

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 25 February 2013.

PRESENT: Mr P B Carter (Chairman), Mr M C Dance, Mr G K Gibbens, Mr R W Gough, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr A J King, MBE, Mr J D Simmonds, Mr B J Sweetland, Mr M J Whiting and Mrs J Whittle

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director of Business Strategy and Support), Mr M Austerberry (Corporate Director, Environment and Enterprise), Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of Human Resources), Mr M Burrows, (Director of Consultation and Communications), Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mr P Leeson (Corporate Director Education, Learning and Skills Directorate), Ms A Honey (Corporate Director, Customer and Communities), Mr A Ireland (Corporate Director, Families and Social Care), Mr A Scott Clarke (Substituting for Kent Director Of Public Health), Mr G Wild (Director of Governance and Law) and Mrs L Whitaker (Democratic Services)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

33. Apologies

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Meradin Peachey. Andy Scott Clarke attended as substitute.

34. Minutes of the Meeting held on 23rd January 2013

(Item 3)

The minutes of the meeting held on 23 January were agreed as a correct record with the following amendment from Mrs Jenny Whittle:

Page 6, final bullet point, *after* “children now needing” *delete* “these services” *and insert* “to be taken into care or needing care services”

The change was required to accurately reflect that the numbers of children needing to be adopted remained high.

35. Decisions from Scrutiny Committee - 12 December 2012

(Item 4 – report by Mr A King, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Democracy and Partnerships and Mr P Sass, Head of Democratic Services)

Cabinet considered a report which contained the decisions of the Scrutiny Committee from the meeting held on 12 December 2012 in order that responses be agreed. Cabinet considered two Scrutiny recommendations in relation to decisions detailed below:

1) Decisions No: 12/01977 - Amalgamation of Walmer Science College and Castle Community College.

The Cabinet Member response to the Scrutiny Committee recommendations was not included in the papers for the meeting, as a result Mr Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills, provided the following verbal response:

- That the requested web page had now been developed and populated with all information relevant to the proposals.
- That letters had been sent to the Chairman of the Governors at each college, on 4th December with details pertaining to the lease. Copies of the letters had been included on the aforementioned webpage.
- Telephone calls had been made to each of the schools by KCC officers to alert them to the discussions that had taken place at the Education Cabinet Committee on 21 November 2012 and Scrutiny Committee on the 12 December.
- The view of the Scrutiny Committee that Walmer Science College be retained for future educational use had been reflected in the Cabinet Member Decision to issue the public notice of the planned amalgamation.

2) Compulsory Purchase Order claim by Darent Valley Hospital Trust, Dartford.

The Cabinet Member response was included in the appendix to the report. Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Business Strategy, Performance and Health Reform, confirmed that the documents requested had been provided.

It was RESOLVED that the decisions of the Scrutiny Committee and the responses of Cabinet Members be noted.

36. Any items which the Chairman decides are relevant or urgent
(Item 5)

None.

37. 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy
(Item 6 – report by Mr M Whiting, Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills and Mr P Leeson, Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills)

Cabinet considered a report which sought agreement to the adoption and publication of the final version of the draft 14-24 Learning and Employment and Skills Strategy.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills introduced the item for consideration and in particular referred to the following:

- He reported that the draft strategy had evolved by various means of communication and consultation with members and with the public and reflected comments received during that process.
- That as the requirement for young people to remain in education, training or work with training until the age of 18 had been implemented, it was important that the various stakeholders and partners were united and this strategy was needed to ensure that Kent County Council worked together with others to help to meet the needs of young people in Kent.

- It was important that young people were in possession of all relevant information when making choices about the future and that this information was accessible to all.
- That currently there were 10,000 apprenticeships in Kent, the Strategy aimed to further increase this number. Kent County Council's own apprentice scheme currently had 84 members and 68 members with Learning Disabilities. The desire of KCC to be a good trainer and employer had helped to shape the strategy.
- KCC maintained a strong commitment to ensure that students in full-time achieved their potential. This strategy would provide another opportunity to do so, by setting out further vocational education opportunities. It was hoped that these and other measures would improve the employment prospects of young people in Kent
- The Strategy set out 4 key priorities:
 - To raise attainment and skill levels
 - To improve vocational education, training and apprenticeships
 - Participation and employment
 - Target support for young vulnerable learners.
- That an Employment, Learning and Skills Partnership Board would be established in order to bring together all partners, including employers to ensure that the strategy would be implemented effectively.

