



Summons to and
Agenda for a
Meeting on
**Thursday, 27th May,
2021**
at **10.00 am**



DEMOCRATIC SERVICES
SESSIONS HOUSE
MAIDSTONE

Wednesday, 19 May 2021

To: All Members of the County Council

A meeting of the County Council will be held in the Main Hall, Sport Centre, University of Kent, Giles Lane, Canterbury, Kent, CT2 7NL on Thursday, 27th May, 2021 at **10.00 am** to deal with the following business. **The meeting is scheduled to end by 4.30 pm.**

A G E N D A

1. Apologies for Absence
2. Election of Chairman
3. Election of Vice-Chairman
4. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
5. Minutes of the meeting held on 11 March 2021 **(Pages 1 - 12)**
6. The Returning Officer to submit the returns of persons elected to be County Councillors until 2025 **(Pages 13 - 18)**
7. Chairman's Announcements
8. Election of Leader
9. Appointment of Leader of the Opposition
10. Corporate Parenting Panel - Notes of the meeting held on 16 February 2021 **(Pages 19 - 26)**
11. Questions
12. Report by Leader of the Council (Oral)

13. Proportionality and Appointment to Committees and other bodies
(to follow)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'B. Watts', with a large, sweeping flourish extending to the right.

Benjamin Watts
General Counsel
03000 416814

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES of a meeting of the County Council held online on Thursday, 11 March 2021.

PRESENT: Mr G K Gibbens (Chairman), Mr M J Northey (Vice-Chairman), Mrs A D Allen, MBE, Mr M J Angell, Mr M A C Balfour, Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mrs C Bell, Mrs P M Beresford, Mrs R Binks, Mr R H Bird, Mr T Bond, Mr A Booth, Mr A H T Bowles, Mr D L Brazier, Mr J Burden, Mr D Butler, Miss S J Carey, Sir Paul Carter, CBE, Mrs S Chandler, Mr N J D Chard, Mr I S Chittenden, Mr J Clinch, Mrs P T Cole, Mr N J Collor, Ms K Constantine, Mr A Cook, Mr G Cooke, Mr P C Cooper, Mrs M E Crabtree, Mr M C Dance, Mrs T Dean, MBE, Mr D Farrell, Mrs L Game, Mr R W Gough, Ms S Hamilton, Mr P M Harman, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr A R Hills, Mrs S V Hohler, Mr S Holden, Mr P J Homewood, Mr A J Hook, Mr M J Horwood, Mr E E C Hotson, Mrs L Hurst, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Mr P W A Lake, Mr B H Lewis, Ida Linfield, Mr R L H Long, TD, Mr R C Love, OBE, Mr G Lymer, Mr S C Manion, Miss D Morton, Mr R A Marsh, Mr J P McInroy, Mr P J Messenger, Mr D D Monk, Mr D Murphy, Mr P J Oakford, Mr J M Ozog, Mr R A Pascoe, Mr M D Payne, Mrs S Prendergast, Mr K Pugh, Miss C Rankin, Mr H Rayner, Mr A M Ridgers, Mr C Simkins, Dr L Sullivan, Mr B J Sweetland, Mr R J Thomas, Mr M Whiting, Mr M E Whybrow and Mr J Wright

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr B Watts (General Counsel)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

274. Apologies for Absence
(Item 1)

The General Counsel reported apologies from Mr Daley, Miss Dawson, Mr Koowaree and Mrs Stockell. Mr Butler, Mr Farrell and Mr Simkins gave their apologies for the afternoon session.

275. Declarations of Disclosable Pecuniary Interests or Other Significant Interests in items on the agenda
(Item 2)

- (1) The Chairman declared an interest in item 8 on the agenda as he received a pension from the Australia and New Zealand Bank group who were mentioned in the report. Mr Bartlett also declared an interest in item 8 as he is an employee of the Bank of New York and one of the funds listed in the report was managed by an affiliate of the Bank of New York. He stayed in the meeting but did not participate in the discussion of the item.

