

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 13 January 2011.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mrs T Dean (Vice-Chairman), Mr R W Bayford, Mr D L Brazier, Mr R B Burgess, Mr B R Cope, Mr J A Davies (Substitute for Mr M V Snelling), Mr S Manion, Mr R J Parry, Mr J E Scholes and Mrs J A Rook (Substitute for Mrs J P Law)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A H T Bowles, Miss S J Carey, Mr R W Gough, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr R A Marsh and Mr J D Simmonds

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss J Clarke (Head of Communications), Mr D Cockburn (Executive Director, Strategy, Economic Development & ICT), Mr R Fitzgerald (Performance Manager), Ms T Gailey (Public Health Policy Manager), Mrs S Garton (Head of County Performance and Evaluation Manager), Mrs T Gleeson (Corporate Web Manager), Mrs C Patrick, Ms M Peachey (Kent Director Of Public Health), Mr D Shipton (Finance Strategy Manager), Ms D Smith (Policy Manager), Mr G Wild (Director of Law and Governance), Mr A Wood (Acting Director of Finance) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

92. Minutes - 12 November 2010

(Item A4)

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

93. Update on the NHS White Paper "Equality and excellence: liberating the NHS

(Item)

(1) Miss Gailey informed the Committee that the White Paper had not yet been published. According to the latest information it would be published by the end of January 2011. She stated that before Christmas the legislative framework and the next steps had been published. The Scrutiny element of Health and Wellbeing Boards had been dropped and Scrutiny had been enhanced to include the ability to require Health Service providers who were NHS funded to attend Health Scrutiny Committees.

(2) Regarding GP commissioning, Mr Gough stated that there was rapid movement in some areas and whilst from the County Councils perspective co-terminosity was desirable it was not likely to happen in West Kent. The Dartford, Gravesham and Swanley consortium cut across three local authority boundaries and

had strong links in that area and looked for its acute provision to Darent Valley Hospital.

(3) Mr Gough stated that he was glad that the Government had listened to the County Council and had separated the Health and Wellbeing board from Scrutiny. Also the Health and Wellbeing Boards strategies had a duty to co-operate. Commissioners had to have regard to these strategies which would insure that the commissioning was more joined up. There was an ambiguity as to where Healthwatch would sit, his personal view was that Healthwatch and Scrutiny should work together. He reported on the successful meeting with GP's on 25 November 2010, it had been a good opportunity to hear ideas from GP's. He referred to the Dartford, Swanley and Gravesham GP Consortium which had been named as a pathfinder. He stated that there were some GP's who were enthusiastic about the new proposals but there were also GPs who were very concerned, especially those not involved in practise based commissioning. He referred to the briefing for Members which had been held in early November 2010.

(4) Mr Gough mentioned meetings that he had with East Kent District Council Leaders and the need to keep District Council colleagues informed of progress. The importance of District Council representatives attending meetings of Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee and feeding back to the authorities they represent was mentioned. It was acknowledged that District Councils had strong role in responding to local concerns. The localism agenda should be taken into account as the role of HOSC develops.

(5) RESOLVED that the update be noted and a further update be submitted to the next meeting of the POSC.

94. "Public Health - the emerging picture"

(Item B2)

(1) Ms Peachey introduced a report on the Public Health White Paper – Healthy Lives, Healthy People which had been presented at Corporate Management Team and would be submitted to the next Cabinet Members meeting. The report outlined the major proposals and issues within the White Paper, which was currently out to consultation.

(2) Ms Peachey explained that there were policy officers in every directorate who were gathering views which would inform the response. She was also part of the NHS Public Health team which was also discussing the White Paper.

(3) Members expressed the following views, some of which were responded to by Ms Peachey:-

- The example of the difficulty of establishing cycle paths and to find funding partners was raised. The legislation did not seem to make provision for the funding of facilities.
- There was no one way to encourage people for example to give up smoking, nudging was just one method, peer pressure was also very powerful.
- The importance of avoiding duplication in areas like tobacco control proposals was raised.

- If public health matters were dealt with by lower tier councils there was the possibility of duplication of resources.
- Local flexibility on national vaccination programmes like swine flu vaccination for under 5's might lead to a postcode lottery.
- The establishment of new agencies for high quality intelligence, information and analysis should not lead to the creation of more Quango's.
- It was suggested that this could be considered at HOSC on 4 February 2011 and that other Members could be invited to attend for this item.

(4) Ms Peachey undertook to circulate an aid memoire to POSC Members setting out the generic headings for the response and inviting them to contribute any comments/observations to help inform the consultation response.

