

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY BOARD

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Board held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Wednesday, 13 July 2011.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, Mr C J Capon, Mr N J D Chard, Mr M C Dance, Mr D S Daley (Substitute for Mrs T Dean), Mr D A Hirst, Mr R F Manning, Mr L B Ridings, MBE and Mrs E M Tweed

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A J King, MBE, Mr G Cowan and Mr R J Lees

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr G Brown (Partnership Manager, Kent Forum Team), Mr M Chrysostomou (Media And Operations Manager), Miss J Dixon (Senior Partnership Officer, Kent Forum Team), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview)) and Mr P Sass (Head of Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

61. Minutes - 26 May 2011

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 26 May 2011 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman as a correct record.

62. Vision for Kent 2011-2021 consultation draft

(Item 4)

(1) The Committee received a report on Vision for Kent which was Kent Forum's strategy, developed in partnership between the public, private and voluntary sectors in Kent. A refreshed version of the strategy, Vision for Kent 2011-2021, was currently out for consultation. The Vision for Kent would be submitted to County Council in October 2011 for approval.

(2) Mr King, Mr Brown and Ms Dixon answered questions from Members and noted comments which included the following:-

- Reference was made to the challenge to get partnership working (page 7) there was a need to change the "us and them" mindset".
- Although the document highlighted the major role of the Kent Forum there was only a brief mention in the glossary of what the Kent Forum was, it was suggested that this should be expanded.
- It was important to create in Kent the "willing workforce", which would be an adaptable workforce, to help create wealth and encourage businesses to come to Kent. Mr King acknowledged that having the right workforce available in Kent was crucial for building the economy.
- The Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee (POSC) had expressed concern about the role of Ambition Board compared to Locality Boards, especially as partners in business were not

represented on Ambition Boards. It was explained that Locality Boards were key to delivering the 3 ambitions from Bold Steps for Kent. The role of Ambition Boards was to act as change agents and to disseminate best practise to assist Locality Boards. It was intended that Ambition Boards should have space to think creatively and to challenge.

- It was confirmed that two of the Ambition Boards (Tackling Disadvantage and Citizen in Control) had met, each had a core Membership of 2 County Council Cabinet Members, 4 District Council Leaders. The minutes for the Ambition Boards were on the Kent Forum Website.
- A Member expressed concern that the current number of responses to the consultation was low in proportion to the population of Kent. It was pointed out that the consultation had only started three weeks ago. It was suggested that the opportunity be taken at the County Show to publicise the consultation and to get feedback.
- The importance of Kent making the most of its natural resources and its listed buildings to encourage tourism was emphasised.
- As Dover was the one of the largest ports, it should be a nucleus for related industries such as ship building.
- The duplication of bullet points 3 and 5 on page 25 was noted.
- A Member mentioned the work being done with local academies and schools etc to prove the skills needed for new technology like construction of wind farms.
- A request was made for Members to receive the unedited feedback from the consultation so that they were able to gauge the concerns of the public.
- A Member questioned the feasibility of the laudable aim of increasing the public's involvement in voluntary work within such a short timescale.
- It was mentioned that some Parish Councils wished to take on more responsibility and were prepared to do so whereas others may not want to or may need some initial support to take on an increased role.
- A Member mentioned the success of the Neighbourhood Forum in his area in gaining the views of local people. Although another Member made the point that Neighbourhood Forums success was not universal across Kent. It was confirmed that Neighbourhood Forums and Local Boards were being used as part of the consultation on Vision for Kent.
- It was suggested that there should be an additional bullet point within growing the economy on Highway and Road infrastructure improvement.

(3) It was requested that the annual monitoring of Vision for Kent should be carried out by the Scrutiny Board or POSCs.

(4) RESOLVED that comment on the draft Vision for Kent 2011-2021, the consultation process and next steps noted.

63. Publicity for Overview and Scrutiny

(Item 5)

(1) Mr Chrysostomou presented a report which set out ideas for working more effectively with the press and media in order to engage with the public on overview and scrutiny activities. This was a second paper (the first was delivered to Scrutiny Board on 15 July 2010) and followed on from the discussion item on 27 April 2011.

