

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### CORPORATE POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of A meeting of the Corporate Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 26 September 2008.

PRESENT: Ms A Harrison (Vice-Chairman), Mr R B Burgess, Mr B R Cope, Mr J A Davies, Mr C G Findlay, Mr R W Gough, Mr C Hart, Mr J E Scholes, Mr J D Simmonds and Mr D Smyth

ALSO PRESENT: Mr A H T Bowles and Mr R A Marsh

IN ATTENDANCE: Miss A Cambray (Climate Change Project Manager), Mr D Cockburn (Director Of Business Solutions & Policy), Mrs S Garton (Head of County Performance and Evaluation Manager), Mr R Hardy (Head of Improvement And Engagement), Ms J Hill (Performance Manager), Ms L McMullan (Director of Finance), Ms T Oliver (Director Of Strategic Development And Public Access), Mr D Oxlade (Head Of Policy), Ms D Smith (Policy Manager), Ms P Smith (County Manager - Supporting Independence Programme), Mr A Wood (Head of Financial Management) and Ms C McKenzie (Greener Kent Manager)

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **99. Membership**

*(Item A2)*

RESOLVED that it be noted that Mr R W Gough has replaced Mr L B Ridings as a Member of this Committee.

#### **100. Minutes - 28 May 2008**

*(Item A4)*

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Meeting held on 28 May 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman, subject to it being recorded that Mr Hibberd was a substitute for Mr Burgess,

#### **101. Dates of meetings in 2009**

*(Item A5)*

RESOLVED that the following dates for meetings in 2009 be noted:-

14 January  
26 March  
8 July  
25 September  
13 November

All meetings will commence at 10.00 am

## 102. Draft Towards 2010 Annual Report

(Item B1)

*(Mrs S Garton, County Performance and Evaluation Manager, Mr R Hardy, Head of Improvement and Engagement, Ms Carolyn McKenzie, Greener Kent Manager, Ms L McMullan, Director of Finance, Ms T Oliver, Director of Strategic Development and Public Access, Mrs Debbie Smith - Policy Officer (Public Health) and Miss Pauline Smith - County Manager - Supporting Independence Programme were present for this item.)*

(1) Mrs Garton presented the report which set out the process for finalising the second Towards 2010 Annual Report prior to approval by County Council on 16 October 2008 and a draft of the report on progress on the 13 targets which came within the remit of this Committee. Each of the officers responsible for these targets gave a brief overview and invited comments from Members.

(2) Members questions and comments included the following:-

- In response to a question Ms McMullan stated that there was not a hard government target for KCC spend with Kent Based Small Medium Sized Enterprises (SME's), however the current figure for KCC was 65% of total expenditure. The Government has quoted a figure of 35% which KCC were exceeding.
- Ms McMullan gave Members some feedback from the meeting that Mr Chard and Mr A King had had with representatives of the Federation of Small Business and undertook to supply a resume of this meeting to Members.
- Page 17 – 2<sup>nd</sup> bullet point – 20% of Highways contracts outside of the Alliance contracts, in response to a question on whether this was related to the percentage of work for SME's, Ms McMullan stated that the intention was that this work should not simply be provided by one supplier and that there was an opportunity for work to go to smaller Kent based contractors.
- The Chairman of the Governance and Audit Committee informed Members that a Trading Activities Sub-Group had been established to ensure that KCC contracts were transparent and that there was greater communication with the private sector.
- In response to a question on funding for film, Ms Oliver stated that SEEDA and the SWEDA were the only development agencies which did not invest in film. This put Kent at a disadvantage when competing against other areas of the UK to attract film companies to use Kent as a location. Ms Oliver stated that attracting of EU money usually required a project bid which was not necessary appropriate for attracting film production companies. She was however submitting an Interreg bid.
- Target 9 -a Member stated that it was important to have an indication of an actual target rather than just to "reduce".
- In response to a question on whether her team were working with Borough/District Councils and other local agencies that do good work on the ground to make sure that KCC adds value, Ms P Smith explained that part of her role with the Supporting Independence programme was to facilitate conversations at a local level, it was essential that issues were owned locally, and she was also able to take an independent Kent wider view and see how this linked in at the local level.