- (2) Miss Morton declared an interest as she had recently taken up employment as a nurse vaccinator with the Kent Community Health Foundation Trust which worked in partnership with Kent County Council.
- (3) During item 10 Mr Burden declared an interest as he was chairman of Age UK Northwest Kent. He did not take part in the discussion relating to question 6 from Ida Linfield to the Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health about funding for Age UK branches in Canterbury.

276. Minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2020 and 11 February 2021

(Item 3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meetings held on 10 December 2020 and 11 February 2021 be approved as a correct record subject to a correction to minute 268 from December 2020 to show that Mrs Hohler had not voted on the item.

277. Chairman's Announcements

(Item 4)

(a) Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport

The Chairman said Barbara Cooper, the Corporate Director for Growth, Environment and Transport, would be retiring on 31 March, after almost twelve years with Kent County Council. He said Mrs Cooper had joined the Council in 2009 from Swale Borough Council and had worked in local government for over 20 years. She had been a stalwart supporter of growth in Kent and had worked tirelessly for the good of the county, including on projects such as the Thanet Parkway, the Creative Estuary and the Production Corridor. He said Mrs Cooper had risen to the particular challenges of Brexit and the coronavirus pandemic over the last twelve months with characteristic enthusiasm, knowledge, and good humour. He said she was described by her colleagues as a truly inspirational leader with amazing levels of energy and commitment to getting the job done. He concluded by saying she would be greatly missed and asked members and officers to join him in wishing her all the very best for her future endeavours.

(b) Director of Public Health

The Chairman said that Andrew Scott-Clark, Director of Public Health, would be retiring in June. He thanked him for his hard work and his support over many years and in particular for his support during his term as cabinet member with responsibility for public health. He said Mr Scott-Clark had worked in public health for around 20 years, but the last 12 months had been an unparalleled challenge. He asked members to join him in thanking Mr Scott-Clark for everything he had done for the county and in wishing him well for his future endeavours.

(c) Mr Balfour

The Chairman said that Mr Balfour was in hospital following an injury to his ankle and sent him best wishes for a speedy recovery.

278. Questions
(Item 5)

In accordance with Sections 14.15 to 14.22 of the Constitution, six questions were asked and replies given. A record of all questions put and answers given at the meeting is available [online](#) with the papers for this meeting.

279. Report by Leader of the Council (Oral)
(Item 6)

- (1) The Leader updated the council on events since the previous meeting.
- (2) Mr Gough said he would like to associate himself with the Chairman's words about Barbara Cooper and Andrew Scott-Clark who had both given outstanding service to the county and to the council and in particular during the last most testing year. He also recognised that this meeting would be the last for many members and thanked the Chairman for his friendship and support over many years as well as his grace and good humour in chairing meetings of the county council. He paid tribute to the group leaders, Mr Bird and Mr Whybrow, who were not seeking re-election. He said it had been a pleasure to work with them and congratulated Mr Whybrow on being the first Green party member elected to Kent County Council. He thanked colleagues from his own party, including Mr Northey and Mr Pugh, who had made significant contributions to both the county council and the communities they served over many years.
- (3) Mr Gough then considered how circumstances had changed since the county council meeting in December. At that time, he had reported that the authority was looking to set up its first symptom-free coronavirus testing sites in Thanet and Swale and he was pleased to report that since then almost 400,000 tests had been conducted in a network of sites across the county. He said that a few weeks after the meeting in December, the seven-day rate of Covid-19 infections in Kent had peaked at just under 900 cases per 100,000 of the population and that the rate currently stood at 37.2 per 100,000. He said the reduction in the rate of infection and the roll out of the vaccine meant that the journey to normality could begin. He said the road map to recovery including school return and local outbreak control plans would be considered at an all-member briefing on the 12 March and he hoped that as many members as possible would be able to attend.
- (4) Mr Gough said that a few weeks after the meeting of the county council in December a decision of the French government to block channel crossings for 48 hours had a huge impact on the east of the county and, in particular, on the town of Dover. He said officers and members had responded well at the time and it was intended to reflect on lessons learned and look to future at the Cabinet meeting scheduled for 15 March. He also said the Cabinet would consider the Reconnect programme designed to support young people in Kent as part of the recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic.

He said it was an exciting programme but that he did not want to pre-empt the discussion at Cabinet by saying too much now.

