

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

EAST KENT (JOINT SCRUTINY) COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the East Kent (Joint Scrutiny) Committee held in the WHITE CLIFFS BUSINESS PARK, DOVER, KENT CT16 3PJ on Wednesday, 25 January 2012.

PRESENT: Cllr I Linfield (Chairman), Cllr D Green (Vice-Chairman), Cllr B Copping, Councillor H Cragg, Mr M C Dance, Cllr I Gregory, Cllr D Hannent, Councillor J Holben, Cllr G Lymer, Cllr K Mills, Mr M J Vye and Cllr Mrs Z Wiltshire

IN ATTENDANCE: Director of Shared Services (EK Services)
Solicitor to the Council (Dover District Council)
Democratic Support Officer (Dover District Council)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

8. DECLARATIONS OF INTEREST

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest made by Members.

9. MINUTES

(Item 4)

The Minutes of the meetings of the Committee held on 12 October 2011 were approved as a correct record and signed by the Chairman.

10. OPERATING ARRANGEMENTS

(Item 5)

The Committee considered the operating arrangements.

RESOLVED: That the operating arrangements be noted.

11. ISSUES REFERRED TO THE COMMITTEE BY THE EAST KENT (JOINT ARRANGEMENTS) COMMITTEE OR BY A DISTRICT COUNCIL SCRUTINY MEMBER

(Item 6)

There were no items for consideration.

12. ITEMS PLACED ON THE AGENDA BY A MEMBER OF THE COMMITTEE

(Item 7)

Members' ICT Support

Councillor D Hannent advised that he had asked for this item to be added to the agenda due to concerns he had over the service being provided to Members at Dover District Council. As part of the work being undertaken by the Scrutiny (Policy and Performance) Committee at Dover District Council he wanted to investigate if Members at other East Kent authorities were experiencing similar issues.

Members discussed the different arrangements for IT provision at the five authorities present and the merits of different hardware.

The Director of Shared Services advised that she could only speak for the three authorities participating in the shared IT service and confirmed that all three authorities were Code of Connection compliant. EK Services had inherited different hardware and software systems (a total of 140 different systems) from each authority and while attempts were being made to streamline and standardise provision where possible, EK Services had to work within different budgets from each authority. An important step in the standardisation process would be the proposed transfer of Thanet District Council from Novell GroupWise to Microsoft Outlook for email provision.

- RESOLVED: (a) That the Director of Shared Services be requested to give a presentation on shared IT with a focus on Members' IT at the next meeting
- (b) That Councillor D Hannent's offer to provide an update to the next meeting on the progress of his work in respect of Members' IT be accepted.

13. UPDATE ON EK SERVICES

(Item 8)

The Director of Shared Services gave a presentation to the Committee on the performance of EK Services.

The Committee was advised that staff from Canterbury City Council and Dover District Council had moved via TUPE on 1 February 2011 to EK Services, which was hosted by Thanet District Council. A total of 331 members of staff worked for EK Services following the TUPE providing services for ICT, Customer Services and Revenue and Benefits for the three authorities.

It was stated EK Services was on course to achieve the 10% budget saving, representing £1.2 million, required by the three partner authorities in its first year. This target would increase to 25% by the fourth year of EK Service's operation. The target would be achieved through continuous improvement and transformation work and exploring opportunities for income generation through marketing services to other authorities.

In respect of performance, EK Services had been required to restructure and introduce new ways of working in order to achieve the 10% budget saving target. The most successful of the shared services had been Revenue and Benefits which had experienced the least disruption and was on target or performing above target in key areas.

The performance of the shared ICT service had been disrupted by the restructuring and the variety of systems in use at the three authorities. However, it was performing above target in respect of infrastructure and the centralisation of the helpdesk had now been completed.

The last service to restructure had been Customer Services and this had experienced performance issues due to vacancies and sickness. These issues had been tackled through recruitment of both permanent and temporary staff and the introduction of more flexible resourcing in conjunction with Revenue and Benefits.

The Director of Shared Services had been working with the partner authorities through client group meetings and attending meetings of individual Corporate Management Teams and committee meetings.

The issue of how authorities not participating in a particular shared service should take part in the discussion and voting was raised and the Solicitor to the Council was asked to seek clarification.

RESOLVED: That the Director of Shared Services be thanked for her attendance and presentation on EK Services.

The meeting ended at 11.20 am.