

ENVIRONMENT AND REGENERATION POLICY OVERVIEW COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment and Regeneration Policy Overview Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 25 September 2008.

PRESENT: Mr R A Pascoe (Chairman), Ms S J Carey, Mr D S Daley, Mr C Hibberd, Mr R E King, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr R F Manning, Mr J I Muckle, Mr A R Poole, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mrs M Newell (Substitute for Mr R J E Parker), Mrs E D Rowbotham (Substitute for Mr R Truelove) and Mrs E M Tweed (Substitute for Mr M J Angell)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr K A Ferrin, MBE, Mr K G Lynes and Dr M R Eddy

IN ATTENDANCE: Dr L Davies (Director, Environment & Waste), Mr A Loft (Director Of Resources), Mr R Hallett (Directorate Finance Manager), Mr D Hall (Head of Transport & Development), Mr R Feasey (Development Planning Manager) and Mrs C Singh (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

85. Membership

(Item A1)

RESOLVED that Mr A R Marsh had been replaced by Mr R S Manning be noted.

86. Minutes of a meeting held on 29 May 2008

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 29 May 2008 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

87. Dates of Future meetings 2009

(Item A5)

RESOLVED that the meeting dates reserved for 2009 for this Committee as detailed below, be noted.

Tuesday, 20 January
Tuesday, 31 March
Thursday, 9 July
Thursday, 24 September
Thursday, 5 November

(all meetings will commence at 10.00 am)

88. Portfolio Holders' Update

(Item B1)

(Verbal report by Mr K Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste and Mr K Lynes, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services.)

Portfolio Holder for Waste, Highways, Local Transport Plan and Environment

(1) Mr Ferrin gave an update on the emergency measures undertaken during the breaking news of the fire in the Eurotunnel. He advised that the immediate concern was to prevent the possible gridlock of East Kent after Operation Stack was invoked. He also expressed his personal views on the safety of Eurotunnel since the first fire in 1996.

Highways Budget

(2) Mr Ferrin advised that a draft Highways Budget had been produced which was prioritised and within the cash limits that met the revenue needs but not the capital needs. He invited a small group of Members from the Committee to meet with him to discuss and challenge the draft Budget. Mrs Stockell and Mr Muckle indicated their interest in being part of the group.

(3) Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:-

- Members felt that if there were safety issues with design faults in the Eurotunnel, Kent County Council should lead in lobbying government and raise these issues nationally.
- In response to a question regarding the popularity of the Freedom Pass causing overcrowded buses, Mr Hall agreed to check whether there had been any complaints.
- In response to a question, Mr Ferrin confirmed that the Freedom Pass would be rolled out to care leavers in Kent up to the age of 21 years but would not be available to those care leavers placed by other authorities in Kent.
- Mr Hall, in response to a question, gave his assurance that he personally would look into a case of a gentleman awaiting a drop kerb in Ashford and would speak to Mrs Tweed outside the meeting.
- In response to a question regarding communication problems between the Parish Council and the Kent Highway Services, Mr Ferrin advised that this was a major concern and measures would be taken to deal with this.
- In response to Members' concerns regarding the vacant Managing Director's and Directors post within Environment and Regeneration Directorate, Mr Ferrin and Mr Lynes assured Members that urgent action was being taken to resolve the situation and the interim posts were being advertised.

Regeneration, Planning Strategy and Supporting Independence

(4) Mr Lynes highlighted some of the work he had undertaken in the first four weeks of his new portfolio.

(5) Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:-

- In response to a concern regarding proposals to build on the Business Park in Thanet, Mr Lynes agreed to communicate the plans as and when they happened.
- In response to concerns from a member regarding whether the global financial crisis would impact on the cost of the building of the Turner Contemporary Art Gallery, Mr Lynes assured that the build was slightly below budget. Mrs Tweed, Lead Member for Community Services, concurred.
- Mr Lynes accepted invitations to discuss the Community Projects in Dover from the Local Member and an invitation to attend the briefings on Kent Thameside and following a request agreed to submit a report on the sub national review to a future meeting.

(6) RESOLVED that the responses to Members' questions and reports be noted.

89. Towards 2010

(Item B2)

(Report by Mr K Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Waste, Highways, Local Transport Plan and Environment, and Mr Kevin Lynes, Cabinet Member for Regeneration, Planning Strategy and Supporting Independence)

(Mr A Loft, Director of Resources and Mr R Hallett Directorate Manager were also present for this Item)

(1) Mr Loft 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 with the 26 targets, which came within the remit of this Committee.

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

- In response to a question Mr Ferrin advised that he had requested a report on the resurfacing of the pavements in the conservation area in Deal and would report back.
- Mr Ferrin noted the suggestion that additional information was needed on page 43 on way yellow lines were measured.
- Mr Ferrin noted the suggestion that the target on the "length of yellow lines removed" should be deleted.
- Mr Lynes noted the suggestion that KCC should be represented at the meetings of the National Alliance, made up of local authorities.

- In response to a request that referred to page 38 Target 9 Mr Lynes agreed to provide a breakdown of figures for those on; incapacity benefit, unemployment and lone parents.
- In response to a question Mr Lynes advised that the “Green Standard” was not obsolete but had been changed.
- Target 20 – A Member suggested that the right infrastructure needed to be in place before proceeding.
- Target 32- A Member requested that the Parking Manager looked at the parking issues on the Tonbridge Road in Maidstone.
- Referring to page 49 Target 35 paragraph 5, Mr Ferrin agreed to check whether the date, “December 2009” was correct or not and report back.
- In response to a comment that the response time on concerns raised by the Parish Councils to the Kent Highways Service was too long and that the relationship with the Parish Councils needed to be improve, Mr Ferrin advised that work was being undertaken to rectify this.