- (5) Mr Gough then turned his attention to the items which he thought would be in the in-tray for the new administration following the elections in May. Firstly, he referred to finance. He said projections from the Office of Budget Responsibility indicated that funding for 'non-protected [government] departments' which included local government would remain under real term pressure and that this had been reinforced by a National Audit Office report published on 10 March which set out the financial and other pressures facing local government. He said that, while he did not expect to see a repetition of the austerity experienced 8-10 years ago, the overall funding framework was likely to remain tight and he anticipated that this would be easier to manage the sooner the authority had medium term rather than one-year financial settlements to work with. He also said the authority would continue to push for its fair share of funding particularly under the Fair Funding Review. Mr Gough referred to the announcement of the Levelling Up Fund and the Towns Fund, from which Margate had received funding, and the Community Renewal Fund. He said the authority would play a key role, in conjunction with the district councils and local members of parliament, in the delivery of the Levelling Up Fund in Kent. He said the process for bidding for money from the fund was complicated and not all Kent districts would benefit. He welcomed the fact that the funding was being routed through local government and anticipated that the Shared Prosperity Fund would also be channelled through local government.
- (6) Secondly, Mr Gough said that public health would feature prominently in the in-tray of the new administration. He said the government had published its White Paper on the Health and Social Care Bill on 11 February, the same day Kent County Council had agreed its budget. He said the White Paper spoke about local government as an equal partner with the NHS and the need for co-operation between them; emphasised the importance of place; and indicated that the preferred geography of integrated care systems was to align them with upper tier local authorities. He said it was right and essential that many of the changes since 2015, which were gradually replacing many of the provision of the Health and Social Care Act 2012, should be consolidated and enshrined in legislation. Mr Gough said the proposed architecture of an integrated care system NHS body and an ICS Health and Care Partnership with health and wellbeing boards playing a significant role had yet to be published. He also said the long promised White Paper on social care was still awaited. He commended the work of the County Councils' Network and Danny Kruger MP working through Demos and said a paper would be presented to a meeting of the county council early in the new term.
- (7) Thirdly, Mr Gough said that further activity in relation to unaccompanied asylum-seeking children would be in the in-tray of the new administration. He said the number of new arrivals was currently low, but the position could change quickly. He said there were 288 under-18s in the care of Kent County Council and there were 1,066 care leavers. He said the

authority would continue to lobby for a National Transfer Scheme over the coming weeks.

- (8) Mr Gough drew members' attention to the announcements by Mr Payne (Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport) relating to highways including the recent launch of a £10 million pothole blitz which followed a very active programme of improvements and developments over a number of years. He also referred to the Vision Zero strategy, which had ambitious targets for road safety improvements and for ways of working with communities, as well as to the public sector Decarbonisation Fund of £21 million for energy projects and £2.25 million for school sites which was being managed by SALIX Finance on behalf of the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy.
- (9) He concluded his report by saying that after today's meeting, many members would turn their attention to the election campaign, and that residents would pass their judgement on members' performance over the previous four years. He said he would turn to the campaign with hope and with pride in the record of the administration in serving the people of Kent.
- (10) Mr Bird, the Leader of the Opposition, thanked the Leader for his kind words and said that he too had appreciated their constructive dialogue. He thanked officers who had assisted him throughout his time as a councillor and although there were too many to mention by name he paid tribute to Barbara Cooper and Andrew Scott-Clark who were, like him, stepping back from KCC. He said he would advise any new member to get to know officers as it was much easier to be an effective member with their help and support. He also paid tribute to his colleague, George Koowaree who was stepping down in May.
- (11) Mr Bird said he had suggested three priorities for Mr Gough's attention when he became Leader of the Council but at the time neither of them had anticipated the impact of Covid-19. Nevertheless, he hoped the priorities of tackling climate change, dealing with inequalities, particularly in health and education, and in supporting community volunteers and carers would be taken forward by the new administration. He said there would be many challenges in the coming years and that KCC would have a major role in supporting the health and wellbeing of residents. He welcomed the increasing partnership working between the authority and local NHS organisations. He went on to say that the authority's most important partner was central government and that he was trying to understand how the government could have spent £37 million on a test and trace system which failed. He said the Chancellor's recent budget had been reasonably well received by the press but had done nothing to help local government. He noted that the authority was awaiting the allocation of public health grants which he thought was not good enough as the public health team needed to be planning for recovery and not wondering whether it would be possible to maintain existing services. He acknowledged the case for reform of local government finance made by the Leader to the Secretary of State and said the ever increasing reliance on an unfair council tax system to fund local services was untenable as it placed too great a burden on households that were just about managing.

