

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room - Sessions House on Thursday, 8 November 2018.

PRESENT: Mr A Booth (Chairman), Mr A M Ridgers (Vice-Chairman), Mrs P M Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr R H Bird, Mr D L Brazier (Substitute for Mr M A C Balfour), Mr G Cooke, Mr P C Cooper (Substitute for Mr J Wright), Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mr R C Love and Dr L Sullivan

ALSO PRESENT: Mr R W Gough and Mr A R Hills

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr K Abbott (Director of Education Planning and Access), Mr A Tait (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr J Cook (Scrutiny Research Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

35. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item A2)

1. Apologies had been received from Mr Balfour (Mr Brazier was substituting), Mr Wright (Mr Cooper was substituting) and Mrs Beresford.
2. Members of the Pupil Premium Select Committee had been invited to attend the meeting and apologies had been received from the following; Mrs Bell, Mrs Game, Mr McInroy and Mrs Cole.

36. Declarations of Interests by Members in items on the Agenda for this Meeting

(Item A3)

1. Dr Sullivan declared an interest in the Pupil Premium Select Committee item as her husband was employed as an Early Help Worker for Kent County Council.

37. Minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2018

(Item A4)

1. In response to a question the Chairman confirmed that in future the minutes of each meeting would include apologies and substitutes given at the meeting.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 4 October 2018 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

38. Pupil Premium Select Committee - 3 Months on Implementation Plan

(Item A5)

1. The Chairman introduced this item and explained that it was an opportunity for the Cabinet Member and Officer to give Members an update on the previous 3 months progress of the Select Committee recommendations.

2. Mr Gough (Cabinet Member for Children, Young People and Education) explained that the comprehensive report of the Select Committee was welcomed. The Committee had focussed on some areas which the Directorate were already working on, such as Early Help and Preventative Services, which enabled further input into the relevant issues. Mr Gough set out some of the highlights of the update report.

3. Keith Abbott explained that the delivery of a number of the recommendations were the responsibility of The Education People and that further information would be available post-Christmas. It was confirmed that as the 'commissioners' KCC was accountable but the day to day delivery sat with The Education People.

4. In response to a question about the difference between 'in progress' and 'on-going' Mr Gough explained that in some cases the recommendations built on work which in some areas was already taking place (on-going) and in progress related to those recommendations where work was just getting underway since the report was approved.

5. The Chairman took comments and questions on each recommendation in turn.

6. Recommendation 1: A Member asked about the timeline for the work and progress relating to this recommendation. Mr Abbott explained that it was hoped that the proposals and the timeline would be available before Christmas and the proposals should be in progress in Terms 3 & 4. It was requested that a timeline be produced showing the projected dates for progression of the recommendations.

7. A Member asked whether it would be possible to have comparative data from within the schools to enable Members to find out which schools were doing well with registration of children eligible for Free School Meals and Pupil Premium Funding. Mr Gough confirmed that this information would be circulated.

8. Recommendation 2: In relation to the Improvement Advisors, a Member asked whether the signposting would be in the form of an easy to read version which could be shared with schools. In addition, would the visits to school be ongoing? Mr Abbott confirmed that the visits by the Improvement Advisors would be ongoing. In response to a question Mr Abbott would circulate further information to the Committee outside the meeting about how the best practice would be captured and shared amongst schools.

9. It was requested that Members be advised of District Governor briefings taking place, it was considered beneficial for Members to have the opportunity to attend these briefings.

10. Recommendation 3: In response to a query about the pilot projects taking place in Swale and the subsequent reduction in demand into Children's Social Care in East Kent Mr Gough explained that, for Education purposes, Swale was in East Kent. Further information relating to the pilot projects would be circulated to Members. The intention was for the pilot projects to be scaled up to other schools across Kent where appropriate, the lessons from the pilots were being incorporated into a practice model. In response to a question about roll-out costs and consequences Mr Gough confirmed that there were some resource consequences,

but roll-out of the project would not be restricted by budget discussions. Mr Gough would ensure that information from the 'Change for Kent Children' project would be shared more widely with members. It was not considered appropriate or economical to implement the schemes in all schools in Kent, however the Council was committed to scaling the project up to appropriate schools in Kent.

11. In response to a question Mr Gough confirmed that the recommendations contained with the report were put forward by the Select Committee. A Member asked that figures be included in the report alongside percentages. Mr Gough confirmed that he would provide more detailed information on 'Change for Kent Children' to Members. It was considered that the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee should receive a further report on the scaling up of the pilot projects and it was suggested that this could form part of the agenda for the meeting in January 2019.

12. Recommendations 4: In relation to sharing data a Member considered it important to remember that this should only occur when it is relevant.

13. Members supported the development of better relationships across relevant staff groups, KCC and the education providers. Mr Gough commented that standards had improved at Primary level and it was hoped that the improved information sharing around transition would allow Secondary education to build on this effectively.

14. Recommendation 5: In response to a question Mr Gough commented on the role of the 0-25 Health and Well-Being Board, there had been progress with the work of KCC and the Health Service on Children's Issues and this was monitored by the 0-25 Health and Well-Being Board.

15. It was considered that engagement between schools and parents was vital.

16. Recommendation 6: A Member asked for clarification on the wording of this recommendation, Mr Gough confirmed that this should say "Early Years Pupil Premium funding should be doubled, funded by either a redistribution of Primary Pupil Premium.. or from elsewhere within the Department for Education (DfE) budget". Mr Gough explained that he had some reservations about this recommendation when it was proposed. There was more appeal to finding funding from elsewhere within the DfE Budget than redistributing the Primary Pupil Premium. Given that Kent performs already well at Early Years and pre-school, such re-distribution could be detrimental to other areas of work in need of support. Mr Gough would ensure that the recommendation of the Social Mobility Commission's report would be circulated to the Committee for information.