Mr Leeson, Corporate Director of Education, Learning and Skills addressed cabinet and made the following further points:

- That the publication of the strategy at this time was pertinent in light of national policy, in particular the significant change in the requirement for young people to continue to learn or train until 18, the emergence of a new vocational education system and the economic climate where unemployment was rising for young people. In some of the most economically challenging areas of Kent youth unemployment was above 20%.
- The identified outcomes of the strategy were ambitious and would, if achieved, have turned around significantly the problems that some young people in Kent currently faced.
- He reported these ambitious outcomes,
 - That youth unemployment be halved in the next 3 years
 - That the number of apprenticeships be doubled
- That the good practice in Kent of promoting apprenticeships would be further enhanced by aligning more closely what employers were seeking with what apprenticeships were offering and this would be achieved by engaging employers more effectively in vocational education development. These actions were intended to achieve a reduction in the gap between the number of young people that wanted to take up apprenticeships and the number of employers that were offering them.
- In recent years vocational education had failed to provide a regular and recognised stepping stone to higher education and it was hoped that the strategy would address this.
- That networks of those people involved in the development of new ways of learning and training would be created as without them the strategy would not accomplish the aims identified within it. Indeed the work that had been carried out to create the strategy had already realised some local organic groups coming together to work in this way.

- The strategy would ensure that the most vulnerable groups succeeded more regularly than they do now. including those with special educational needs but also those from lower socio economic backgrounds. Ongoing support would be provided in order to help these young people to achieve.
- The strategy would create more opportunity for young people but also better outcomes would be created. Young people would be better prepared for the employment market and the cycle of long term unemployment sometimes spanning two or three generations of one family would be broken.
- Fundamental, more traditional, educational issues remained to be addressed. The strategy would aim to provide a level of numeracy, literacy and IT competency that would secure young people employment when they had finished school and this strategy would compliment the existing School improvement strategy to achieve this.
- That further to the consultations with Members and stakeholders to which the Cabinet Member had referred much consultation work had been undertaken with young people to identify their needs and to ensure that the strategy attempted to deliver what was desired by young people.

In summary he informed the Cabinet that the strategy was ambitious and wide ranging. The age range to which it referred reflected this ambition and acknowledged that issues did not only exist nor could only be solved within the ages of 16-19.

The Leader of the County Council described the Strategy as excellent. He questioned the Corporate Director and Cabinet Member with regard to the communication and dissemination of information to those people that would be affected by changes or who may not even be fully apprised of the status quo.

Mr Leeson responded:

- He argued that the key to informing those involved and ensuring engagement and participation was for new ways of communicating with young people to be adopted.
- In addition it was vital that the quality and independence of advice being given to young people was assured. Government policy had recently required that schools be responsible for the provision of such advice and that this had the potential to affect its impartiality. The Kent Choices Website however was the most comprehensive of its type nationally and had many users including the schools who signposted young people to the site or used it themselves to give advice and guidance.
- Social media, apps, mobile phones, the Kent Youth Forum were all being utilised as a way of connecting with young people
- Schools would be expected to contribute to the dissemination of the strategy to young people and as responsibility for the post 16 destination of pupils was now devolved to the individual school a greater willingness to engage with the council, this strategy, and others had emerged and would be utilised.
- Young people themselves would seek out information and the services provided by Kent County Council, for example the creation of information hubs helped to facilitate this

The Leader of the County Council welcomed the responses received and reiterated the importance of publicising information and in particular the need for the Kent Choices website to be accessible and reliable and in a form that encouraged use by

both young people and employers. It was vital, he maintained that all of those involved in making the strategy work understood how they could help or be helped by it. He requested that a report be considered by Cabinet at a future meeting detailing the marketing strategies and techniques that would be employed to ensure that the strategy was given the best chance to succeed.

The Cabinet Member for Education Learning and Skills further reported, on hearing the Leader refer to the Kent Choices website, that currently 75% of all young people in Kent were signed up to the site as members. In addition last year 13,000 Yr11 students used the site to help them as they decided on a path for the future. This year numbers were likely to be even higher.