90. Budget Outturn and Outturn Business Plans 2007/08

(Item B3)

(Report by Mr K Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Regeneration and Waste and Mr K Lynes, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Services.)

(1) The Committee considered a report of the four year outturn for 2007/08 by division within the Environment and Regeneration Directorate.

(2) Following a brief introduction by Mr Hallett, Members were given the opportunity to ask questions and make comments which included the following:-

- Mr Ferrin noted a request that referred to page 85 of the report for the length of the road resurfaced to be measured against the total.

(3) In response to a question on the table on page 83 and what it meant, Mr Ferrin explained that the conditions of roads were national indicators. The ABC roads were assessed electronically. A detailed report was produced for each ten metre section of road. Mr Ferrin concluded that in general the picture showed that the conditions of the roads were below average.

(4) In response to a question, Mr Ferrin advised that results on page 84/85 were from the Call Centre. Members noted that complainants were called back to check whether they were satisfied with the outcome of their complaint and this was monitored monthly.

(5) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the outturn figures for the Environment and Regeneration Directorate be noted;
- (b) the actual performance against targets and performance indicators be noted; and
- (c) the comments made by Members detailed above and the reports be noted.

91. Financial Monitoring Report : Environment and Regeneration 2008/09

(Item B4)

(Report by Mr R Hallett, Director, Finance Manager)

(Dr L Davies, Director, Environment and Waste was present for this item)

(1) The Committee considered the financial position of the current year which included the first quarter financial monitoring as reported to the Cabinet and the significant variations since the Cabinet meeting.

(2) Mr Hallett introduced the report explaining that the overall forecast remained at break-even although there had been a further significant underspend of £0.9m predicted on waste. This had been partly due to increased income from recycled materials and partly due to Allington waste to energy plant being offline for some of July and August 2008. The underspend would be offset by an intention to increase the invest-to-save proposals by £0.9m to produce savings and efficiency to help with next year's inflation pressures.

(3) Members of the Committee were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions which included the following:-

- In response to a question, Mr Ferrin advised that the Winter Reserve was going to be renamed as there had been a reduction in the salt runs in previous years.

(4) In response to a question on the Allington Incinerator, Dr Davies advised that she had received daily updates and that the fire damage to the turbine had been repaired as well as the material/dry sorting facility, both were up and running.

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

92. High Weald and Kent Downs Area of Outstanding Natural Beauty Management Plans - response to consultation

(Item B5)

(Report by Mr K Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Regeneration and Waste.)

(Dr L Davies, Director, Environment and Waste was present for this item)

(1) The Committee received a report that provided a brief on the draft Management Plans and KCC's response to the consultation in advance of adoption of the plans in Autumn/Winter 2008. Following a brief introduction by Dr Davies, Members were given the opportunity to make comments and ask questions.

(2) In response to a question on whether this relied on the Kent Biodiversity Study and how much strength they would have with the South East Plan, Dr Davies advised that these were strategic plans. Policies needed to be embedded down into Local Development Framework.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the Members' comments be noted;

- (b) a further report be submitted to the POC in November providing an overview of the finalised plan.

93. E& R Annual Complaints 2008

(Item B6)

(Report by Mr K Ferrin, Cabinet Member for Environment, Regeneration and Waste and Mr K Lynes, Cabinet for Adult Social Services.)

(Mr A Loft was also present for this item)

- (1) Members considered a report on the user feedback received by the Environment and Regeneration Directorate 2006/07 and 2007/08.
- (2) Members were pleased to see compliments and also be included as part of the complaints report and hope the complaints would aid improving the quality of service and reduce complaints.
- (3) Members of the Committee felt that the tracking of complaints and the communication to the complainer needed to be improved. Mr Loft advised that work was being carried out to improve the reporting process.
- (4) RESOLVED that the figures for the Directorate for 2006/07 and 2007/08 and the comments made by Members be noted.

94. Climate Change

(Item B7)

(Report by Cabinet Working Group on Climate Change and Managing Director for Environment and Regeneration)

(Ms A Cambray, Climate Change Project Manager, was present for this item)

- (1) The Committee received a detailed report that summarised the progress towards delivering KCC's Climate Change Action Plan and other environmental performance objectives, including an overview for the next steps for Environment and Regeneration Directorate.
- (2) Members of the Committee suggested that KCC should lead by example on energy efficiency.
- (3) RESOLVED that:-
 - (a) the progress to date and the general shape of the Climate Change Action Plan going forward be noted;
 - (b) agreement to be given to the proposed next step for Environment and Regeneration in particular as outlined in paragraphs 3.3, 4.3, 5.6 and 6.2 within the report; and
 - (c) the Environment and Regeneration officers report back progress to the POC in six monthly intervals, starting from March 2009.

95. Select Committee - update

(Item C1)

(Report by Mr P Wickenden, Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

(1) Members considered a report on the Select Committee for Accessing Democracy, Passenger Rail Services in Kent and the outcomes from the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 10 September 2008.

(2) In response to a question, Members were advised that the issue of a sub-group for flooding had been raised with the Leader. Efforts would be made to establish this group up.

(3) RESOLVED that the Members' comments and the report be noted.

96. URGENT ITEM - South East Plan: Consultation on Secretary of State's Proposed Changes

(Item C2)

RESOLVED that due to the length of the report the Committee agreed to pass their comments on individually outside the meeting.