(5) RESOLVED that the contents of the report and comments made to inform the consultation response be noted and that that the response be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

95. Update on KCC Health Inequalities Strategy (Item B3)

(1) Ms Smith referred to the KCC Health Inequalities Strategy which had been approved by Cabinet on 13th September 2010, along with a summary of the influential report on Health Inequalities, Fair Society, Healthy Lives'. The Committee report included the summary of the Marmot Review an update on the KCC Health Inequalities Strategy.

(2) Ms Smith explained that work was already being carried out using the strategy document with colleagues in District Councils, Primary Care Trusts and the voluntary and private sector. It was difficult to measure the impact on a short term basis. In relation to the way to measure for health inequalities they were looking to the Kent and Medway Observatory to find the right meaningful measure and were identifying good models of working.

(3) Members made a number of comments which include the following:-

- Members were pleased to see that the strategy was starting from first principles and hoped that success would flow from this.
- The recognition in the Strategy of the need to invest in early years support was welcomed.
- There was a need to have a balance between targeted work, which can be very successful, and avoiding stigma by targeting the community as a whole. Ms Smith explained that one way to address this was to have universal policies to get support from the community and then target those in most need.
- It is interesting to see when this document is considered by Children, Families and Education how the budget lines up to support this.
- The importance of engagement with the community, at an early stage was emphasised.
- The effective preventative work being carried out by the Margate Task Force was highlighted.

- The strategy was very high level, Members were interested in having information on delivery and outcomes.

(4) Mr Simmonds stated that he was aware of the need to look at cuts in the intervention budget and the implications of that, he acknowledged the effectiveness of doing more at an early stage.

(5) RESOLVED that the update and the comments made by Members be noted and that a further update be submitted to a future meeting of the POSC in approximately a years time.

96. Financial Monitoring Report : Corporate Services 2010/11

(Item B4)

(1) Mr Shipton introduced the second quarter's budget monitoring report for 2010/11 as reported to Cabinet on 29th November 2010 and the latest exception report on 10th January 2011.

(2) RESOLVED that the projected outturn for the Chief Executive's Department and Financing Items for 2010/11 based on the second quarter's monitoring report to Cabinet and subsequent exception report be noted.

97. Budget 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/13

(Item B5)

(1) The Committee considered the Chief Executives Departments (CED) Draft Budget proposals set out in the Draft Budget 2011-12 and the Draft Medium Term Financial Plan (MTFP) 2011-2013 and also the report which was circulated specifically relating to the key areas of these documents for this Department.

(2) Mr Wood, Mr Shipton and Mr Simmonds introduced the Draft Budget 2011-12 and the Draft MTFP 2011-2013 for the Chief Executives Department and Financing Items and then answered questions from Members about the following issues:-

(3) Clarification was sought on the "Reduction in Member Allowances & Overheads" of £200,000 (page 99 of the Draft Budget). Mr Simmonds explained that there would be full details by 1 April 2011. This reduction reflected the new Directorate and Cabinet Member responsibilities and would depend on the way that the Cabinet was restructured and the number of Deputy Cabinet Members.

(4) Mr Shipton explained that currently they did not know where the staffing efficiencies would occur, it was expected that that they would be delivered as much as possible through natural turnover and not filling vacancies, which would emerge during the year, but it was inevitable that there would be some redundancies. It was not possible at this stage to say what proportion will be met from natural turnover. Business units had been given a target figure., The top tier re-structuring had already delivered savings and it was expected that further savings would be delivered as this process went through the next tier.

(5) Mr Simmonds explained that £750, 000 had been allocated for savings from the top tier review. He stated that in the Finance Unit it was difficult to say were the

staff saving would come from, as finance staff from the directorates were being re-absorbed into the Finance Unit. Mr Shipton stated that unit staffing figures would be available for the final version of the Budget Book following the County Council agreement of budget (as has been the case in previous years).

(6) In relation to savings from “changes to human resources policies” (page 102 of the Draft Budget), Mr Shipton stated that Ms Beer was working on a proposal and this would be the subject of a consultation.

(7) Mr Shipton confirmed that the largest part of the “other” savings of £1.7million was the reduction in the cost of employer’s pension contributions from 23.1% to 21% which would save a significant amount (£526,000) with little direct impact on staff.

(8) In response to a question on what budget consultation would be carried out following the cessation of consultation work by Ipsos MORI, Mr Shipton explained that although the work of Ipsos MORI had been helpful in obtaining in depth feedback from a small group, he confirmed that they were looking at other ways of achieving this including using on line consultation.

(9) Mr Shipton stated that the un-ring fenced grants for LINKs could now be used to contribute to the funding of Healthwatch.

(10) RESOLVED that the revenue and capital budget proposals included within the Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/13 be noted and the comments made by Members on the revenue and capital budget proposals be fed into the Cabinet Budget meetings and County Council in February.