(2) Members discussed the recommendations set out in the report and made comments which included the following:-

- The Chairman of the Customer and Communities POSC mentioned that a reporter from the Kent and Sussex Courier had attended a meeting of her POSC and the Crime and Disorder Committee on 8 July 2011.
- It was mentioned that as the public were not able to speak at POSC meetings there was little point in holding these meeting outside of County Hall, if this continued to be the case then, as meetings were webcast it would be more efficient to hold these meetings at County Hall. The issue of allowing the public to speak at Overview and Scrutiny meetings was one that needed to be considered and a decision made.
- The importance of the Forward Plan of Key Decisions being used as a tool at agenda setting meetings in order to ensure that POSCs are able to have an input into the development of policy, was emphasised.
- It was pointed out that the Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee was keen on using press releases prior to the meeting to generate public interest.
- Mr Chrysostomou explained that his role was to advise Members on the right and most appropriate means of communicating with the media. He clarified that as part of the re-structuring officers who were involved with communication and engagement had been put into the same work directorate.

(3) RESOLVED that the recommendations set out in this report and the comments made by Members be noted.

64. Rapporteur Scheme: The Four Principles (Item 6)

(1) Mr Sass introduced a paper which set out a suggested process for the operation of a Rapporteurs Scheme for Overview and Scrutiny Members. The guidelines set out the main issues that needed to be considered before approval was given to a proposal to appoint a Rapporteur.

(2) Mr Chard pointed out that there needed to be a note against point (4) (a) to make it clear that Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee (HOSC) was exempt from the requirement to get approval from the appropriate Directorate, as HOSC did not fall within the remit of any Directorate. It was clarified that a "Rapporteur" did not have to be an individual but could also include a small group of Members, which was the route that HOSC preferred. It was emphasised that as HOSC needed to drill down into certain issues, the use of Rapporteurs was a very effective way of working.

(3) The Chairman of the Regeneration and Economic Development POSC referred to a recent meeting where an academic of national standing had been invited along to the meeting to put forward his views as an external Rapporteur giving a different perspective and had promoted and very constructive debate. Details of this debate were mentioned to the Deputy Leader of Ashford Borough Council who had expressed an interest in them.

(4) A Member referred to the work that he had done on behalf of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee in looking in detail at a sensitive issue and reporting back at the public meeting of the Committee. This had been a very effective way of dealing with a sensitive issue.

(5) A Member emphasised although it was helpful for a Rapporteur to have an interest and/ some expertise in the matter under consideration they should also be independent, and be seen to be independent of the matter that they were going to report on.

(5) RESOLVED that the four principles set out in the report be approved (subject to the amendment of (4)(a) regarding HOSC), as the basis for the appointment of Rapporteurs and all requests by Overview and Scrutiny suite Committees to appoint a Rapporteur be submitted to the Scrutiny Board for approval.

65. Select Committee update

(Item 7)

(1) Mr Sass introduced an update on the current Topic Review Programme and the resources available to deliver the programme.

(2) The Chairman of the Crime and Disorder Committee informed the Board that at the meeting of the Committee on 8 July 2011 a suggestion had been put forward for a Select Committee on Domestic Abuse, this suggestion had been supported by Police representatives. An assessment form would be completed and it was intended to submit this to the September meeting for the Scrutiny Board for consideration.

(3) It was noted that there might be a request to a future meeting to consider extending the timescale for the Select Committee on Educational Attainment.

(4) RESOLVED that the progress of the Select Committees on Educational Attainment at Key Stage 2, Dementia and the Student Journey be noted.

66. Sharing of good practise - discussion

(Item 8)

(1) The Chairman of the Corporate POSC stated that when the amount of business for his POSC dictated it would be his intention to start the meeting at 9.30am in order to try to consider the business in one session.

(2) A couple of POSC Chairmen emphasised the importance of POSCs being timetabled so that items from Cabinet could be considered by POSC.

(3) Reference was made to the POSC Informal Member Groups on the Budget, those that had been held to date had been very successful.

(4) RESOLVED that the comments made be noted.