- (12) Mr Bird said, although he and the Leader had not always agreed with each other's approach to issues, he was clear that there was a common bond of wanting the best for the residents of Kent among all members and parties. He hoped that the role of the council and, in particular, the work of officers over the last year was properly appreciated.
- (13) Mr Farrell, Leader of the Labour Group said that the government's recent budget was remarkable for what it failed to mention including how Covid-19 related expenditure would be repaid and the impact of the fact that in the future people would take home less of the money they earned. He wondered if austerity would return before it ever went away. He also commented on the £37 billion spent on the failed Covid-19 test and trace system and suggested that this money could have been spent giving each nurse a payment of just under £125,000. He went on to comment on the government's debate about whether to award NHS staff an extra £3.50 or an extra £7.50 a week, its expenditure of £340,000 plus legal fees to enable the Home Secretary to avoid the consequences of bullying, its unwillingness to fund meals for school children, and its re-heated policy on home ownership for young people. He said plans to turn 'generation rent' into 'generation buy' were laudable but there was a worrying lack of action on 'generation universal credit'. He further said that the number of people in receipt of Universal Credit had risen by 5.1% in the three months to December 2020, almost three-fifths of whom were under 25 years of age, and that the number of people on company payrolls was 726,000 down on pre-pandemic levels. He thought there was little point in offering young people a mortgage at an interest rate of 5% if they could not get a job to enable them to make the repayments. He said the Chancellor had been keen to advertise his budget on Instagram but there was nothing in it for schools, teachers, the Police, NHS staff and nothing in it to tackle inequalities or to fix social care. He said local councils were also ignored and wondered why the promised review of the Fair Funding and the Business Rate Retention schemes had not been completed and why the White Paper on Devolution and the Green Paper on Social Care Reform had not come forward. He said the national budget fell short in relation to councils who needed to help their communities recover from the pandemic and that the Levelling Up Fund smacked of trying to retain or buy votes in constituencies represented by Conservative MPs. He contrasted Robert Jenrick's intervention to assure approval of a Conservative party donor's £1 billion development within 24 hours with the fact that years after the Grenfell fire there were still 56,000 people living in homes with unsafe cladding.
- (14) Mr Farrell said the next administration at Kent County Council faced many challenges including an outdated local taxation system and many outdated key strategies. He suggested that the authority needed to move away from vanity projects and return to the day job of supporting communities and investing in services.
- (15) He concluded by acknowledging that this meeting was the last for some members. He said it had been an honour and a privilege to be a member of Kent County Council and to work with 80 other members. He also

wished to be associated with the words spoken by the Leader and the Chairman about Mrs Cooper and Mr Scott-Clark.