98. Open Kent

(Item B7)

(1) Mr Gough and Mrs Patrick introduced a report which provided Members with an overview of the Open Kent project and an update on progress.

(2) In response to a question on who would check the information supplied by partners, Mrs Patrick stated that the information used was already available on the partners websites so the onus was on them to ensure that it was current and accurate. She had found that once there was data that people found useful, and the partners could see the benefit of supplying this information they were likely to keep the information up to day and to supply additional information.

(3) Mrs Patrick confirmed that the £31,960 funding for the Open Kent Trial had come from the Kent Connects Partnership. The £31,960 included the cost of IBM licences. In relation to the cost of the system itself Mrs Patrick explained that because it involved accessing existing data a significant amount of the cost would be for future maintenance of the system and ongoing marketing.

(4) Members emphasised the importance of the information supplied being in plain English and the information being able to be easily accessed by people with little knowledge of local government or how it works was emphasised. Mrs Patrick confirmed that use of plain English and access was part of user testing for the system.

(5) Mrs Patrick confirmed that it was anticipated that one of the benefits of allowing people to have direct access to the information that they required would be a reduction in Freedom of Information requests, however this would rely on partner organisations being open with their data.

(6) Mrs Patrick explained that Members would be involved with testing the system via the existing Member Information Group, she issued an open invitation to any Members of the Committee who wished to be involved in testing the system to contact her.

(7) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members be noted.

99. KCC Website Update

(Item B6)

(1) Mr Gough, Mrs Oliver, Mrs Gleeson and Mr Mcghie presented a report which updated Members on progress to date and future plans for the KCC website – www.kent.gov.uk.

(2) Mrs Oliver explained that there would still be an option for the public to pay for services etc with cash or a cheque, and that by introducing more online means of payment they were not closing down other channels of access, there would still be a provision for a face to faced Gateway experience.

(3) In response to a request for information on the officer policy for use of social network sites, Miss Clarke explained that the position that had been taken was that officers in corporate communications had social network access in order to carry out their work, but other officers wishing to use social media had to go on a course and be licensed. She confirmed that the use of social media was not open to all staff. Corporate Communications had been very active in promoting Twitter (there were approximately 2100 KCC twitter followers) and Yammer, KCC internal social networking facility, had 1,730 users.

(4) Mrs Gleeson confirmed that the search facility on Kent.gov was evolving as new pages were added. She stated that the aspiration was that everything that the public had an interest in or needed to contact the County Council for would be available on the website, and that these services could be supported by the Gateway and contact centre.

(5) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members be noted.

100. Proposed Company Structures - Rules Applying to the Provision of Legal Service

(Item B8)

(1) Mr Wild introduced a comprehensive report on the rules applying to the provision of Legal Services.

(2) As this was a complex issue it was proposed that an Informal Members Group be set up to hold a single meeting to consider this report in detail.

(3) RESOLVED that an IMG be established to consider this paper, and that Mr Christie and Mr Lees be invited to attend.

101. Core Monitoring

(Item B9)

(1) Mrs Garton and Mr Fitzgerald presented a report is to inform Members on key areas of performance and activity across the authority, she invited comments from Members on the information provided.

(2) The format of the report was welcomed as being more readable and usable. It was suggested that there should be a larger number of data sets including average figures from the Local Authority family. Mrs Garton pointed out that they were already looking at increasing the amount of comparative data for future periods.

(3) In relation to sickness absence figures, Mr Fitzgerald explained that comparisons made with the private sector were not on a like for like basis, as the organisations who completed returns tended to be smaller companies who had a higher percentage of males and a younger workforce. Mr Gough pointed out the there had been a significant reduction in sickness absence.

(4) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

102. Reducing the National Performance and Inspection Burden and Increasing Sector Self Regulation

(Item B10)

(1) Mr Gough and Mrs Garton introduced a report which set out the main changes to the national performance management and inspection landscape since the Coalition Government came to power.

(2) RESOLVED that the report be noted and that the POSC be kept informed of developments in relation to self regulation.

103. Decentralisation and the Localism Bill

(Item B11)

(1) Mr Bowles presented a report on the Decentralisation and Localism Bill. He referred to the Kent Forum which was looking at proposed pilots for three tier working.

(2) The need to discuss the issue of devolving resources to Parish Councils was mentioned.

(3) RESOLVED that an updated report be considered at the next meeting of the POSC.

104. Select Committees - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report on the current topic review programme and were invited to put forward suggestions for future Select Committee topic reviews.

(2) RESOLVED that the update be noted and the Democratic Services officer be advised of any potential items for Select Committee topic reviews.