- Target 18 – 1,000 apprenticeships offered by a Kent Apprenticeship scheme – clarification was sought of whether these were in addition to the apprenticeships already being offered by Kent Companies. Ms P Smith confirmed that the 1,000 were facilitated by the Kent Apprenticeship scheme and were in addition to those already being offered by other organisations.
- In response to a question Ms P Smith confirmed that apprentices received a minimum of £80 a week, and not the minimum wage. A large number of apprentices on the Kent Apprentice Scheme achieved full employment with 3 – 6 months.
- Ms P Smith confirmed the impact of the economic climate on the Apprenticeship scheme was monitored.
- In response to a question on how to ensure that working neighbourhood funding was paid to the relevant District Council to use in their area rather than being used to support current KCC services, Ms P Smith confirmed she would wish to ensure that this money was used to make real sustainable change in the area and would be working with employers on this.
- Target 19 – in response to a question on whether the 78% of young people with the Kent Community Project teams who had been supported into further education came from across Kent, Ms P Smith confirmed that this was the case.
- Target 24 – Kent TV – In response to a question on funding, Ms Oliver confirmed it would be a Member decision on the ongoing funding for Kent TV and highlighted the savings made through publications as a result of Kent TV existing. The current financial year has a target of £200k saving and this was on course to be met. Income generation was proving more difficult in the current financial climate but efforts were being focused on larger corporate sponsors. The Kent TV Board of Governors decided not to focus on smaller-scale advertising as local media companies were concerned about the impact on their revenue generation.
- Ms Oliver clarified that the reference to “customer profiling” on page 34 referred to the means by which we were working with partners to try to understand more about the customers who were using the Gateways in order to provide the most effective services.
- Members requested the Webcast viewing figures for each Committee.
- Target 41 – In response to a request for examples of new builds, Ms McKenzie referred to Turner Contemporary and the Kent Highways Depot.
- Ms McKenzie clarified that “very good” in relation to BREEAM standards was not the highest standard as there was also excellent and exceptional.
- Target 48 – In response to a question from a Member, Mrs Garton explained that “Healthy Eating” came under Target 51 which was within Children, Families and Education Policy Overview Committee’s remit.
- The issue of retailer re-sizing children’s clothes (i.e. making them larger within the same age range), which re-enforced the trend towards childhood obesity was mentioned.
- Target 48 – the importance of ensuring that any funding for physical exercise initiatives focused on sustainability and that it supported activities that people wanted to undertake was emphasised.

(3) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members on the targets be noted.

### **103. Corporate Services Budget Monitoring 2008/09**

*(Item B2)*

(1) Ms McMullan presented a report which set out the forecast outturn against budget for the Chief Executives Department and the Financing Items Budget for the year 2008/09. Ms McMullan highlighted the forecast variance and the end of year underspend. The report set out the main reasons for the forecast underspend.

(2) There was discussion around the challenges of LABGI Scheme (Local Authority Business Growth Incentives Scheme). Ms McMullan informed Members that this was being reviewed and that she and Mr Chard had given evidence to a government Select Committee in relation to this.

(3) Regarding the Kent Enterprise fund, Ms McMullan explained that the contribution from this to the revenue fund was a one off amount spread over two years.

(4) RESOLVED that the projected outturn figures for the directorate as at the first quarter be noted.

### **104. CPA Corporate Assessment response and draft performance improvement plan**

*(Item B3)*

(1) Mr Hardy presented the draft Performance Improvement Plan relating to the comments and conclusions of the Corporate Assessment report which was attached as Appendix 1 to the report. He reminded Members that the assessment had been extremely positive and the PIP should be considered in this context.

(2) Comments from Members were invited and included the following:-

- Mention was made of the comment relating to Kent's Strong Brand and self promotion and the impression that this can give partners.
- The issue of a Members right to information and the time that it sometimes takes for a request to be acknowledged and the information received was raised.
- Although it was acknowledged that a lot of good work was being carried out through overview and scrutiny, it was recognised that there was still a lot that could be done across the piece to improve.
- It would be helpful to Members who served on both District/Borough Councils and the County Council if there could be as much consistency as possible between the two in relation to issues that affected both authorities.
- Pages 58/59 – Overview and Scrutiny – a key challenge referred to was backbenchers and opposition Members having access to papers ahead of a decision being made, in order to understand the options that had been considered and rejected.
- In relation to the County Councils relationship with Borough/District Councils it would appear that the CPA inspectors were saying that KCC was making progress, but it still had a long way if measured against its aspirations.
- Page 66 – in relation to KCC being seen to be over keen to claim credit, it was suggested that this perception could come from some press releases which tended not to acknowledge funding received from central government.

- Page 73 – the importance of all plans containing SMART targets with measurable outcomes was emphasised, although it was accepted that not all National Indicators contained SMART targets.

(3) RESOLVED That the comments made by Members be noted and the draft Performance Improvement Plan attached as Appendix 1 to the report be agreed.

### **105. Comprehensive Area Assessment: Joint Inspectorate Consultation** (Item B4)

(1) The Committee received a report presented by Mr Hardy which outlined the proposals contained in the joint consultation paper on the new assessment framework for the Comprehensive Area Assessment (CAA) which was published on 29 July 2008 by the Audit Commission, the Commission for Social Care Inspection, the Healthcare Commission, HM Inspectorate of Constabulary, HM Inspectorate of Prisons, HM Inspectorate of Probation and Ofsted. The consultation period was due to close on 20 October 2008. The report highlighted four issues that could form the basis of KCC's response to the document.

