appropriate ambitions and priorities to meet the strategic challenges facing the county. The Council often leads beyond the norm for local government and is an outstandingly effective advocate for Kent at all levels including internationally. Well-established partnership work is bringing real improvements to quality of life for local people. Ground-breaking recent pilot projects embrace new technology and aim to personalise services. The Council has for ten years been seeking excellence and its organisation is impressive, high-quality, responsive and gives good value-for-money. But this has required a drive and firmness of direction that is seen by some as over-dominant. The Council recognises that it has reached a stage of maturity where further gains will depend on a more inclusive approach, internally and externally. It has taken early steps, but needs to do more to achieve its ambition of fully-integrated public services that are well-targeted on the needs of the people of Kent. A minority of services under-perform, and in some shared priorities work is at an early stage.
- 2 The Council is unusually outward-looking, which gives it important strengths. Horizon-scanning is high. It provides a strong voice for Kent, building high-level alliances, including with government departments where its drive for innovation is creating interest in testing new ideas jointly, despite having a different ruling party. It has well-developed strategic partnerships including internationally. It gives more time and attention to learning from other types of organisation, such as retail, than is usual in local government. It translates this learning effectively through the organisation into an alertness and willingness at the front line and by operational management to develop new solutions. It extends its influence and learning by using secondments and joint leadership training with national and regional organisations.
- 3 KCC is value-driven, principled and strategic. It concentrates on tackling disadvantage in its communities according to need, particularly by improving access to, and skills for, employment. Values and ambitions have stayed constant through recent changes in leadership. The previous nationally-recognised Leader and Chief Executive both stood down in 2005. The new Leader has brought a highly-regarded, team-working approach to the Cabinet and a strong, altruistic focus on improving the life chances of less academic young people. He has worked with district councils to create a joint approach to localism, although knows there is more to do. He has improved the operation of overview and scrutiny but recognises that there is more room to develop. The Chief Executive has brought a passion and drive for innovation that re-echoes through the organisation, and is fostering a more corporate approach to local well-being. His leadership is recognised and appreciated internally at all levels, and his work at central government level brings useful cross-fertilisation of ideas.

- 4 The Council has a strong focus on users, finding new ways of giving better-tailored outcomes for individuals and better value. It researches and analyses Kent's needs thoroughly, and interprets and shapes national priorities confidently to meet them. It is prepared to take risks to achieve a step-change in outcomes. It is ambitious and active in facing the challenges to quality of life of a sharply-increasing population and the ever-widening London-to-Europe corridor.
- 5 The organisation is well-informed, intelligent, lively and responsive. Its performance and depth of resource is impressive. It uses delivery partnerships and procurement very well to increase its reach and capacity. It transfers knowledge diligently from commercial partners and its own councillors, many of whom have top-level business-management skills, but with no blurring of the line between governance and management. Relationships are high in trust and respect. The Council has recently been awarded level 3 in the Equalities Standard for Local Government and is aiming for Level 5 by 2010.
- 6 Good internal controls are an effective counter-balance to the Council's free-thinking innovation, with particular strengths in financial management. The Council achieves good value-for-money and is particularly effective at increasing its financial capacity by attracting funding and using its assets astutely. Performance management is solid, but the Council knows there is room for improvement and is taking appropriate action.
- 7 The Council achieves very well in priority areas, including social care, economic development, improving education and skills-development, increasing public transport use and promoting exercise. It is open to new ideas and active in trying them out, for example in developing Kent TV as a community resource and to web-cast Council meetings. It maintains impetus and uses innovation to achieve good value-for-money while maintaining service quality. Although the Council is performing well against the basket of performance indicators used for Comprehensive Performance Assessment (CPA), in the indicators used for Corporate Assessment it is below average for county councils. The Council and its partners are at an early stage in showing improved outcomes in some important shared priorities - such as tackling high levels of health inequality, reducing the carbon footprint of services, and developing a planned approach to sharply-increasing numbers of healthy older people - but are taking action on all of these.
- 8 The Council's capacity to deliver its ambitions would be stronger if it adopted a more inclusive, listening approach - particularly with local partners and, internally, with opposition parties. This is needed for the full development of localism and of inclusive decision-making that reflects fully the needs of all communities. Although KCC's strengths are widely-appreciated, there is some alienation at what is perceived by some to be an over-dominant style with some local partners that does not take enough time to listen and build consensus. KCC's branding is active and strong, but this can be misconstrued as an over-inclination to take credit for partnership work. Opposition councillors have fewer opportunities for their views to be heard at a formative stage of policy than is usual. The Council can be unproductively sensitive to external criticism. By changing these aspects of its style, the Council could be even more effective.

## Areas for improvement

- 9 Further progress in delivering excellent, integrated, well-targeted services for local people would be strengthened by a more inclusive and listening approach. To achieve this, the Council should tackle the following areas for improvement.
  - The Council should be more sensitive to the perceptions of some partners about aspects of its style. With voluntary and community organisations the Council needs to tell less and listen more. It also needs to be more generous to other partners in its external communications.
  - In the Council's membership, better-supported and earlier engagement of opposition and backbench councillors in decision-making and performance monitoring is needed, to build trust and openness and to ensure the views of all communities are fully heard before decisions are made.
- 10 Within the organisation corporately, and the Council's membership, equalities practice needs to be driven harder to reach the level of the best directorates.
- 11 In addition, the Council needs, with local partners, to deliver improvements in areas of lower performance such as recycling, refuse volumes and air quality. It also needs to understand and continue to address issues raised by the latest public satisfaction measures, including with complaints-handling.

## Summary of assessment scores

Headline questions	Theme	Score*
What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?	Ambition	4
	Prioritisation	4
What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?	Capacity	3
	Performance management	3
What has been achieved?	Achievement	3
<b>Overall corporate assessment score**</b>		<b>4</b>
<b>*Key to scores</b>		
1 – below minimum requirements – <b>inadequate performance</b>		
2 – at only minimum requirements – <b>adequate performance</b>		
3 – consistently above minimum requirements – <b>performing well</b>		
4 – well above minimum requirements – <b>performing strongly</b>		

### \*\*Rules for determining the overall corporate assessment score

Scores on 5 themes	Overall corporate assessment score
Two or more themes with a score of 4 None less than score of 3	4
Three or more themes with a score of 3 or more None less than score of 2	3
Three or more themes with a score of 2 or more	2
Any other combination	1

## Context

### The locality

- 12 Kent is the most populous county in England, with 1.38 million people, an increase of 3 per cent since 2002. The population is ageing and is predicted to have one of the UK's highest increases in the number of people aged 85 over the next few years, together with a fall in under-18s. The county has significant and growing numbers of new arrivals, both economic migrants and asylum-seekers.
- 13 Kent is a mix of rural communities and urban areas, with no dominant centre of population but a network of 18 towns, the largest of which is Maidstone. It has the longest coastline of any English county. It is widely known for the quality of its countryside, landscape and historic building. The Thames and Medway estuaries have significant areas of post-industrial decline, though they are also ecologically important. Seaside towns have also suffered long-term economic decline.
- 14 Population growth is creating pressures. Kent contains two of the government's major growth areas, with over 120,000 new households planned over the next 20 years. Three districts - Dartford, Gravesham and Swale - are part of the Thames Gateway, and Ashford has been designated because of its fast rail connection to mainland Europe. Housing growth presents challenges for planners and causes concern for residents. Demand for affordable housing, transport infrastructure, waste management, social, recreational and educational services and water supply are all challenging, and urbanisation is increasing flood risk.
- 15 Transport is a major strategic challenge. Kent is the main link between the UK and mainland Europe, with two international rail stations, the world's busiest passenger ferry port, two growing airports, the Channel Tunnel and the newly-constructed international high-speed rail link. HGV traffic through Kent is growing at 8 per cent each year, placing a strain on infrastructure. Proximity to London results in large commuter volumes. A higher than average proportion of people live in rural areas and car ownership is above average.
- 16 Kent has a £19.3 billion service-based economy and prosperity is growing overall, with significant tourism, thriving small and medium-sized businesses and a growing base in creative industries, pharmaceuticals and bio-science. Agriculture, fruit-growing and mineral extraction remain important to the character of the county but are no longer significant employers. The former coalfield area suffers deprivation. The workforce is less well-qualified than nationally and regionally. There is polarisation of prosperity: 19 wards, largely in the east of the county and around the coast, are among the 10 per cent most deprived in England, but there is also considerable affluence, particularly in the west, closer to London.
- 17 The health of people in Kent is generally good but there is a large, 17-year gap in life expectancy between some wards. Kent is relatively safe but violent crime is becoming a bigger factor. Public perception is that crime and anti-social behaviour related to excessive alcohol is the biggest problem.