In addition to the information on the Kent Choices website, the Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills informed members that a review of all information which related to apprenticeships appearing on the Kent.gov.uk site would be conducted, in order to ensure that it was clear and comprehensive for both young people and employers.

Finally he reminded members that the 'Kent choices for you' live show would be held at Detling Hill on the 13th and 14th March. Training providers, Employers, Schools, Young People and other Stakeholders would convene to advertise, share ideas and form networks. This event would raise awareness of the strategy and emphasise further the multi-agency approach which would be needed to implement it.

The Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Economic Development addressed Cabinet and, in particular referred to the following:

- That the role for Regeneration and Economic Development in helping to deliver the strategy would be to bridge the different interests between the parties involved in delivering the strategy. He referred to a meeting which had taken place between officers and members from Economic Development and Regeneration and Education, Learning and Skills at which the Chamber of Commerce had been present as had the independent organisation the, Education Business Partnership.
- Reported at the meeting was positive evidence of teachers taking proactive steps to secure young people apprenticeships that would particularly meet their skills and needs and this of the employer. However it was also reported that employers had experienced negative consequences of the closure of local job centres and the resultant move to job centre plus. He argued that this had impacted Kent County Council's own apprenticeship scheme by making the process more bureaucratic and less personal to the needs of customers.
- Businesses had expressed some concerns about the work ethic of those young people looking for apprenticeships at 16. It was important to show those with concerns the work that some young people were doing and the value they had added to businesses in the locality.
- Finally he reported and welcomed the Education Business Partnership initiative to take teachers into workplaces to see first hand what was required.

Ms Honey, Corporate Director of Customer and Communities made the following supporting remarks:

- That the strategy was an excellent document that was to be welcomed and which was rightly described as ambitious
- That she was particularly pleased to see Vulnerable Learners highlighted in the case studies. The description of the provision of additional support that was reported for those learners with additional needs such as convictions, teenage pregnancies and learning disabilities was much needed and building on that success would be crucial to successful delivery of the strategy.
- That the involvement of the Skills Plus Centres, providers of adult education, in the creation of the strategy was welcomed. The centres continued to give adults access to education to achieve the levels of literacy, numeracy and IT skills required in the workplace.

The Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health also welcomed the inclusion of Young people with Learning disabilities in the strategy and the important role that transition had to play in supporting young people to continue to achieve as they became adolescents. Young people with learning disabilities had expressed the view in consultation exercises and engagement opportunities that they needed job opportunities and he commended public sector programmes where they were regularly provided. He argued that it was imperative that the private sector became involved in this provision too in order to affect meaningful change.

The Cabinet Member for Customer and Communities addressed members and referred to the important role that schools should be encouraged to play in encouraging and supporting young people to achieve. Schools should produce pupils not only capable of working but motivated to do so.

The Cabinet Member for Education, Learning and Skills addressed Cabinet and in conclusion he made the following comments:

- He reported to those present, by way of assurance that businesses would be fully involved in the implementation of the strategy work, recently undertaken with DEN construction and schools to provide a pilot GCSE course which allowed students struggling to engage with Maths and English to do so through a construction based course.
- He thanked those who had made comments from other Directorates and emphasised once more that this had been a genuinely cross-cutting piece of work.

It was RESOLVED

CABINET	
14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy	
25 February 2013	
1.	That the 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy, as at appendix A, be adopted and published
2.	That the Executive Summary of the 14-24 Learning, Employment and Skills Strategy , as at Appendix B, be adopted and published
3.	That the outline communications plan for disseminating the Strategy, as at paragraphs 4.1, 4.2 and 4.3 of the report be agreed.

4.	That a further report detailing the communications plan be brought for the consideration of Cabinet
REASON	
1&2	In order that the strategy be formally adopted to facilitate implementation.
3	In order that the aims, objectives and positive impacts of the strategy are effectively communicated.
4	In order that Cabinet effectively monitor and influence the success of resolution 3.
ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS CONSIDERED	None.
CONFLICTS OF INTEREST	None.
DISPENSATIONS GRANTED	None.