17. Recommendation 7: A Member queried the wording in the comments which stated: "There was no opportunity under current regulations to supplement a national resource with funds locally". Mr Abbott confirmed that the County Council had a policy confirming that it would not top up Dedicated Schools Grant (DSG) money. There were also issues around the formula funding for early years. The Chairman confirmed that the Select Committee was clear on its findings and there was a significant steer that it was beneficial when finance was apportioned more to Early

Years. Mr Gough stated that he and his officers would confirm the current position around recommendation 7.

18. Recommendation 8: There were concerns that decisions by other authorities to place children in care in Kent schools were sometimes based on financial reasons. This issue had been raised previously an ongoing challenge for Kent. It was necessary to ensure that other authorities were as clearly sighted as possible with regard to the potential impact of the concentration of Looked After Children in particular areas, so that this could be taken into account when making placement decisions. Also, it was important to ensure that appropriate services were available to those young people when they arrive and that KCC was made fully aware. It was noted that this issue was also in the work programme for the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee and it would continue to be monitored in terms of the impact officers were able to have by talking to the placing authorities and working with schools. A Member commented that consideration should be given to engaging District and Borough councils as the relevant planning and housing authorities as part of the planned relationship building and forward planning.

19. Recommendation 9: A Member asked that planned piloting of the updated toolkit should include a school which had good outcomes, against the 2018 national average, for disadvantaged pupils so that it could confirm the appropriateness of the best practice being promoted by KCC – providing a stamp of approval from the sector. Mr Gough confirmed that this would be considered further.

20. Responding to questions, Mr Abbot advised the Committee that KCC had previously developed a toolkit and that the work on the recommendation was related to refining and improving it, rather than creating a new one. Mr Abbott offered to discuss the origins of the toolit development outside the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Committee thank Mr Gough and Mr Abbott for the update report and for attending the meeting and answering Members' questions.

39. Flood Risk Management Committee Annual Report *(Item A6)*

1. Mr Hills, the Chairman of the Flood Risk Management Committee introduced the report of his Committee which included work undertaken over the past year. The Committee was an outward facing body looking at flood risks and water management across the County. The Committee encouraged the external groups to attend and it was well supported by experienced officers.

2. The Chairman asked Mr Hills how his committee engaged with other organisations in relation to the delivery of water services to serve the high levels of housing that districts were due to build?

3. A Member also asked about the round England footpath. Mr Hills confirmed that this was a concern, and it would be necessary to revisit this in the future. The Committee asked that the Council take a positive stance in protecting every inch of the County's coastline.

4. Members welcomed the report, concerns were raised about the impact of significant housing producing high levels of waste alongside increased rainfall resulting in systems operating at capacity. Was there more that KCC could do to draw attention to this, perhaps in conjunction with the planning authorities? Mr Hills explained that extreme weather conditions were putting pressure on the drains, but officers were working hard to ensure that the drainage systems were in the best condition possible to cope with such weather conditions. In relation to housing, some sites were being developed with grey water and others were looking at how water and waste could be used in the future.

5. Members discussed the issues associated with climate change and the challenges facing Kent. The Committee was constantly evaluating the information available from the relevant agencies.

6. A Member referred to paragraph 7.2 of the report, and attendance by Committee Members.

7. Members welcomed the report and one Member asked about water resource and reduction in leakage, was there enough emphasis on water leakage reduction? Mr Hills explained that his Committee took this issue very seriously and had heard recently from Southern Water who had a target of reducing water usage per person per day. It was a changing world and in fact water usage in Kent had reduced in the last 20 years because of the change in industrial practices.

8. In response to a question about gulley clearance, whether this was done sufficiently, and the associated road safety aspects of flash flooding. Mr Hills explained that more information would be available after his meeting next week, it was important to ensure that accurate information regarding flooding was disseminated to members of the public. Mr Hills would report back to the Committee on this issue.

9. In relation to prevention, was there any way in which KCC could help prevent flooding issues? Mr Hills explained that it was preferable to divert or hold back water before it reached towns and villages; natural management of water. This was a slow process which required negotiation with land owners etc. it was important, and Mr Hills confirmed that his Committee would continue to investigate this within its powers.

10. A Member asked whether the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation had reported to the Flood Risk Committee, bearing in mind the 15,000 houses which were due to be built on this development site. Mr Hills was not aware that they had reported to the Committee, but this would be considered for the future work programme.

11. In relation to attendance at the Flood Risk Management Committee, Mr Tait clarified that an invitation was sent to all District and Borough councils and that if their nominated representative did not attend the papers were sent to the Leader of each Council. Mr Tait confirmed that it was not KCC Members who were not attending the meeting.

RESOLVED that the Scrutiny Committee thank Mr Hills and Mr Tait for attending the meeting and NOTE the content of the report.

40. Future meeting dates

(Item A7)

RESOLVED that the future meeting dates for 2019/20 be noted.

41. MOTION TO EXCLUDE THE PRESS AND PUBLIC FOR EXEMPT BUSINESS

(Item A8)

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

“Information relating to the financial or business affairs of any particular person (including the authority holding that information)”

42. Exempt minute of the meeting held on 4 October 2018

(Item A9)

RESOLVED that the exempt minute of the meeting held on 4 October 2018 was a correct record and that it be signed by the Chair.