

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### SELECT COMMITTEE - APPRENTICESHIPS

MINUTES of a meeting of the Select Committee - Apprenticeships held in the Cabinet Room, Sessions House on Tuesday, 18 December 2012.

PRESENT: Mr R H Bird, Mr A R Chell, Mr L Christie, Mr D A Hirst, Mr R J Lees, Mr S C Manion, Mr M J Northey and Mr K Smith

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P D Wickenden (Democratic Services Transition Manager), Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer), Mr G Romagnuolo (Policy Overview Research Officer) and Mr S Shrimpton (Research Analyst)

#### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **1. Membership - to agree that Mr L Christie be allocated one seat on the Committee for the Labour Group, and that Mr R J Lees be co-opted on to the Committee**

*(Item 1)*

1. RESOLVED that:-

- a) Mr L Christie be allocated a seat on the Select Committee to represent the Labour Group; and
- b) Mr R J Lees be co-opted as a Member of the Select Committee.

2. Mr Christie and Mr Lees were warmly welcomed.

#### **2. Election of Chairman**

*(Item 2)*

Mr S C Manion proposed and Mr A R Chell seconded that Mr K Smith be elected Chairman of the Select Committee. There were no other nominations.

*Agreed without a vote*

Mr Smith was duly elected and took the Chair

#### **3. Election of Vice-Chairman**

Mr M J Northey proposed and Mr S C Manion seconded that Mrs C J Waters be elected Vice-Chairman of the Select Committee. There were no other nominations.

*Agreed without a vote*

Mrs Waters was duly elected.

#### **4. Terms of Reference and Scope**

*(Item 3)*

1. The Chairman advised Members that, during the development of the Terms of Reference, he had shared the draft with all Party Groups and had sought comment from senior officers, to ensure that all could support and commit to their content.

2. Members discussed the draft Terms of Reference and Scope and made the following comments:-

- a) apprenticeships can be for people of any age, not just for young people leaving school, although the latter is by far the larger group;
- b) the Terms of Reference are good and have the support of the Committee, but Members requested that a one-paragraph summary of them be prepared. This will help Members to relate the aim of the Select Committee more easily and quickly to potential participants during rapporteur visits;
- c) as well as speaking to those with experience of apprenticeships, the Select Committee will also need to speak to some who are unable to access apprenticeships, and consider in its findings what can be done to help these people;
- d) some employers are happy to support and offer apprenticeships to help young people gain valuable experience and work skills, but are then unable, or unlikely to be able, to offer a job at the end as they are not in a position to recruit at that time. It will be difficult to measure the outcomes from TOR 3, – ‘...the extent to which successful completion of apprenticeships leads to sustainable employment’;
- e) due to the extreme and rapid change in the economic climate, many employers are not in a position to ultimately offer jobs, but an apprenticeship can still be a very valuable addition to a young person’s CV;
- f) the report of the recent review undertaken by Doug Richards states that the Government’s role is to create a pool of work-ready people who hold key qualifications. Members were each given a copy of the executive summary of the Richards report;
- g) it is important always to look ahead and train young people in the skills they will need for the future. Good literacy and numeracy will always be needed. Previously, some educators believed that the need for computer skills would overshadow the need for good basic literacy and numeracy, but this has not proved to be the case. It is important to get the basics right first; specialisations can be explored later; and
- h) although the future is unpredictable in many ways, the Select Committee will need to be prepared to say how it thinks the next five years might look, in terms of apprenticeships.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the Terms of Reference and Scope be agreed and adopted; and

- b) a one-paragraph summary of them be prepared to help Members to relate the aim of the Select Committee easily and quickly to potential participants.

## **5. Revised Timetable**

1. The Chairman reported that an extension to the timetable had been negotiated with the Leader. This relaxed the need to report formally to the Corporate Board and Cabinet and allowed scope for more informal sharing of issues with Cabinet Members and officers. Not having to adhere to the formal meeting deadlines for these groups would allow the Select Committee to take more time for evidence gathering, in the form of additional hearings and rapporteur visits.