- (16) Mr Whybrow, Leader of the Independents Group, thanked the Chairman and the Vice-Chairman for their efforts and wished them very happy years ahead. He commended the Chairman for choosing Porchlight as his charity for the year. He thanked Mrs Cooper and Mr Scott-Clark for their hard work and wished them well. He thanked the Leader for his kind words and said that he too had appreciated good working relationships across the political spectrum. He said that one of the most positive aspects of his eight years as a county councillor had been the calibre, helpfulness and professionalism of officers and he thanked them. He concluded his thanks by thanking all the members of the opposition including his colleagues in the Independents Group.
- (17) Mr Whybrow then responded to the Leader's report. He said the numbing effects of a decade of austerity might be forgotten because of the slightly better than anticipated financial settlement and drew attention to the report of the National Audit Office which referred to the 'scarring of councils' balance sheets and to the fact that at least 25 councils were close to bankruptcy. He also suggested that the proposed pay increase of 1% for NHS and social care staff demonstrated the tone-deaf nature of the government. Mr Whybrow said the national budget had not been good from a green recovery perspective and that the only way to ensure recovery from the Covid-19 pandemic was through an economic transformation that prioritised the wellbeing of people and the planet over a fixation with growth and GDP. He expressed surprise that the government, which had signed up to the Paris Climate Agreement and was planning to host the COP26 Climate Summit later in the year, was also proposing to cut air passenger duty on domestic flights, had allowed a freeze on fuel duty and had agreed to eye-watering rail fare increases. He suggested that, even for KCC, there was a danger of a disconnect between the rhetoric relating to zero carbon and actions leading to results. He assumed that in future all KCC's own planning applications would be zero carbon in terms of carbon usage and that issues relating to its estate would be addressed soon. He further suggested that KCC's capital programme and bids considered by the Southeast Local Enterprise Partnership should support walking, cycling and public transport projects and reiterated his call for KCC to divest from fossil fuels.
- (18) Mr Whybrow concluded by saying he was not standing for re-election and looked forward to spending more time on activities in the community. He hoped there would be greater diversity among the next set of members and that central government would recognise the financial and other resources needed by the local government sector.
- (19) Mr Gough responded to the comments of the Group Leaders. He said the current administration had a record to be proud of on climate change and biodiversity. The administration had brought forward an Energy and Low Emissions Strategy and had set targets to achieve Net Zero for its estate and operations by 2030. He also said much thought had been given to responding to the social impact of Covid-19 and many of the

announcements made in recent weeks, including the Helping Hands funding, were aimed at addressing such issues, He also said these issues would be discussed further along with support for volunteers and carers later in the meeting.

- (20) Mr Gough said the authority's relationship with the local NHS was very good and acknowledged that the levels of centralisation within the NHS remained a key issue. He anticipated that a paper would be brought to the County Council about health and social care early in the new term. He also said the picture was mixed in relation to local government finance and that the funding Robert Jenrick had provided over the last year indicated that he had acted as a champion of the sector. He acknowledged that local government historically was not as high on the government's list of priorities as the NHS and armed forces.
- (21) Mr Gough said he did not propose to address Mr Farrell's comments about the central government and said his claim that the authority had few up to date strategies could not be substantiated and he referred in particular to the strategic reset and the interim strategic plan brought in when the authority had to step back from the widely-admired five-year plan because of Covid-19. He concluded by referring to the work underway to reach carbon zero in relation the authority's own estate and operations.
- (22) RESOLVED that the Leader's report be noted.

280. Pay Policy Statement 2021-22

(Item 7)

- (1) Mrs Prendergast proposed and Mr Oakford seconded the motion that:
- “The County Council endorses the Pay Policy Statement.”
- (2) Following the debate the Chairman put the motion set out in paragraph 1 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (65)

Mrs Allen, Mr Angell, Mr Balfour, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Beresford, Mrs Binks, Mr Bird, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Brazier, Mr Butler, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chittenden, Mrs Cole, Mr Collor, Mr Cook, Mr Cooke, Mr Cooper, Mrs Crabtree, Mr Dance, Mrs Dean, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Mrs Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Homewood, Mr Hook, Mr Horwood, Mr Hotson, Mrs Hurst, Mr Kite, Mr Lake, Ida Linfield, Mr Long, Mr Love, Mr Lymer, Mr Manion, Mr Marsh, Mr McInroy, Mr Messenger, Miss Morton, Mr Murphy, Mr Northey, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mr Pascoe, Mr Payne, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Pugh, Miss Rankin, Mr Rayner, Mr Ridgers, Mr Simkins, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Whiting, Mr Whybrow, Mr Wright

Against (6)

Mr Burden, Mr Clinch, Mr Farrell, Mr Harman, Mr Lewis, Dr Sullivan

Abstain (0)

Motion Carried.

(3) RESOLVED that the County Council endorses the Pay Policy Statement.

281. Treasury Management 6 Month Review 2020/21
(Item 8)

(1) Mr Oakford proposed and Mrs Crabtree seconded the following motion:

“Members are asked to consider and comment on this report.”

