

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 17 January 2014

PRESENT: Mr A J King, MBE (Chairman), Mr R H Bird (Substitute for Mrs T Dean), Miss S J Carey, Mr N J D Chard, Mr J Elenor, Mr C P D Hoare, Mr R A Latchford, OBE, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr S C Manion, Mr L B Ridings, MBE, Mrs P A V Stockell, Mr D Smyth and Mr N S Thandi

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P B Carter, CBE, Mr G Cooke, Mr J D Simmonds, MBE and Mr B J Sweetland

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Cockburn (Corporate Director of Business Strategy and Support), Mrs P Davies (Service Desk Manager), Ms C Grosskopf (Policy Manager), Mr D Shipton (Head of Financial Strategy), Ms R Spore (Director of Property & Infrastructure Support), Mr D Whittle (Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships), Mr A Wood (Corporate Director of Finance and Procurement), Mr T Woolmer (Corporate Policy Officer) and Mrs A Hunter (Principal Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

43. Apologies

(Item A1)

Apologies for absence were received from Mrs Dean. Mr Bird attended as substitute.

44. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item A2)

- (1) Mr Latchford declared an interest in Item C2 – Civilian Military Covenant as he was an ex-service man, chairman of his local branch of the British Legion and chairman of the national war memorial project in Dover.
- (2) Mr Long declared an interest in Item C2 – Civilian Military Covenant as he was a serving reserve officer in the Territorial Army.

45. Minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2013

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 December 2013 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the chairman subject to the deletion of the word “attended” in minute number 31, the deletion of the word “manger” in minute 41(4) and the insertion of the word “manager” in its place.

46. Minutes of the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 13 November 2013

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the Property Sub-Committee held on 13 November 2013 be noted.

47. ICT Service Desk - Customer Service Accreditations

(Item C1)

- (1) Mr Cooke (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services) introduced the report and said that the accreditations obtained reflected the high quality of the service provided by the Service Desk. He also introduced Matthew King and Jack Lodemore who were apprentices in the Service Desk team.
- (2) Mrs Davies (ICT Support Services Manager) gave a short presentation outlining the work of the ICT Service Desk, the way in which the team works and the Service Desk's accreditation from the Service Desk Institute (SDi) and Customer Service Excellence Standard. She also outlined the nine SDi concepts that the team worked to, gave more information about the achievement of the Customer Excellence Standard and the opportunities within the team for apprentices and young people leaving care.
- (3) Mr Matthew King said the apprenticeship had given him valuable life skills, an opportunity to gain experience and to start his career in ICT.
- (4) The excellent support provided by the Service Desk to Members was acknowledged.
- (5) Mrs Davies confirmed that Mr Lodemore and Mr King were following level three apprenticeships and that other authorities including Medway and East Sussex County Council had sought advice about best practice relating to ICT service desk support.
- (6) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

48. Budget Consultation and Provisional Local Government Settlement

(Item B1)

- (1) Mr Shipton introduced the report. He said the Draft Budget had been published on 14 January and reminded the Committee that it was being asked to consider the consultation feedback and the provisional local government finance settlement.
- (2) He said the consultation had been successful, with over 3,000 responses to the online '2 minutes, 2 questions' and 487 responses to the on-line budget tool. He said: this was the best ever response to a consultation on the budget; the responses to the three elements of the market research were consistent; and were also consistent with the views of staff.
- (3) Most respondents had expressed a view that the council should look to savings that could be made through efficiencies and transformation rather than cutting back existing service provision. Over 70% of respondents also supported a small increase in council tax in order to offer some protection to front-line services. The more detailed budget modelling tool identified that

services for the most vulnerable and where people had no choice other than to receive support from council were the most highly valued and should be protected. This did not mean that other services were not valued but if savings had to be made the council should look at these services.

- (4) He explained that the 2014/15 settlement had been broadly as expected, with technical changes that meant some funds that had previously been allocated during the year had been rolled into the Revenue Support Grant (RSG). For example the amount top-sliced for the New Homes Bonus had been reduced which increased the RSG but reduced the amount paid as an in-year adjustment.
- (5) It had been expected that the New Homes Bonus would be removed entirely and transferred to the single Local Growth Fund in 2015/16, however, this would not now be the case and the New Homes Bonus would be rolled out as originally planned. The provisional settlement also confirmed that the separate grants previously allocated to support council tax freezes would be rolled into the RSG settlement and therefore were unlikely to be removed in future settlements. The conclusion was that indicative settlements for 2015/16 and 2016/17 were better than anticipated during the consultation.
- (6) Members asked if the questions in the survey could be clearer and less ambiguous in the future and asked about how representative the respondents were of the population of Kent.
- (7) Members considered that the consultation had been successful.
- (8) RESOLVED that the feedback from the consultation and comments by members be noted.