- 18 Kent has lower than average numbers of people with black and minority ethnic (BME) heritage but also a large, established Sikh community. BME groups are on average better qualified and healthier than the population as a whole with around average economic activity. Migration is high, potentially contributing to the economy, but also putting demands on education and other infrastructure and leading to possible challenges to community cohesion. There are significant numbers of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children.

## The Council

- 19 There are three tiers of local government in Kent: the County Council, 12 district councils and more than 300 parish and town councils. Medway, formerly part of Kent, became a unitary council in 1998.
- 20 The Local Strategic Partnership (LSP) is the Kent Partnership, set up in 2002 and chaired by KCC. It has five working groups: the Children's Trust, Safer Stronger Communities Group, Health and Wellbeing Group, Kent Economic Board and The Kent Public Service Board. Districts, additionally, have their own LSPs.
- 21 KCC has 84 councillors, (57 Conservative, 20 Labour, 6 Liberal Democrat and 1 Independent), governed by a Leader and Cabinet. The Cabinet has nine portfolios for: Corporate Support; Finance; Operations, Resources and Skills; Children, Families and Educational Achievement; Adult Social Services; Environment, Highways and Waste; Public Health; Community Services and Regeneration and Supporting Independence. Policy Overview Committees match service directorates rather than Cabinet portfolios and have chairs appointed from the ruling group. Task-and-finish cross-party Select Committees and working groups support policy-development. The Leader of the Opposition chairs the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee and there is an NHS Overview and Scrutiny Committee. There are the usual regulatory committees, an Audit Committee and a Standards Committee.
- 22 The officer structure was revised in 2006 into four service directorates headed by Managing Directors: Adult Social Services, Children, Families and Education, Communities, and Environment and Regeneration together with a Chief Executive's Department. The Council employs around 45,000 people, including school staff. The gross revenue budget for 2007/08 is £2,114 million, net £ 741.7 million. Band D Council Tax was £964.17 in 2007/08, the fifth lowest of the 20 county councils without fire services. The capital budget is £1 billion over the three years of the Medium Term Plan.

## What is the Council, together with its partners, trying to achieve?

### Ambition

- 23 The Council is performing strongly in this area. The Kent Partnership and the County Council have clear, challenging ambitions that are very well-matched to the strategic challenges facing the county. The Council is making progress with localism but this work needs a more inclusive approach.
- 24 The Community Strategy, *The Vision for Kent (V4K)*, is an excellent, inspiring document that identifies strategic needs clearly. V4K was first published in 2002 and reviewed during 2005/06. Ambitions are set out under eight themes designed to tackle the strategic challenges facing the county over the next 20 years. The themes are: Economic success - Opportunities for all; Learning for everyone; Improved Health, Care and Well-Being; Environmental Excellence; Stronger and Safer Communities; Enjoying Life; Keeping Kent moving and High Quality Homes. Each theme has a set of priorities and action plans.
- 25 These themes include a targeted approach to improving access to quality education, skills and employment, and a broadly-based approach to reviving coastal towns - for example with the arts quarter in Folkestone and the Turner Contemporary in Margate. There is a strong and successful approach to public transport, to improving access to green space around the Thames Gateway and to helping old people stay independent including through new technologies.
- 26 The consultation process for both versions of V4K was extensive. In 2005 it involved over 800 people from 240 public, private, voluntary and community organisations, an online questionnaire and special youth conference. Partners have researched needs using ward-level, and increasingly postcode-level, cross-matched research data. Ambitions and plans are shared and understood across partnerships, councillors and staff and well-communicated externally.
- 27 The Partnership and the Council are highly-focused on tackling deprivation through targeted action to improve access to employment and to employment skills. They have a full understanding of the importance of cultural development to making the county attractive to high-quality employers and raise the accessibility of better local career-paths, with some good early outcomes. The Council remains committed to educational selection at 11+, but has been active over the last five years in improving the life-chances of less academic young people by federating secondary schools and driving new approaches to developing employment skills, in partnership with employers, for the 14-24 age groups.
- 28 The Council and its partners are acutely aware of the strategic opportunities and challenges of the 'Corridor to Europe' transport links that cross the county from London to Dover and the Channel Tunnel. They have adopted early, active and successful horizon-scanning and wider lobbying to ensure that benefits accrue to the people of Kent to offset the adverse impact on their environment.

- 29** The Council is unusually outward-looking for new ways of achieving better outcomes for local people, using extensive European and wider partnership projects, including with the US States of Virginia, Washington and Massachusetts, and adopting commercial approaches to customer service and contact. A high proportion of the Council's middle managers have had opportunities to see practice elsewhere, including abroad, and feel enabled and encouraged to apply that experience in suggesting better ways of doing things in their own work.
- 30** KCC is ambitious for itself and raises the ambitions of its partners. It was an early and effective advocate of greater freedoms and flexibility in the application of public funding to its area, influencing government thinking on local public service agreements and Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Partners can already point to improved quality of life for local people, including new employment, more accessible green space and better support for independent living. The Council uses its wellbeing powers broadly, for example in the new 'Gateway' retail-style public service shops and in promoting electronic individual health monitoring.
- 31** In community leadership the Council is a very effective voice for Kent, widely recognised and appreciated by partners for its sub-regional, regional, national and Europe-wide activity in promoting the interests of the county. This has brought large amounts of national and European funding to support initiatives, and successful lobbying over various transport issues. KCC was early in recognising the potential of the Olympic Games, whether in London or Paris, and had a strategy ready to be tailored, when the decision was made. The Council is felt by other local partners to be generous and principled in its lobbying support and advocacy.
- 32** The Council's external communication is effective, with exceptionally well-produced public documents, and, recently a multi-channel approach including text-messaging and its own web-based Kent TV. Key Council meetings are web-cast, achieving much higher viewing figures than public attendance. KCC is a national leader in exploring new ways to get its message across and giving community groups a powerful voice on the web, but needs to take care not to alienate or undervalue legitimate independent voices, for example the local press. KCC's strong brand image and able self-promotion can create an unintended impression that the Council is over-keen to claim credit for joint initiatives, and it needs to keep working to change this impression.
- 33** KCC has made some progress with its Going Local agenda but is aware that there is more to do. It set up councillor-led local boards in district council areas in 2006 and negotiated the Kent Commitment, an agreement between the County and District Leaders in 2007. County Councillors have a budget to use in support of local projects. In Dover the Board has evolved into smaller, neighbourhood forums that are starting to produce genuine dialogue between all three layers of local government, creating public interest and real engagement. In other areas lack of dialogue at the set-up stage and a decision that, initially, boards would be chaired by a county councillor of the ruling group have contributed to variable, but often slight, local buy-in and engagement. A further review is intended.