(2) The motion as set out in paragraph 1 was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED that the report be noted.

282. Covid-19 - Delivering through the Pandemic
(Item 9)

(1) Mr Gough proposed and Mrs Bell seconded the following motion:

“County Council is asked to note and comment on activity undertaken by KCC and partners to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and prepare for recovery.”

(2) The motion as set out in paragraph 1 was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED to note the activity undertaken by KCC and partners to respond to the Covid-19 pandemic and prepare for recovery.

283. Covid-19 Local Recovery Fund
(Item 10)

(1) Mr Oakford proposed and Mr Gough seconded the following motion:

“The County Council is asked to note the report and support the proposal to create the Covid-19 Local Recovery Fund for 2021-22 under part (a) of the Helping Hands Support Scheme via Executive Decision 21/00024.”

(2) The motion as set out in paragraph 1 was agreed without a formal vote.

(3) RESOLVED that the County Council notes the report and supports the proposal to create the Covid-19 Local Recovery Fund for 2021-22 under part (a) of the Helping Hands Support Scheme via Executive Decision 21/00024.

284. Motion for Time Limited Debate
(Item 11)

Promoting respite services in Kent

- (1) Ida Linfield proposed and Mrs Dean seconded the following motion:

“This Council notes the many benefits to health and wellbeing that respite services and short breaks provide to carers. However, it is clear that even before the current pandemic many carers in the county were not accessing any support. These numbers are likely to have increased markedly, and stress levels amongst carers are known to be very high.

The Council commits to actively promoting respite breaks for all carers across Kent by launching a new publicity campaign to raise awareness to those carers who have yet to take advantage of the short break and respite services to which they are entitled”.

- (2) Mrs Bell proposed and Miss Morton seconded the following amendment:

“This Council notes the many benefits to health and wellbeing that respite services and short breaks provide to carers. However, it is clear that even before the current pandemic many carers in the county were not accessing any support. These numbers are likely to have increased markedly, and stress levels amongst carers are known to be very high.

~~The Council commits to actively promoting respite breaks for all carers across Kent by launching a new publicity campaign to raise awareness to those carers who have yet to take advantage of the short break and respite services to which they are entitled.~~

The Council congratulates the administration on the Making a Difference Every Day programme. The Council further supports the determination of the administration to continue and expand on the work to improve engagement with carers, to raise awareness of the services available to carers, and to actively promote these services via the KCC Comms Team, as well as our partners in Primary Care, the voluntary sector, district councils and others, to ensure that carers across Kent are able to benefit from the short break and respite opportunities and other support available to them.”

- (3) Following the debate the Chairman put the amendment set out in paragraph 2 to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (54)

Mrs Allen, Mr Angell, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Beresford, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Bowles, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Collor, Mr Cook, Mr Cooke, Mr Cooper, Mrs Crabtree, Mr Dance, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Mrs Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Homewood, Mr Horwood, Mr Long, Mr Love,

Mr Lymer, Mr Manion, Mr McInroy, Mr Messenger, Mr Monk, Miss Morton, Mr Murphy, Mr Northey, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mr Pascoe, Mr Payne, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Pugh, Miss Rankin, Mr Rayner, Mr Ridgers, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Whiting, , Mr Wright

Against (11)

Mr Bird, Mr Burden, Mr Chittenden, Mr Clinch, Mrs Dean, Mr Harman, Mr Hook, Mr Hotson, Ida Linfield, Dr Sullivan, Mr Whybrow

Abstain (0)

Amendment carried.

- (4) The Chairman put the substantive motion set out in paragraph 2 above to the vote and the voting was as follows:

For (50)

Mrs Allen, Mr Barrington-King, Mr Bartlett, Mrs Bell, Mrs Beresford, Mrs Binks, Mr Bond, Mr Booth, Mr Bowles, Mr Brazier, Miss Carey, Sir Paul Carter, Mrs Chandler, Mr Chard, Mrs Cole, Mr Collor, Mr Cook, Mr Cooke, Mr Cooper, Mrs Crabtree, Mr Dance, Mrs Game, Mr Gough, Mrs Hamilton, Mr Hill, Mr Hills, Mrs Hohler, Mr Holden, Mr Homewood, Mr Long, Mr Love, Mr Lymer, Mr Manion, Mr McInroy, Mr Monk, Miss Morton, Mr Murphy, Mr Northey, Mr Oakford, Mr Ozog, Mr Pascoe, Mr Payne, Mrs Prendergast, Mr Pugh, Miss Rankin, Mr Rayner, Mr Sweetland, Mr Thomas, Mr Whiting, Mr Wright