49. Civilian Military Covenant

(Item C2)

- (1) Mr Ridings (KCC's Armed Forces' Champion) introduced the report which outlined the role of the Kent and Medway Civilian Military Partnership Board in overseeing the Armed Forces Community Covenant that KCC had signed to complement the Armed Forces Covenant. The report also set out the implications for Kent of the government's strategic changes to the armed forces and provided examples of initiatives taken to date.
- (2) Mr Ridings said it was planned that the armed forces would reduce by 20,000 by 2020 and there was a need to provide support for ex-service men and women to secure employment. He acknowledged the difficulties some had adjusting to life after serving in the armed forces with high numbers of ex-service personnel among the prison population and presenting as homeless.
- (3) Mr Ridings said KCC had established a board to oversee the implementation of the Covenant and the board had established five working groups across the key themes of: health and wellbeing; integration; housing; employment, economy and skills; and recognise and remember. He drew particular attention to the work undertaken by the Libraries, Registration and Archives

team to establish a Kent First World War Timeline for the Frontline Kent Partnership.

- (4) During the discussion the importance of the Men's Sheds' project was acknowledged and reference was made to various commemorative events including a national war memorial on Dover's White Cliffs at Western Heights to commemorate the 1.7 million service men and women from across the Commonwealth who died in the service of the UK in World War 1 and World War 2 and the Memorial Arch at Folkestone.
 - (5) Questions were asked about the involvement of schools in commemorative events and it was suggested that the Education, Learning and Skills Directorate be encouraged to send out a pack relating to "lest we forget."
 - (6) Mr Woolmer (Policy Officer) said that KCC's employment policies regarding ex-service personnel and serving reservists would be considered by the Employment, Economy and Skills Sub-Group in conjunction with district councils and health organisations.
 - (7) In response to a further question Mr Woolmer said the Recognise and Remember Sub-Group were scoping how best to consolidate information in one place about the many commemorative events taking place in Kent. The Recognise and Remember Sub-Group recognised the enormity of this undertaking and planned to work with other agencies, such as Visit Kent, to bring together as many events as possible. It was also intended to update the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee on progress at appropriate times.
8. RESOLVED that the report be noted.

50. Welfare Reform and Potential Impacts on Kent

(Item C3)

- (1) Mr Carter (Leader) introduced the report which provided an update on a range of indicators that may be affected by recent and ongoing welfare reforms following the comprehensive research report presented to the Committee in June 2013. He said the report had been reviewed and updated following its withdrawal from the Committee's agenda in December 2013. A number of concerns including the rise in homelessness, increased criminality in East Kent and the use of foodbanks were identified in the report but could not be attributed solely to changes in welfare benefits.
- (2) Mr Whittle (Head of Policy and Strategic Relationships) said that foodbank usage would be monitored and reported wherever possible.
- (3) RESOLVED:
 - (a) That the changes made to the original December update report on welfare reform as set out in sections 2, 3 and 4 of the report be noted.
 - (b) That the revised welfare reform update report be noted.

51. Mid Kent Key Office Hub - Acquisition of Premises - Report of an urgent decision taken

(Item C4)

- (1) Mr Cooke (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services) introduced the report which set out details of an urgent decision taken between meetings of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee as it could not be reasonably deferred to this meeting of the Committee.
- (2) The Committee noted the exempt information provided at Agenda Item D1.
- (3) RESOLVED that Decision 13/00060 – Mid Kent Key Office Hub- Acquisition of Premises – taken in accordance with the process in Appendix 4 Part 7 paragraph 7.18 of the Council's Constitution be noted.

52. Exclusion of the Press and Public

RESOLVED that under Section 100A of the Local Government Act 1972 the press and public be excluded from the meeting for the following items of business on the grounds that they involved the likely disclosure of exempt information as defined in paragraph 3 of Part 1 of Schedule 12A of the Act.

53. Mid Kent Key Office Hub - Acquisition of Premises

(Item D1)

- (1) Mr Cooke (Cabinet Member for Corporate and Democratic Services) introduced the report which contained detailed information that he had considered prior to making Decision 13/0060. He also answered Members' questions.
- (2) RESOLVED that the information be noted.

54. Exempt Minutes from the meeting of the Property Sub-Committee held on 13 November 2013

(Item E1)

RESOLVED that the exempt minutes of the Property Sub-Committee held on 13 November 2013 be noted.