## Prioritisation

- 34 The Council's prioritisation is strong with a focus on individual user needs. Priorities are clear, well-established and widely-understood. Community strategy priorities within V4K are clear. Succinct action plans draw out partners' specific contributions. Within that established framework the Council's priorities are clearly-articulated, well-communicated and actively incorporated into strategies and plans. Mechanisms to ensure delivery are good, and many priorities are already making a difference to quality of life in Kent.
- 35 Kent has been in the national vanguard of developing and delivering joint priorities with public sector partners. It was the first area to set up a Public Services Board and negotiate a Local Public Service Agreement (LPSA). It was a pilot for Local Area Agreements (LAAs). Its first LPSA (2001-2004), entitled *Reducing dependency, increasing employment and fulfilment* contained 12 specific targets centred on the *Supporting Independence Programme*. LPSA2 (2005-2008), *Supporting Independence – Promoting Opportunity and Wellbeing*, includes 14 targets covering children and young people, vulnerable adults, environment and health and safety. LPSAs were incorporated into the Local Area Agreement (LAA1) in 2005. Progress is well-advanced on agreeing targets for LAA2, due to start in 2008.
- 36 The Council has been, for the last ten years, agreeing, planning and delivering strategic targets in partnership and is practised at incorporating these into strategies and plans. It has published in turn *The Next Five Years* (1998-2003), *The Next Four Years* (2002-2006), and currently *Towards 2010* (2006-2010). There is continuity and consonance, and clear, up-to-date links with other strategies and plans. The Leader's focus on young people is visible in the detail of the *Towards 2010* priorities, which are increased prosperity through business growth and job creation, transformation in education, reduced traffic congestion, improved health and quality of life, quality homes in a well-managed environment, a safer Kent, and improvements in services while keeping council tax down.
- 37 The Council is robust in its decision-making. Within clear priorities its value-based approach provides a strong strategic framework for making choices and it does not get tempted into parochialism or sectional interests. It is very effective at attracting and generating money, and its strengths in financial management and planning ensure that it can resource its priorities. So far the Council has, through strenuous efforts, funded the costs of priority developments from efficiency savings (more than £90 million over five years), by attracting high levels of external funding, from asset-realisation and through partnership. It recognises that increasing financial pressures may mean painful disinvestment in valued services in future but has the robustness of decision-making to face that squarely.
- 38 KCC and its partners have a strong record of delivery. LPSA1 achieved 83 per cent of the targets set, well above the national average and attracting Performance Reward Grant (PRG) of over £21 million. LPSA2 is on course for PRG of at least £23 million. In the stakeholder survey for this assessment, Kent scored near the top of county councils for its delivery of priorities.

- 39 There are many examples of priorities being translated into action and having an impact on quality of life. These include a large apprenticeship scheme, freedom bus passes for school pupils and targeted skills development for 4,000 14-16 year-olds in partnership with employers. School attainment, attendance and participation post-16 are improving and numbers of young people not in employment, education or training are reducing. Serious road accidents have reduced sharply despite rising traffic. Bus transport is increasing, against the national trend. The Council works especially well with unaccompanied asylum-seeking children. It is maintaining coverage in adult social services by innovation, partnership working and focusing on independence. The *Green Grid* of joined up countryside spaces is providing new opportunities for recreation and exercise for people in the Thames Gateway where planned housing development is high. Opportunities for exercise are increasing across the county, especially in schools.
- 40 The Council can take hard decisions to stay on track, such as its reviews of adult services involving closure of popular facilities for longer term gains for service-users. Another example is its unpopular decision to cancel the original prize-winning design for the new Turner Contemporary gallery in Margate when costs spiralled, proceeding with the concept but changing the design model.
- 41 A few targets need strengthening and focusing more strongly on community outcomes rather than activity. A minority of 2010 targets are not specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART). Examples are target 3 on town centre regeneration, target 4 to support rural business and communities to build a strong entrepreneurial culture, and target 54 on reducing avoidable admissions to hospital. Although priorities generally cascade well into team plans, there are a few gaps that the Council's current work on strengthening its quality assurance on business planning is designed to deal with.
- 42 The Council consults well with its own clients to shape its people-based services, with some excellent examples of work with less-heard groups on specific service development. Young people are enabled to contribute to broad policy. Equalities impact statements have recently been incorporated routinely into policy changes. Recent budget consultation has used a professional polling organisation to good effect. Sexual orientation is treated sympathetically.
- 43 Nonetheless there is scope for better regular engagement of some less-heard groups over broad Council priorities, for example house-bound people who are not receiving social care, and recent migrants. Some local communities and groups, including voluntary and community organisations, do not feel listened to and there is scope for local boards to make more contribution. The recent focus on electronic communications helps in engaging some people well who were less well-heard previously, for example young people and some BME groups, but the Council needs to maintain a commitment to other forms of communication to reach all sections of the community.

## What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?

### Capacity

- 44 The Council is performing well in this area. The strength of its organisation is exceptional and capacity is increased by extensive external funding and by high-volume trading. It is unusually outward-looking, trying constantly to find better ways of doing things. Able and enthusiastic staff are skilled and motivated to deliver customer-focused services in an innovative and supportive environment. Internal controls are effective and value for money is high. Councillors are of high calibre and the internal culture is one of mutual respect. Overview and scrutiny are improving but pre-decision scrutiny is underdeveloped and not independent enough of the executive. The approach to equalities and diversity is improving but the Council knows there is more to do. Extensive delivery partnerships continue to develop well, but some aspects of relationships with district councils and voluntary organisations need improvement.
- 45 Political leadership is strong, setting a principled and altruistic tone. The Cabinet is an effective team. Roles and responsibilities are clear and councillors are high calibre and understand their strategic role. Ethical standards are high and decision-making processes are clear and well-ordered. Managerial leadership is aimed at transforming the organisation to promote a culture of innovation, challenge and risk taking with a focus on service-users. This is successful, with the Chief Executive's emphasis on fresh thinking about service-users' experience re-echoing through the views of managerial and staff groups.
- 46 Internal communication is effective, with well-developed team-briefings coupled with a multi-channel approach that includes newsletters and emailed briefings. Staff consider the Chief Executive and senior officers to be accessible. For example, the Chief Executive is reported to answer emails from individual staff members reliably, fully and promptly. Written communications, including policy documents that in many councils are dry and bureaucratic, are excellently-produced and refreshing to read in plain English. However, document control could sometimes be improved.
- 47 Council staff are highly skilled and equipped to deliver high quality services. There is a culture of continuous improvement, an atmosphere of openness and honesty, high job satisfaction and a committed workforce. Training and development is very good and a high quality leadership development programme ensures continuing development. Joint top-level leadership training, supported by two business schools, has recently started with other public sector and business partners. Human Resources policies and strategies are good. The whole council has Investors in People accreditation.

- 48 Financial management is excellent. The Council received one of the best Use of Resources assessments nationally, with the maximum score overall and in four out of the five individual themes. It offers good value for money. Risk is managed effectively - for example in provisions for exit strategies from externally-funded projects. The Council has for some time been expert at augmenting its financial capacity through astute asset and service-management. It is extremely successful at attracting funding and making the best use of the money it attracts. For example only half of the £100 million budget in the Communities Directorate is funded directly, the rest being supported by income.
- 49 The Council uses ICT effectively throughout its activities and partnerships. Criticisms in an Audit Commission assessment in 2002 have been addressed and ICT strategy now aligns with strategic objectives and is supporting transformation in service delivery. Unit costs are low and directorate confidence in ICT is high. Managers have devolved responsibility and more flexibility to suit ICT to their business needs. ICT investments support a wide range of community benefits such as Kent Connects (a single public service network which enables partners to share information securely), Explore Kent, Cluster Web, Kent Card, Telecare and Telehealth. Kent Community Network provides schools with high speed, high capacity broadband. Customers have 24-hour access to many of the Council's services and Cabinet and key Council meetings are web-cast. Parish portals enable each of Kent's parish councils to produce their own web and email facility.
- 50 Asset management is strong. The Council works in partnership to manage its substantial assets, for example working with district councils on joint property rationalisation, using proceeds of sale effectively to fund new front line assets, and in some cases to invest and bring a return. Large capital schemes are currently planned, including a very large Building Schools for the Future (BSF) programme. These are challenging, with some funding gaps being met through planned slippage. Nonetheless the size of the Council's asset base and its financial acumen mean it is well-placed to manage its way through.
- 51 Procurement is effective and continues to improve. The Council hosts the South East Centre of Excellence and is recognised and used as a national good practice exemplar. It has revised governance to give tight corporate control and produced a particularly good plain English guide for staff. It has made £42.4 million savings over the last four years, with strengthened diversity and environmental provisions. There is unusually wide and well-managed use of delivery partnerships, with over 45 per cent of non-schools spending used to procure services. The Council's very large Commercial Services arm (£350 million turnover) spreads overhead costs and improves value for money by providing functions externally to an unusual extent, including back-office functions to district councils and other public sector bodies including government departments. Delivery partners are mostly very positive about joint working, a number reporting that they feel better-engaged with KCC than with other councils.