Against (13)

Mr Angell, Mr Bird, Mr Burden, Mr Chittenden, Mr Clinch, Mrs Dean, Mr Harman, Mr Hook, Mr Hotson, Ida Linfield, Mr Messenger, Dr Sullivan, Mr Whybrow

Abstain (0)

Substantive motion carried.

- (5) RESOLVED that:

- (a) This Council notes the many benefits to health and wellbeing that respite services and short breaks provide to carers. However, it is clear that even before the current pandemic many carers in the county were not accessing any support. These numbers are likely to have increased markedly, and stress levels amongst carers are known to be very high.
- (b) The Council congratulates the administration on the Making a Difference Every Day programme. The Council further supports the determination of the administration to continue and expand on the

work to improve engagement with carers, to raise awareness of the services available to carers, and to actively promote these services via the KCC Comms Team, as well as our partners in Primary Care, the voluntary sector, district councils and others, to ensure that carers across Kent are able to benefit from the short break and respite opportunities and other support available to them.

285. Chairman's Remarks

The Chairman thanked members for their support and help during the life of the administration. He paid tribute to the leaders of the opposition groups and thanked them for their help in making virtual meetings work. He also thanked the Vice-Chairman, Mr Northey for his counsel and advice during the year. He thanked officers for their support and advice over the last four years and, in particular, over the last twelve months for their efforts in facilitating the move to virtual meetings of the council without any detriment to the democratic process. He concluded by thanking members who were not seeking re-election for their input and he wished those who were standing for re-election the best of luck.

By: Ben Watts, General Counsel (County Returning Officer)

To: County Council – 27th May 2021

Subject: The Returning Officer to submit the returns of persons elected to be County Councillors until 2025

Classification: Unrestricted

Summary: This report provides the formal return of those Councillors duly elected to the County Council for the period until May 2025

1. The election for 80 out of the 81 County Council seats took place on May 6th 2021, with the results being announced on May 7th 2021. In my capacity as County Returning Officer, the formal return of Councillors is set out in the appendix to this report.
2. As Members will be aware, these were elections conducted in challenging circumstances and preparations were largely made during periods of lockdown across the County. The safe delivery of these elections was very much a team effort and whilst impossible to mention everyone, I would like to draw Member's attention to some of the significant numbers of people who helped make these elections possible:
 - a. The twelve Deputy Returning Officers, their Electoral Services Teams, polling station teams and count staff for the safe delivery of the KCC election particularly given the challenges presented by COVID and multiple polls being conducted simultaneously.
 - b. My KCC Deputy Returning Officer, Lizzy Adam, for her outstanding work, technical expertise and patience
 - c. The KCC Elections Project Team (Peter Healey, Siân Connelly, Rebecca Binstead, Jill Kennedy-Smith, Ryan Thomas, Joel Cook, Tristan Godfrey)
 - d. Rachel Kennard for the procurement of PPE used at Polling Stations and Count Venues across the county
 - e. Guidance and advice from our soon to retire Director of Public Health, Andrew Scott-Clark, which allowed me to make pragmatic and informed decisions
 - f. Support from the KCC Health & Safety Team (Flavio Walker (retired), James Johnstone, Jamie Callaway)
 - g. Melanie Cowley for co-ordinating the use of KCC buildings as polling stations
 - h. Support from across People and Communications including Lidor Lapid and Nathanael Munckton for turning our ideas into the Results Map that worked so well on election results day, Kristie Lawton for the KCC Election webpages and notices, Christina Starte and Andrew Bose for co-ordinating a myriad of different activity, Lucie Beer for social media messaging and Lucy Mayor and the team for media liaison.