2. Mr Wickenden added that this extension had been sought in response to Members' expressed concerns about the lack of time available to cover the subject adequately and produce fully-considered findings.

3. RESOLVED that the extended timetable be welcomed and agreed.

## **6. The Rapporteur Scheme**

1. Members discussed briefly the rapporteur method of evidence-gathering. All had been sent a copy of the KCC's Rapporteur scheme, approved at the Scrutiny Board in July 2011.

2. The rapporteur method had been only lightly used in the past but the time constraints of the current review make it an ideal and necessary tool to cover the evidence-gathering required in the time available. The following key points were highlighted:-

- a) to make the most of a visit to a college or employer, one Member should meet with several young people together in a group, rather than individually;
- b) no teaching staff or employer's representative should be included in the group, so the young people being interviewed can speak frankly about their experiences;
- c) rapporteur visits are arranged and undertaken by a Member or Members without officer involvement, and the writing up and reporting back of findings is the responsibility of the Member/s involved; and
- d) to avoid duplication of Members' effort and participants' time commitment, a central list of who is contacting and visiting whom will need to be prepared and shared between Members.

## **7. Administrative Issues (oral)**

*(Item 4)*

### **Hearing programme, and additional dates for evidence gathering**

1. The Democratic Services Officer advised that the programme of evidence-gathering interviews drawn up in advance of the Select Committee's inaugural meeting was provisional, and participants had been advised of and had accepted appointments on this basis. Following this meeting, all participants would be advised that their interview times had been confirmed, unless the Committee chose to direct otherwise.

2. Miss Grayell advised that the afternoon session previously set aside for identifying recommendations – 17 January – and the two unallocated afternoon sessions following it – 22 and 23 January – would be used to accommodate the additional evidence-gathering interviews which had become possible with the extension to the Committee's timetable. The timing and running order on these days would depend on witness availability and would be announced as soon as possible. Members were asked to continue to reserve all three dates until further notice.

### **Administrative and 'Housekeeping' Arrangements**

3. The Democratic Services Officer set out a number of suggested administrative arrangements for the timing of interview sessions and the handling of information. These had been tried and tested by previous Select Committees and established as best practice:-

- evidence gathering sessions are half-days only, each half-day including 3 or 4 interviews, each of 45 minutes' duration, with a 15-minute 'buffer' between; this allows limited scope for overrun without delaying the next interviewee. Keeping to time is important. A four-interview session will probably require a change of clerk part-way through.
- a 'summing up' session of 20 minutes' duration is added to the end of each half-day, after the public part of the proceedings, to allow Members to summarise and note the main issues arising from the session. This will be shown on the agenda and needs to be factored in to timings.
- all agendas, papers and briefings are circulated to Members by email (papers are published on Modern.Gov, which automatically generates an emailed notice), followed by paper copies. Members asked that anything over 10 pages in length be also sent as a paper version.
- summaries of evidence-gathering interviews are shared with Select Committee Members as soon as possible after each interview (the aim is to prepare these within 5 days of the interview), at the same time as they are sent to the interviewee to check and agree. Summaries remain in draft form until they have been cleared and agreed by the respective interviewees. Interviewees are advised of this.
- all participants are sent a 'welcome' email, which prepares each interviewee and tells them what to expect at the interview (for example, it's open to the public), and will include a copy of the Terms of Reference and Scope and 'housekeeping' points such as a map and directions to the County Hall site. When they are sent their interview summary to check, they are told of the next steps.

- all evidence-gathering sessions are held in public but are not webcast. Later sessions – identifying Recommendations, discussing the report and sharing it with Cabinet Members – are not open to the public. With the revised timetable, the report now becomes public when it is published on 19 March for full Council On 28 March.
4. RESOLVED that the provisional programme of interviews, additional dates and the administrative arrangements set out above be noted and agreed.