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- 52** The Council is building the capacity of some voluntary sector partners in supporting its delivery. For example, libraries use 600 local volunteers and the Council supports volunteer bureaux to improve their media skills. In adult social care the Council is active in recruiting young volunteers with a view to future recruitment. Delivery partnerships with this sector are growing in effectiveness, but as previously mentioned, the Council does not fully exploit opportunities for harnessing their input through listening and engagement.
- 53** Workforce planning is developing internally but is at an early stage. The Council has good data and is adopting a more strategic approach. It is commissioning joint workforce planning with its main partners to overcome skills shortages, although this is not yet in place. It is improving the diversity of its workforce, for example by recognising the ageing profile and developing graduate and mentoring programmes to attract younger workers. The number of women in senior positions is increasing. Staff networks for BME staff, disabled, LGBT and young people offer support to each other. The Council is in Stonewall's top 30 gay-friendly employers nationally and has the Two Ticks symbol as a good employer of disabled people.
- 54** The Council is better-focused on some cross-service priorities as a result of restructuring, although it is still essentially service-based. Mechanisms to ensure a more corporate approach are at an early stage of development but are starting to have an impact. There is good cross-departmental working in LAA priorities. The cross-directorate resource managers group is effective in supporting and enabling cross-directorate work. Its members report reduced departmental defensiveness and a newly collegiate approach. Greater collaboration brought success in delivering the challenging 2008/09 budget with little inter-directorate conflict. There are high-level cross-directorate boards on selected corporate development areas, although progress is variable and the Council is aware that there is further to go in some areas to achieve consistency, for example in Freedom of Information, equalities and personalisation of services.
- 55** The staff profile does not fully reflect changing demographics and there is wide variation between departments. The experience of staff members who are in a minority is mixed and is too dependant on the attitudes of individual managers and departments. Training on equalities is not compulsory for staff or councillors, although modules are included in induction and management training. At the time of this assessment the Council was being assessed at level 3 of the Equality Standard for Local Government, (since confirmed), not as high as some high-performing councils, but it is, ambitiously, aiming for Level 5 by 2010.

- 56 Scrutiny is improving but there is considerable scope for a more inclusive approach. Policy Overview Committees are now normally attended by Portfolio-holders, which allows more opportunity to hold the Cabinet to account, and they have recently started to get six-monthly performance monitoring reports for their areas. Task and finish Select Committees and working groups are highly valued by councillors of all parties and have made important contributions to policy. But currently Overview is not independent enough of the Executive to be fully-effective in performing a wider scrutiny of policy development and ensuring this work has impact. The constitution is operated to clear the way for Cabinet decisions but in the process dissipates opposition input into over-used, and often ineffective, post-decision call-ins. Officers' capacity to support overview and scrutiny appears unusually small and can be a limiting factor in pre-decision debate. As a result opposition views are formulated and considered too late in the process to help the robust and inclusive development of policy and priorities.
- 57 KCC's relationships with partners are generally good and improving. The current Leader has worked hard and successfully to improve relationships with local councils at Leader level, reaching an agreement, *The Kent Commitment*, for joint working and action-planning in early 2007. There are many effective and innovative initiatives mentioned elsewhere in this report. Relationships with Medway Council have greatly improved. However relationships between KCC and District and Borough Council Chief Executives, which should be a key resource in shaping joint priorities and smoothing the path to implementation, are not as effective as they might be. KCC's innovative drive is seen, on occasion, as impatient in building joint ownership and in meeting district councils' concerns about identity and consultation. The Council needs to manage these relationships more strategically so as to promote a higher level of trust, in view of the growing importance of local partnerships and national expectations for their future delivery of big and complex issues.

## Performance management

- 58 The Council is performing well in performance management. Systems are clear, well co-ordinated and well-linked to business planning. A comprehensive appraisal system is in place for officers. Performance management is established and effective in most established partnerships, although is less developed in others. The Council uses information to drive improvement and has turned round some under-performing areas. It uses external review actively. There is scope for improvement, albeit from a solid base, in target-setting, business planning, service standards and complaints-handling, and the Council is working in these areas. It needs to be more active in giving backbench members ready access to relevant, up-to-date performance information in summary form.
- 59 There is a clear, accessible performance management system in place, with effective performance monitoring arrangements at cabinet, corporate management and directorate levels. Senior officers and councillors use reporting systems effectively to identify under-performance. Portfolio-holders and directors meet frequently to discuss and account for service performance. Most staff understand and use their departmental systems well.

**20 Corporate Assessment | What is the capacity of the Council, including its work with partners, to deliver what it is trying to achieve?**

- 60** Reporting is generally appropriate, with monthly performance monitoring at directorate level and quarterly at Chief Officers' Group and Cabinet. Performance against a selected group of national performance indicators (PIs) is included on an exception basis through a well-established *Staying Excellent* reporting process to ensure a targeted focus on key areas for improvement.
- 61** The Council uses performance management systems effectively to drive improvement. Monitoring leads to intervention to correct underperformance, for example for Youth Offending Service referral times to Child and Adolescent Mental Health, where the rate of meeting the target timescale rose from 20 per cent of cases in 2005 to all cases by 2007. Similarly, there has been a reduction in the average number of days to complete streetlight repairs following a sustained focus. For road accidents, a key LPSA target, a disappointing performance in autumn 2007 prompted an active publicity campaign, resulting in better than average figures for the past three months.
- 62** The Council has a well-established, reliable annual appraisal process. Appraisals are backed by good management processes, and staff and managers feel they have free upward access. Staff and managers understand the culture they are expected to model and the outcomes expected of them. They feel empowered to deliver services flexibly to improve outcomes, and to suggest improvements. Staff development is well-targeted on need and takes many forms in addition to conventional training. Councillors and Cabinet members have to produce an annual report about their activity, and Cabinet Members are appraised by the Leader. The Council is aware that evaluation of development needs strengthening and is taking steps to do so.
- 63** There is a mix of established and developing performance management and monitoring arrangements with key partners. Clear performance management systems are in place for established partnerships, including the community safety partnership and the Kent Agreement, and there are developing arrangements for other partnerships such as the children and young people's partnership. The Cabinet receives quarterly performance information on LAA and *Towards 2010* targets that is shared between the partners and is used effectively, for example to monitor LAA1 and develop the new LAA2 agreement. However, other partnerships have yet to develop effective joint systems. The quality of the information shared between partners is variable but the Council is working actively with partners to improve it.
- 64** The Council is active in seeking out innovative ideas and using them to learn and improve. There are a number of examples where it has visited councils and other organisations within the UK and internationally to seek out notable practice. For example, it developed the family group conferencing service based on learning from New Zealand via Hampshire CC. Telehealth and Kent TV resulted from seeing innovative practice in the USA. It uses secondments from other organisations well, for example a climate change expert from DEFRA is helping to reduce its carbon footprint. The Council is also developing frameworks and structures internally to share learning, for example the senior managers' cross-directorate forums. It uses external peer evaluation extensively to drive improvement.

