

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Online on Monday, 27 April 2020.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Miss S J Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr P J Oakford, Mr M D Payne, Mrs S Prendergast and Mr M Whiting

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Corporate Director of People and Communications), Ms J Mookherjee (Consultant in Public Health), Ms E Sanderson (Strategic Business Adviser), Mr A Scott-Clark (Director of Public Health), Ms C Starte, Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr D Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance) and T Woodhouse (County Parks and Countryside Partnerships Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

136. Minutes of the Meetings held on 27 January and 2 March 2020

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 27 January 2020 and 2 March 2020 were correct records and that they be signed by the Chairman.

The Chairman explained that three questions had been asked and not answered at the informal Cabinet briefing the previous week. These questions were asked of the Cabinet Members and responses given.

137. Suicide Prevention Programme Update

(Item 4)

1. Mrs Bell, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Public Health, introduced this item. Andrew Scott Clark outlined highlights from the report. There was work to be done on recovery from the Coronavirus epidemic, particularly in relation to the impact of social isolation. Jess Mookherjee explained that Kent had been nationally recognised for the work done to reduce the rate of male suicide, which was now slightly lower than the national average. However, there was still work to do. Mental health training was highlighted within the strategy and priority had been given to Adverse Childhood Experiences and Trauma Informed Care. Funding would be reducing so there was a need to ensure continued skills and resources were available. Tim Woodhouse explained the 'release the pressure campaign', which had a 24-hour support line as well as a recent 'support by text' service available to anyone in Kent for free.

2. Mrs Chandler explained that there was a focus on children and young people within the strategy and that excellent work was underway with partners. There were concerns about the effects of social isolation (due to the Coronavirus Pandemic) on young people, however, it was also apparent that for some young people, being at

home with their families was reducing the pressure on them, and this would be considered in the future.

3. Mr Hill referred to Domestic Homicide Reviews which now included suicides as well as homicides. He said the reviews were a valuable tool to determine why suicides had happened and what could be done to prevent future deaths.

4. The Leader thanked the Cabinet Member and officers for their introduction and presentation, this was a timely item of increased risk and considerable concern during the period of lockdown.

5. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the presentation and report.

138. Kent Together Update (Presentation)

(Item 5)

1. Mrs Prendergast introduced this item. During the Coronavirus Pandemic there had been a huge emergence of volunteers offering help and support to those in need. The Kent Together helpline played a key role in coordinating this support.

2. Amanda Beer gave a presentation which is available [via this link](#). The overall aim of Kent Together was to ensure that anyone who needed help (with no family or friends) had somewhere to go. There were three key groups of people who were a priority to support, these were: those on the Government shielding list, those known to public services in Kent and the group that had not previously used any public service but who found themselves in need of support from others. The Kent Together team included officers from across KCC and the districts.

3. Christina Starte explained how Kent Together worked, this information is contained within the presentation, available [via this link](#).

4. The Leader welcomed the 24/7 nature of Kent Together, there was a question over whether this needed to be emphasised since numbers of contacts at weekends were lower than during the week.

5. Mr Whiting congratulated everyone involved in the Kent Together programme and the widespread offer of help that was being given. The Leader emphasised that this programme was designed to supplement and support existing services, to ensure that people did not miss out on the help that they needed.

6. The Leader thanked the officers for their presentation and comments and asked that congratulations be passed onto the team involved in Kent Together, he looked forward to hearing more about the programme in the future.

7. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the update on Kent Together.

139. Governance Update on Virtual Meetings

(Item 6)

1. Mr Oakford, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services, introduced this item. It was good news that regulations had allowed the holding of virtual meetings.

2. Ben Watts explained that his team had worked hard with colleagues in Infrastructure to determine how meetings could be conducted online. This was being done via Microsoft Teams and training had been undertaken with Members over the past 4 weeks. The report set out the changes to legislation along with a draft protocol which Cabinet was asked to approve.

3. Mr Hill commented upon the Police and Crime Panel, a meeting of which was scheduled for 18 June, and asked if it be possible to hold this meeting virtually. Ben Watts said he was hopeful that by mid-June it would be possible to have a quorate virtual meeting with all the parties involved in the Police and Crime Panel. Work was ongoing through the Kent Secretaries Group to understand the different technologies being adopted by each district in Kent.

4. The Leader thanked the Deputy Leader and Ben Watts for their comments and for answering Members' questions on this item.

5. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the report and agree the Protocols.

140. COVID 19 Corporate Planning

(Item 7)

1. Liz Sanderson and David Whittle introduced this item and gave a presentation which is available [via this link](#). In considering recovery from COVID-19, thought was being given to the way the Council worked and how it would deliver vital services. Despite ongoing uncertainty, it was possible to make some assumptions about what kind of council KCC would become in the future.

2. Mrs Prendergast reassured Members that a new engagement platform was being worked on which would help meaning engagement with the public.

3. Mr Whiting asked about progress on enabling a virtual Planning Applications Committee meeting. Ben Watts said work was underway regarding this, lessons were being learnt from other councils and there was confidence that it could be done. KCC had governance arrangements that allowed the taking of many decisions without the need for meetings and officers were currently looking at decisions which needed to be considered by the Planning Applications Committee as a matter of urgency.

4. The Leader thanked Liz Sanderson and David Whittle for their presentation. The evolution of the Council's relationship with the Community Sector was important to maintain. Referring to recovery it was important to ensure that infrastructure was in place before housing growth. KCC would continue to focus on this as a part of the county's economic recovery.

5. RESOLVED that Cabinet note the presentation.