(2) Mr Hardy emphasised the importance of the new assessment clearly identifying the responsible organisation so that the County Council was not held to account for outcomes that were not within its control.

(3) Members comments and suggestions were invited to assist with formulating the response. The following comments and suggestions were made by Members:-

- The proposal to shift the burden from service-based assessment to a corporate focus should be welcomed.
- There in no indication of a change in timescale or a light touch approach to demonstrate that it is different from the Comprehensive Performance Assessment.
- In order for the CAA to work there have to be true partnership arrangements.

(4) RESOLVED that:- (a) the comments on the proposals and contributions to the response be noted.

(b) That the Chairman and Spokesmen for this Committee be authorised to sign off the final response on behalf of the Committee alongside the responsible Cabinet Member.

(c) That the Audit Commission be invited to brief elected Members on how the CAA process is expected to work.

### **106. Chief Executives Department Annual Complaints Complaints, Complements and Enquires Report** (Item B5)

(1) Mr Hardy introduced a report which provided Members with information about the operation of the Chief Executives Department complaints and representations procedure between 1 April 2007 and 31 March 2008. Every Policy Overview

Committee would be receiving a similar report relating to their Directorate. It was intended to submit a report to the next meeting of this Policy Overview Committee on the complaints process across the authority. Mr Hardy informed the Committee that he chaired an internal review group which was drafting a protocol which would set out the way in which complaints were to be dealt with across the authority. This document would be submitted to this Committee.

(2) Members made a number of comments on the report which included emphasising the importance of standardising response times across Directorates and definition of what constituted a complaint so that the Council had a consistent approach. Also it was requested that in future this information should be broken down to business unit level.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **107. Localism: A Strategy for Success** *(Item B6)*

(1) Mr Bowles introduced the report on behalf of the Leader of the Council which set out details of the ongoing discussions with Councils in Kent on the preferred models of engagement with the Local Community. He explained that there had been further meetings since the report had been published, between County Council and District Council colleagues. It was anticipated that 3 or 4 pilots would be rolled out early next year.

(2) The importance of having regular feedback to Members on this and progress with the recommendations of the IMG on Going Local was emphasised. Also raised was the issue of devolving Health Scrutiny powers to District Councils. Mr Bowles undertook to ensure that there was regular feedback to Members on Localism issues.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

### **108. KCC International Activities Annual Report 2007/08** *(Item B7)*

(1) Mr Oxlade presented the third International Activities Report which covered the diverse range of international work in which the County Council was involved. It was intended to formally publish the report following, incorporating the views of Members and other comments and observations.

(2) A Member requested that in future information on the programme, objectives and feedback of visits made by officers to other countries be made available to Members, and a process should be put in place to make Members aware of these visits so that they can seek further information if they wish. Mr Oxlade assured Members that there was a robust monitoring process in place for foreign visits.

(3) The International Affairs Group was congratulated on their efforts with Ashford Eurostar Campaign.

(4) A Member noted that the keynote speaker at the European Business Network had been a shadow minister and mentioned that shadow speakers had been the keynote speaker at all three events mentioned in the report. Mr Marsh stated that

event organisers attempted to get the best available speaker from Central Government but on occasions there was no one available and a shadow Minister was invited.

(5) The issue of KCC seeking permanent representation on Interreg Committees was discussed by Members

(6) RESOLVED that the 2007-8 Annual Report, the comments made by Members and the future challenges it has identified be noted.

**109. A summary of progress towards delivering Kent County Council's Climate Change Action Plan (which implements Select Committee on Climate Change recommendations as adopted by Council in January 2007). An overview of the next phase of opportunities for Chief Executive's Department (CED).**

*(Item B8)*

(1) Miss Cambray reminded Members that the Select Committee on Climate Change had published its recommendations in October 2006. Kent County Council produced its first response in January 2007 and committed to a series of actions since drawn together in a Climate Change Action Plan, overseen by the Cabinet Working Group on Climate Change. She presented a report which summarises progress and outlined further opportunities for CED to contribute to the next phase of the programme.

(2) Members referred to the Group Source Heat Pump's being used at a new Village Hall. Also mentioned was ICT and reducing KCC's carbon footprint.

(3) RESOLVED that:- (a) progress made to date be noted,  
(b) the proposed next steps for CED be endorsed;  
(c) officers from the CED report back on progress to the POC at six-monthly intervals.

(d) an item be placed early on the agenda for the next meeting to enable Members to discuss the issues further.

**110. Select Committees - update**

*(Item C1)*

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the Select Committee Topic Review programme which included the Select Committee on Accessing Democracy and outcomes from the meeting of the POCC on 10 September 2008.

(2) The Chairman reminded Members that in accordance with the Constitution meetings of the Policy Overview Committee could last up to 4.00pm and therefore they should book the whole day in their diary for these meetings

(3) RESOLVED that the updated be noted.