- 65 Although the links between decisions and actions are generally solid and well-established, the Council is aware that there is scope for improvement. For example it is refining its business plans to ensure consistency and to meet the corporate standard, with revised service planning guidance and quality assurance processes for 2008/09. The carry-through of priorities into business and delivery plans, although generally good, has some gaps and needs better quality-checking. Targets tend to be over-focused on achieving planned activity rather than on outcomes for local people, and are not always SMART. A minority of delivery plans lack timescales and milestones for some of their activities.
- 66 The Council's use of and response to complaints as a resource to drive improved services is being further developed, but currently - although statutory requirements are met - directorates have inconsistent approaches, and mechanisms for monitoring and using complaints are underdeveloped. This inconsistency is reinforced by the mixed quality and availability of service standards. Public satisfaction with complaints-handling is in the worst 25 per cent compared with other councils.
- 67 In its relationships with regulators the Council is unexpectedly defensive for an organisation of such high repute. This discourages early advice and means that stronger messages about areas for improvement are not always heard clearly and acted upon quickly, because the immediate response is often to expend much energy, unproductively, on rebuttal.
- 68 Performance monitoring by the wider body of councillors is under-developed although improving. Presentation of performance monitoring information to councillors outside the Cabinet, while it has increased recently, remains unusually limited. Policy Overview Committees have in recent months taken on a six-monthly performance monitoring role, although their approach to and rigour in this is, so far, inconsistent. This is the only formal mechanism for presenting backbenchers with in-year performance information. There is no electronic 'dashboard' or regular reports for backbench and senior opposition members to monitor areas of individual interest, or performance more generally. The ability of backbench and opposition councillors to be alerted at an early stage to areas meriting scrutiny and challenge is therefore hampered. The new IT system will put the Council in a position to remedy this.

## What has been achieved?

- 69 KCC is performing well in achieving with partners its priorities for local people. The Council was in the forefront of developing the national-local shared priorities, and is confident in shaping national priorities to local need and taking advantage of opportunities for pilot funding. Leadership for and commitment to shared priorities and major strategic challenges is strong, and mechanisms to ensure delivery are good. There is notable practice, but some work is at too early a stage to show results. The Council achieves generally good improvement in priority areas, However, performance is weak in a few service areas and at a very early stage in some of the shared priorities.
- 70 With its partners the Council is tackling some major strategic challenges, including improving educational participation and performance, making major population growth sustainable, targeting improvements in local skills and jobs, tackling post-industrial and seaside town decline, supporting healthy living, mitigating the effects and maximising the opportunities of the London to Europe corridor. There is notable practice in a number of these areas. Work on other shared priorities is in hand, but at too early a stage to show results, including on health inequalities, the over-50 agenda and climate change.
- 71 The Council and its partners are delivering improvements in priority areas on the ground. Achievements include a significant reduction in road accidents, reduced crime and anti-social behaviour, traffic congestion, teenage conceptions and impact of drug misuse, and improvements in educational participation and achievement, employment and public transport use. Regeneration is starting to transform coastal towns. These achievements are improving life-chances and quality of life in the County.
- 72 Focus on the user experience is exceptional and the Council and its partners are in the forefront of experimental approaches to personalising services. These include developing retail-type shop-fronts for public sector services provided by County, District, NHS and voluntary-sector which promise to help contain costs as well as provide better, more-integrated access for local people. The Council is a national leader on large-scale trialling of assistive technology, including health monitoring, to help maintain people's independence.
- 73 The Council's people-based services do excellent work in engaging less-heard groups and service-users with disabilities in service design, but some council services have more to do in engaging diverse groups to help shape them.
- 74 Despite strong focus on, and notable practice in, priority areas, and good value-for-money overall, Kent's performance in some areas is less strong, for example in recycling and volume of waste, and below-target air quality. Under the standard methodology now used for the public satisfaction figures, which have removed the option for direct interviewing, KCC's results have moved from the best, with an improving trend, to the worst quarter of councils, as they have for satisfaction with complaints-handling. Nonetheless surveys performed on behalf of the Council for individual services continue to show high levels of satisfaction.

## Sustainable communities and transport

- 75 The Council is effective in stimulating employment growth in Kent. It maintains a strategic overview of employment issues, engaging effectively with regional agencies and districts to ensure that sufficient land is available for development. It is helping to open up new employment sites, including by using its own land, and providing infrastructure for economic development and regeneration. The inward investment partnership, Locate in Kent, secures about 2,500 jobs per year in sectors with good prospects for further growth. KCC supports many projects to help excluded or vulnerable residents into work, particularly in areas of disadvantage. It supports the rural economy through its draft *Rural Delivery Framework* and tourism initiatives.
- 76 The Council engages well with partners in the regeneration of north and east Kent. It promotes broadly based approaches through local partnerships and works across services. It targets specific employment issues in vulnerable wards through its *Supporting Independence Programme*, and young people's skills development in areas where youth disaffection is high. It uses its own procurement to support the local economy, also procuring goods and services at competitive rates for local firms that supply it with services.
- 77 However, significant disparities remain. Although employment is growing faster in Kent than the south east as a whole, unemployment remains higher and skills levels and earnings lower. The proportion of employment in the growing 'knowledge' economies is also lower. The earnings gap is widening slightly. Three quarters of the jobs attracted through Locate in Kent over the last four years went to west Kent and the Thames Gateway, though the level of new investment in East Kent has improved recently.
- 78 KCC has shown leadership on housing development through the regional planning process and the Local Area Agreement. Housing completions are meeting regional plan requirements, though affordable housing performance has been poor in some districts. The Council is an active partner in the national housing growth areas at Ashford and Thames Gateway. It is working with east Kent districts on an empty homes initiative, committing staff resources and capital funding to support a loan scheme for property refurbishment. In 2006/07 the partnership brought 170 empty properties into use and is on track to exceed its LPSA2 target of 372. It also supports housing projects for vulnerable households.
- 79 The Council has put infrastructure in place to improve waste management and made budget provision for further investment, but there are risks for the next decade. A major waste-to-energy plant and materials recycling facility is currently being commissioned at Allington and an in-vessel composting facility is under construction in west Kent. These will increase overall recycling levels by about nine per cent and reduce the demand for landfill. But to avoid landfill tax penalties the Council needs to introduce further new waste facilities by 2014. Strategic decisions are urgent but the Waste Development Framework has been delayed. As a result, sensitive planning decisions for waste facilities may have to be taken before its adoption with the risk that they will not be guided strategically, or not be agreed and penalties incurred.

- 80 The Kent Waste Partnership (KWP) has been slow in developing effective local collection schemes that integrate with disposal arrangements to produce high levels of recycling. Recycling rates across the county are improving but are low compared with others and there is disparity between collection authorities in practice and performance. KWP is drafting a new action plan and memorandum of understanding, but it is too early to say how effective these will be. Partners are stemming waste growth using a variety of education programmes across the County. Waste levels are above average compared to other counties but have stabilised after a long period of increase.
- 81 Progress on environmental protection and enhancement is mixed. The Council supports a number of successful countryside management projects that encourage volunteering and promote sustainable tourism. It has opened a major new visitor centre at Shorne Country Park, with interpretation and conference facilities in an innovative, sustainable building. It has invested in Kent rural footpaths and bridleways and supported them with guidebooks for walkers, cyclists and riders, self guided walks and an Explore Kent website. However some biodiversity indicators are deteriorating, and air pollution is off-target.
- 82 The Council is helping to encourage high standards of design in new development through Kent Design, a partnership of planning authorities and developers. Sixty per cent of new KCC buildings are currently built to BREEAM Standard 'very good', and the Council co-sponsors the *Kent Design Guide* and *Kent Design Awards* to promote good sustainable design.
- 83 The Council is making good progress against most of its transport priorities. Its Local Transport Plan is assessed as excellent, and delivery as good. The number of people killed or seriously injured on its roads has reduced significantly. The Council has improved the cycling network, with a 53 per cent increase in cycle trips, and has increased the number of children walking to school. It has supported improvements in public transport, securing an impressive 19 per cent increase in bus use through a number of measures. Sophisticated traffic management systems are reducing congestion and prioritising buses in towns. Road maintenance has been challenging, but the condition of principal roads is improving and now compares with that of the best councils. The Council has developed a new customer care culture through the Kent Highway Alliance and this is helping it to improve its speed of response.

- 84 The Council is showing a new awareness about improving its own sustainability, but progress is not consistent across the organisation and senior managers' awareness is variable. The Council has not established and is not monitoring its total carbon footprint. However policy targets for 2010 have been set out and a £1.5 million internal energy and water investment fund established. There has been some success with CO2 and small-to-medium scale water and energy savings. The eco-schools programme is helping many schools to improve environmental performance and awareness by competing for national flag awards. The Council has not, however, evaluated the overall impact of the programme on the sustainability of the service. The Council is procuring goods and services in a more sustainable way. It is supplying bio-diesel to its extensive vehicle fleet, installing biomass boilers and developing a supply chain to secure fuel from local coppiced woodland. But it does not have a comprehensive view of its baseline performance and cannot show the full, cumulative effect of these initiatives.

## Safer and stronger communities

- 85 The Council is working well with its partners to improve community safety. Levels of overall crime are reducing, especially vehicle crime and burglaries. While violent crime is reducing it remains higher than average, and a particular challenge in East Kent. The Council and its partners have a good understanding about this and reducing violent crime is a target in the emerging LAA2. The Council provides good leadership on community safety and is innovative and creative but backbench councillors and opposition leaders are not kept as well-informed as they need to be to be fully-engaged. The Council is improving its approach to domestic violence, trialling special courts and setting up a domestic abuse forum, albeit later than many.
- 86 The Youth Offending Service has contributed to a year-on-year fall in first time entrants to the youth justice system and a fall in re-offending for young people. The service works well with young people who are at risk of getting involved in crime, anti social behaviour or being excluded from school.
- 87 Fear of crime is reducing as a result of effective measures to reduce anti social behaviour. A Community Warden Scheme complements neighbourhood policing and over 100 wardens cover rural communities and urban fringes. Wardens work well with local police teams and respond to a wide range of community concerns. The HandyVan and HomeSafe schemes help to make elderly and vulnerable people feel safer at home and have made safety checks and security installations in the homes of 15,000 older and vulnerable people. However, the anti-social behaviour strategy is in draft and is not yet driving a multi-agency approach.

- 88 The Council is working to reduce drug and alcohol misuse. It participates in the local delivery of the National Drug Strategy through its membership of Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team (KDAAT). The performance of KDAAT does not currently compare well nationally but the Council has invested to increase its capacity. New leadership, a greater focus on user involvement, improved performance monitoring systems and more collaborative working arrangements have put KDAAT in a good position to improve.
- 89 The Council understands how fear of crime is driven by environmental factors as well as by crime and anti social behaviour. Clear guidance is available to staff about how to mainstream community safety into all council services. Operation Cubitt is an effective multi-agency approach to deal more effectively with abandoned cars and untaxed vehicles. The Clean Kent Campaign focuses on reducing fly-tipping, littering and graffiti and has contributed to a 20 per cent increase in the public perception that Kent is clean. These projects are contributing to a better environment and quality of life for local communities.
- 90 The Council works effectively with other agencies to reduce accidents. Road accidents are reducing significantly and are on track to meet the national target of a 40 per cent fall in the number of people killed or seriously injured well before the 2010 deadline. Multi-agency campaigns target drink driving, mobile phone use, speeding and non-use of seat belts. A combination of education, publicity, training and enforcement has been successful. Projects such as Operation Cubitt and Clean Kent are reducing deliberate fires, fire deaths and casualties.
- 91 Emergency planning arrangements are fit for purpose. Multi-agency arrangements are in place, with KCC providing support to District Councils. The Local Resilience Forum co-ordinates information- and resource-sharing effectively. Arrangements were put to the test in the fuel crisis in 2000, the Foot and Mouth Disease outbreaks in 2001 and 2007, flooding in 2000 and the east Kent earthquake of 2007, and have worked well. Evaluation and review is systematic.
- 92 The Council works well in improving community cohesion in local areas, for example the Positive Futures project with Charlton Athletic Football Club and the multi-agency Gypsy and Travellers Forum. Rural wardens strengthen community cohesion and there is good work to support asylum seekers and economic migrants. However, the Council does not have an overarching strategic approach to cohesion and this is resulting in a lack of co-ordination and some gaps, for example the lack of a county-wide approach to promoting the contribution of migrants and countering myths.

## Healthier communities

- 93 KCC and its partners understand health inequalities well but progress in meeting them is not yet delivering measurable results. Life expectancy overall is higher than average but between the best and worst wards there is an unusually high 17 years difference. Thanet has the lowest life expectancy, well below the national average.

- 94 Joint work with the NHS on health inequalities has until recently been slow to develop, but in 2006 the Council and the Primary Care Trusts (PCTs) jointly appointed a Director of Public Health. The resulting public health strategy was agreed by partners in 2007 and has clear, appropriate priorities. Local action plans are now being developed in each district, supported by the 'Choosing Health' budget.
- 95 Councillors are committed to addressing health inequalities and KCC has a Cabinet member for Public Health. The Council is leading on a public health observatory, to promote health and reduce inequality through sub-ward-level public health intelligence and knowledge management. Health scrutiny is well developed, for example commissioning a wide-ranging report into physical activity and obesity that is contributing to a strategy across PCTs, District Councils, the private leisure industry and the voluntary sector.
- 96 The Council is vigorous in promoting healthy lifestyles for all age-groups. It has for some years been developing with partners the 'Green Grid' near the Thames Gateway, where recreational space is short, to provide a network of woods, heath-land and country park, connected by foot, cycle and bridle paths. Walking, cycling and riding routes across the county are well-promoted. East Kent Health Walks for people diagnosed as needing physical activity attract around 550 participants weekly. 'Activmobs' provides the infrastructure to help local people organise their own group physical activity. The Council promotes healthy eating and exercise to staff and offers health checks to non-schools staff.
- 97 The number of school pupils taking part in high-quality sport and physical exercise for at least two hours a week has climbed from 64 per cent in 2005 to 84 per cent in 2007 as a result of Big Lottery Fund projects for activities on school sites outside hours. In 2006/07, KCC secured £4 million of external funding, trained 1,300 teachers, coaches and volunteers, and supported 138 community sports events and programmes. A new, biennial Kent-wide School Games starts in 2008. The Healthy Schools initiative in partnership with the PCTs and KDAAT has been exceptionally successful, focusing first on schools in the most deprived areas. The Kent Agreement target of 50 per cent of schools was reached in July 2006 and 90 per cent are now involved, with 100 per cent in Thanet. There are two European-funded projects for joint work between children in Kent and North France on aspects of healthy living. Teenage pregnancies have reduced, although so far by less than target.
- 98 The 'Gateway' joint shop-front initiative brings health prevention closer to people's daily lives, although this is still at an early stage. The Ashford Gateway, the first to open in 2007, found a health screening event with a local pharmacy so popular that ongoing free checks for diabetes, blood pressure and *Chlamydia* infection are planned. However, there is limited focus within the Council on working with more vulnerable minority ethnic communities, for example adult asylum seekers and migrant workers, to identify needs and promote understanding of how to access health and support services.

## Older people

- 99 Kent is at a very early stage in developing a strategic approach to engaging with and providing for its increasing numbers of healthy, independent people over 50. It has recognised this gap and has appointed an older people's champion recently, but this is not a Cabinet role and routes to influence mainstream policy are not yet established. There are many impressive individual services and projects that promote a healthy and productive lifestyle, some described in sections above and others offered within cultural, arts and education services. But they are not pulled together into a targeted offering for older people.
- 100 Adult social care services are good, judged three-star by the Commission for Social Care Inspection. The Council is now one of few councils that still sets eligibility criteria at moderate, focusing its efforts on maintaining independence. It provides and commissions effective care to help people to return to their homes from hospital, with several impressive new partnership projects. It works effectively in partnership with the Department for Work and Pensions to promote benefit take-up. Its guidelines on working with older people from BME backgrounds have been recognised by the Department of Health (DoH) as a good practice exemplar.
- 101 There are notable developments. The Council is rolling out proposals to allow people over the next ten years to personalise their care through a responsive market place. The proposals are to meet need earlier by giving better information about community-based services; to make access easier by being more local; to extend self assessment so that people with less complex needs have no-fuss access to basic aids; to develop online assessment for more complex needs; and to provide brokering services that will help people procure their own services and develop a market place that makes real choice possible.
- 102 Kent has actively promoted a Whole System Demonstrator scheme to support older people, and is one of three areas in the country to pilot it. The DoH has awarded £5.1 million to make assistive technologies available to 1,000 people in five Kent areas. Electronic health and care monitoring will be a major part of the project, and social and health services will work together closely. If successful, tele-health is expected to be mainstreamed through health and tele-care through social care. Early pilot work suggests these technologies may bring significant help to vulnerable people living at home, reducing home-visits, visits to the doctor, hospital admissions and residential care as well as giving reassurance.
- 103 Until 2006 the Council was lagging in its use of direct payments but has now increased them to expected levels. It has developed the Kent Card, in partnership with a high street bank. Direct payments are credited to the card for recipients to buy their own home care support. This reduces administration, but has had a slow take-up as most providers are not set up for card payments. Nonetheless it has potential, particularly if extended to other types of assistance, to give more choice and control to service users.

## Children and young people

- 104** Outcomes for children and young people in Kent are generally good and there is outstanding potential to improve.
- 105** Children and young people enjoy and achieve in education. Looked after children have closed the gap with their peers at GCSE achievement. Unaccompanied asylum-seeking children receive a particularly good service in identifying their educational needs and then being placed to meet them. Children and young people are safe. They are generally helped well to make a positive contribution. The Youth Service plays a very significant role and many young people make an excellent contribution to civic life and local politics as a result. The Council contributes well to the ability of children and young people to achieve economic well-being.
- 106** Services are changing, to give more priority to prevention. The Kent Children's Trust (County Board) and four local 'pathfinder' trusts have agreed new structures and working practices to deliver better assessments of need and more coordinated services. The *Kent Children and Young People's Plan* identifies clear targets with realistic identification of the resources needed. The ambitions and priorities of the Council are based on extensive research, analysis and consultation. Weaknesses are prioritised and strategies put in place to improve.
- 107** The Council and its partners have successfully focused on under-achieving and vulnerable groups and have narrowed the participation and attainment gaps at ages 16 and 19. Participation in education and training post-16 is now good, having risen every year from 2004 to 2007. The variation between the highest and lowest areas within the county is low, noticeably so given very different levels of deprivation. There have been improvements at both level 2 and 3 as a result of clear strategic objectives, strong local planning structures and good, local and flexible implementation plans as part of the 14-19 strategy.
- 108** The Council and its partners have very good and wide-ranging safeguarding arrangements in place. Preventative work is effective and fewer children are being referred for social care. The large majority of those that are referred receive good services following good, timely assessments. Children on the child protection register are case-managed well, with council services operating very effectively in a planned way with partners. Quality assurance arrangements are strong and ensure that good outcomes are achieved wherever possible.
- 109** Looked after children are a priority for the Council. There has been significant reduction in the need for care services through good preventative interventions, and effective work in placing children who cannot return home with extended family and friends or adoptive families. Excellent foster carers, including specially trained carers, receive good support and offer increasingly stable placements.

- 110 Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are being well safeguarded, benefiting from good quality early years education, day care services, and schooling. Children with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are increasingly involved in planning and reviewing services, and transition planning is good. Children and young people are helped to make the necessary changes at key stages in their lives. However, some parents described difficulties in obtaining information about, and access to, specialist provision.
- 111 The Council works closely with partners to improve health, particularly by promoting healthy lifestyles. Teenage conception is lower than elsewhere in the country but local variation and a modest rate of reduction mean that it needs to stay as a priority. The 2010 target of a 50 per cent reduction against the 1998 figure remains challenging, not helped by insufficient IT capacity to monitor progress. The Council's approach with partners to wider sex and relationship education and sexual health provision shows early evidence of encouraging outcomes. Young people are very positive about what is available to them.
- 112 The capacity to improve is outstanding. The quality of service management and leadership are very strong and partnership working is very effective. There is political support and strong evidence of ability to deliver significant improvements.

## Appendix 1 - Framework for Corporate Assessment

- 1 This corporate assessment was carried out under section 10 of the Local Government Act 1999, under which the Audit Commission has power to inspect local authorities' arrangements for securing continuous improvement. The results of the corporate assessment contribute to the determination of the overall CPA category for an authority, which the Audit Commission is required to assess and report on under section 99 of the Local Government Act 2003.
- 2 The Council's self assessment provided a key resource in focusing the assessment activity which included consideration of:
  - key documentation;
  - updated performance indicators and performance data;
  - a comparative review of the Council's website;
  - a survey of local partner and stakeholder organisations undertaken in November 2007 that received a 55 per cent response rate (78 responses); and
  - interviews and meetings attended.
- 3 The assessment for Kent County Council was undertaken by a team from the Audit Commission and took place over the period from 28 January to 8 February 2008.
- 4 This report has been discussed with the Council, which has been given the opportunity to examine the Audit Commission's assessment. This report will be used as the basis for improvement planning by the Council.

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By: Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager  
To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 10 September 2008  
Subject: **Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme - Update**  
Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To receive an update on the current Topic Review Programme and the resources available to deliver it.

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### **Current Phase of the Work Programme – Autumn 2008 to Spring 2009**

#### *Accessing Democracy*

1. The Select Committee under the Chairmanship of Mrs Angell finished its evidence gathering in June and in August received the first draft of their report. The Select Committee's final report will be submitted to Cabinet on 15 September 2008 and the County Council on 16 October 2008.

#### *Autistic Spectrum Disorder Select Committee*

2. (1) This Committee under the Chairmanship of Mr Simmonds started its work in June 2008 and held its first phase of hearing sessions in July. Further hearing sessions and visits have been programmed for September/early October 2008.

(2) The Select Committee have requested an extension of the timescale to allow them to submit their report to Cabinet in January 2009 rather than December 2008.

#### *Provision of /Positive Activities for Young People – Select Committee*

3. (1) The research for this review was started in July 2008 and the inaugural meeting for this Select Committee took place on 29 August 2008. It is anticipated that the Select Committee will hold their hearings in October/November 2008 and submit their report to Cabinet on 30 March 2009.

(2) Prior to the commencement of the Review the Labour Group indicated that they were unable to find two Members to serve on the Select Committee. However, the Group were happy for the Review to go ahead. Members of my team supporting the Select Committee will keep Mr T J Birkett, Shadow Cabinet Member for Communities fully apprised of the activity of the Select Committee.

#### *Access to Healthcare – Select Committee*

4. I will update the Committee at the meeting on the progress being made to support this Review.

## *CTLR Passenger Services – Select Committee*

5. Members will recall that at the last meeting it was reported that at the request of the Leader of the Council resources would be sought from the Environment and Regeneration Directorate to support this review. I am pleased to report that resources have been made available from within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate. The Review has started and the intention is that the report will be available for reporting to the Cabinet on 1 December 2008.

### **Operational Issues for Managing the Topic Review Programme**

#### *Programming for Topic Reviews*

6. I have already drawn the Committee's attention to the difficulty that the Labour Group had in providing two Members to serve on the Select Committee: Provision of Activities for Young People. However, there is a matter of principle here which the Committee may wish to consider - which is how many Select Committees can be supported at a given time so that the political groups can identify their Members to serve on these committees, accordingly.

#### *Resources to Deliver the Work Programme*

7. (1) I now have two and a half FTE Research Officers supporting the Select Committee Topic Review Programme and I have one research officer whose time is dedicated entirely to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(2) At the May meeting of the Committee, I was asked to bid for a Graduate from the Graduate Development Programme. However, on approaching the Manager of the programme I received a note from the Chief Executive what made it clear that he does not consider that the new Kent Graduate Programme is appropriate to be used in this way. The Chief Executive has, however, suggested that the Talent Management Scheme could be a possible source of additional resource for Select Committee Topic Reviews. This is being explored. I will make an oral report to the Committee of progress made.

(3) In addition to the Research Officer resources to support topic reviews, there are three Democratic Service Officers to support the Policy Overview Committee and Select Committee activities.

#### *Cabinet Scrutiny Committee*

8. I have appointed a Research Officer to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee. Mrs Anna Taylor takes up her appointment on 15 September 2008.

### **Building Capacity for Policy Overview Committees**

9. (1) At the last two meetings of this Committee there have been discussions on the way forward for building capacity for POC's to overcome the increasing challenge for them as they fully exercise their Terms of Reference of trying to carry out their business effectively in 5x1 day meetings per year.

(2) The Children's Families and Education Policy Overview Committee will be asked at their meeting on 19 September 2008 to consider establishing a Sub-Committee to oversee and report back to the POC on the Local Children's Strategic Partnership.

(3) Members will also see from the Minutes of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee IMG held on 25 June 2008 that it is suggested that where POC's find it necessary or would like to, they should set up IMG's to look at the budget for their Committee at key times of the year.

(4) Taking into account the challenges identified by the Labour Group in identifying Members to serve on additional Committees etc Members may wish to consider how it wishes to accommodate them ad-hoc Member Committees if they are not identified as part of the formal work programme.

### **Recommendations**

10. The Committee are requested to note:-

- (a) the progress of the Select Committee Topic Reviews Accessing Democracy, Provision of Activities for Young People be noted ;
- (b) consideration be given to extending the timescale for the Select Committee on Autistic Spectrum Disorder to enable it to present its report to Cabinet in January 2009
- (c) the resources suggested for undertaking the Accessing Health Care Select Committee Topic Review be endorsed
- (d) Members be invited to submit their views on how ad-hoc Member Committees are to be accommodated in the Work Programme.

### Contact details

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Background Documents: None

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By: Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager

To: Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee – 10 September 2008

Subject: Publicising Select Committee Topic Review and Launching Select Committee Topic Review Reports

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Summary: This report sets out the views of an IMG which has considered how the County Council could improve the publishing and launching of Select Committee Topic Review report. It recommends a protocol for incorporating in the County Council Constitution

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## **Introduction**

1. As agreed at the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 23 May 2008, the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee IMG met on 25 July 2008 and considered a report on the above topic. A copy of the Notes of this meeting are included on the Agenda of today's meeting.

### *Publicising of Select Committee Topic Reviews*

2. (1) It has become clear from the views expressed by Members that there is often a difficulty in publicising the work of Select Committees via the local media. Looking at the Centre for Public Scrutiny Website and from contact with colleagues in other local authorities, this is a common challenge for Overview and Scrutiny.

(2) Some of this arises from the local press's lack of understanding of the work of Select Committees as opposed to the much clearer Committee system. There is also the issue of the press being decision-focused and therefore reporting on the work of Cabinet and Planning Application Committees, rather than Overview and Scrutiny Committees.

(3) The POCC IMG acknowledged that this was a challenging area and agreed that the example of the press release from the Greater London Assembly and the Protocol for Public Relations and Scrutiny from Telford and Wrekin Council, along with comments made by Members should form the basis of a draft Protocol to be submitted to this meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee for consideration.

(4) Attached as an Appendix is a draft Protocol that has been prepared on this basis.

### *Launching of Select Committee Topic Reviews*

3. (1) The POCC IMG at its meeting on 25 July 2008 also considered the issue of establishing a process for the launching of Select Committee Topic Review Reports. It was acknowledged that Members of Select Committees put a lot of work into producing their reports and although this was recognised when the report is considered by Cabinet and the County Council, it is also important, especially for those witnesses who had contributed to the report and partners who may have been involved in the review, that

the report is launched as widely as possible so that it has the potential to achieve the maximum impact both internally and externally for the benefit of the residents of Kent.

(2) No examples of a protocol for launching of Select Committee Topic Reviews by other authorities have been found.

(3) Members of the IMG suggested the following way forward for launching of Select Committee Topic Reviews.

(4) The IMG felt that the most effective time to launch a Select Committee report was at a formal meeting of the County Council when the majority of County Councillors would be present. However, the IMG would strongly recommend that the launch of a Select Committee report should be a very early item on the County Council Agenda and suggested this should be after questions and the report by the Leader of the County Council.

(5) The IMG would also recommend that the Select Committee items should be allowed sufficient time to have a constructive debate. This will be dependent on the Topic Review. Members of the IMG anticipated that this would probably be a minimum of two hours - but could be longer.

(6) The IMG also suggested that it would be helpful if the Chairman of the Select Committee and other cross-party Members from the Select Committee had an input into that part of the County Council agenda to determine who should be invited to come along to speak and to agree the length of time this item should take.

(7) The IMG was firmly of the view that the debate on Topic Review items should be led by the Select Committee Chairman and Members of the Select Committee, rather than the Cabinet Members. If this is the view of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee there will need to be a dialogue with the Chairman of the County Council and the Cabinet on this proposal.

(8) Members also stressed the importance of encouraging Kent TV to assist in launching and publishing of Select Committee Topic Reviews.

#### **4. Recommendations that:-**

- (a) that subject to the views of the Committee and other relevant Members, the attached draft Protocol for publicising Select Committee Topic Reviews, be approved; and
- (b) that the suggested process for the launching of Select Committee Topic Reviews via County Council meetings if approved, be discussed with the Chairman of the County Council and the Cabinet prior to consideration by the Selection of Member Services Committee who will need to consider the recommendations and the possible amendments to the Constitution.

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*Background Documents: None*

## Kent County Council

### PROTOCOL FOR PUBLIC RELATIONS AND SELECT COMMITTEE TOPIC REVIEWS

This protocol has been written as a basis for all communications between Select Committee Topic Review Members and the media. It will ensure that the corporate communications team is able to maximise opportunities for scrutiny to publicise its work and promote the transparency of the Council's decision-making process.

- Select Committee Members should not approach the media direct to discuss the topic review. Media activity should be co-ordinated through the corporate communications team who will make arrangements and ensure that the appropriate Member(s) is put forward.
- The Select Committee Chairman should be the official spokesperson for the topic review, unless another more suitable spokesperson has been identified by the Chairman.
- Chairmen of Select Committee's will be expected to attend or have attended media training.
- *There is potential, on rare occasions, for conflict between scrutiny and cabinet on issues. Ensuring a professional reputation of the council in the eyes of the public is paramount and conflicting statements may make the council appear inept or divided. Care should be taken, on all sides, to avoid this situation from arising. But in such circumstances Corporate Communications would present factual information to the media fairly representing both the Scrutiny and Cabinet viewpoints.*
- The corporate communications team should be advised of any media enquiries received by Select Committee Members to offer guidance and help if required and to monitor responses.
- Press releases for Select Committee will be drafted by a member of the corporate communications team, in consultation with the Research Officer for the review and approved by Select Committee Chairman, in consultation with The Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager.
- Press releases will be fair and representative of the views of the Select Committee. On occasions they may include the views expressed in minority reports if those views differ from the main report.
- The media are invited to attend all formal meetings of Select Committee unless matters of an exempt nature are to be discussed.
- When the report of the Select Committee is ready to go into the public domain a member of the corporate communications team, in consultation with the Research Officer to the Select Committee drafts a press release. Where possible the press release should include input from a 3<sup>rd</sup> party who has been involved with the review. The Press release should be approved by the Select Committee Chairman (with the nominated official spokesman, where

appropriate) in consultation with the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager. An embargoed copy of the press release should be sent out with an electronic copy of the report, to the media a day before the public domain with an embargo on it. There may or may not be a press conference but the Chairman, relevant members make sure they are available for interviews.

- *Corporate Communications officers are permitted to refuse to prepare press releases, deal with media enquiries or arrange media interviews in the following cases:*
  - (i) *If the press release or enquiry is political in any way.*
  - (ii) *If the information in the press release is deemed libellous or malicious*
- Corporate Communications officers will not organise interviews between media and individual members of the Select Committee unless there is explicit agreement by the Select Committee Chairman.
- Press releases will not be issued as a matter of course after Select Committee meetings simply to record the proceedings. Post-meeting publicity will, however, be given where there is good reasons for doing so e.g. to promote opportunities for public consultation.