- i. KCC Count Team who uploaded all of the results as they were announced meaning that the results map was updated in real time including Matthew Dentten, Anna Taylor, Andrew Tait, Jaime Palmer, Joanne Holmes, Hannah Lucey-Lamb, Léonie Harrington, Emily Kennedy, Kay Goldsmith, Theresa Grayell, and to Cantium Business Services for supporting KCC staff attending the count (VIP Support) and monitoring servers (Chris Beer and Carl Palmer)
 - j. Fiona Dawson for enforcement activity relating to campaign material on KCC property
 - k. Lee Manser for insurance queries relating to the election
 - l. Anne Brierley for support with KCC boundaries and demographic data
 - m. All of the KCC staff who worked in a polling station, at a count, or who enabled a KCC building or asymptomatic testing site to be used as a polling station
3. In accordance with the Council's governance, I will report in further detail on the election outcomes and provide a lessons learned report to inform future elections to the Electoral and Boundary Review Committee later in the year.

Recommendation

Members are asked to NOTE the formal return of Councillors duly elected to the County Council for the period until May 2025.

COUNTY COUNCIL

ELECTION OF COUNTY COUNCILLORS

To the Democratic Services Manager of Kent County Council

I, BENJAMIN WATTS, County Returning Officer for the County of Kent, DO HEREBY RETURN the attached list of names as the persons being duly elected as County Councillors from 71* Electoral Divisions at the election held on 6 May 2021.

**The election of a county councillor in the Elham Valley division was cancelled following the death of a candidate. A new election for this division has been scheduled for Thursday 17 June.*

Dated this 7th day of May 2021

Signed:



COUNTY RETURNING OFFICER

Sessions House
County Hall
Maidstone
Kent ME14 1XQ

Division	Elected Candidate	Political Party
Ashford Central	Pau Bartlett	Conservative
Ashford East	Steven Campkin	Green Party
Ashford Rural East	Clair Bell	Conservative
Ashford Rural South	David Robey	Conservative
Ashford Rural West	Charlie Simkins	Conservative
Ashford South	Dirk Ross	Conservative
Birchington & Rural	Derek Crow-Brown	Conservative
	Linda Wright	Conservative
Broadstairs	Rosalind Binks	Conservative
Canterbury City North	Alister Brady	Labour and Co-operative Party
Canterbury City South	Mel Dawkins	Labour and Co-operative Party
Canterbury North	Robert Thomas	Conservative
Canterbury South	Mike Sole	Liberal Democrat
Cheriton Sandgate & Hythe East	Rory Love, OBE	Conservative
Cliftonville	Lesley Game	Conservative
Cranbrook	Seán Holden	Conservative
Dartford East	Penny Cole	Conservative
Dartford North East	Kelly Grehan	Labour
Dartford Rural	Jeremy Kite, MBE	Conservative
Dartford West	Jan Ozog	Conservative
Deal & Walmer	Trevor Bond	Conservative
	Derek Murphy	Conservative
Dover North	Steve Manion	Conservative
Dover Town	Nigel Collor	Conservative
	Oliver Richardson	Conservative
Dover West	David Beaney	Conservative
Faversham	Antony Hook	Liberal Democrat
Folkestone East	Jackie Meade	Labour
Folkestone West	Dylan Jeffrey	Conservative
Gravesend East	Jordan Meade	Conservative
	Alan Ridgers	Conservative
Gravesham Rural	Bryan Sweetland	Conservative
Herne Bay East	Dan Watkins	Conservative
Herne Village & Sturry	Alan Marsh	Conservative
Hythe West	Andy Weatherhead	Conservative
Maidstone Central	Tom Cannon	Conservative
	Dan Daley	Liberal Democrat
Maidstone North East	Ian Chittenden	Liberal Democrat

Maidstone Rural East	Shellina Prendergast	Conservative
Maidstone Rural North	Sir Paul Carter, CBE	Conservative
Maidstone Rural South	Lottie Parfitt-Reid	Conservative
Maidstone Rural West	Simon Webb	Conservative
Maidstone South	Paul Cooper	Conservative
Maidstone South East	Gary Cooke	Conservative
Malling Central	Trudy Dean, MBE	Liberal Democrat
Malling North	Sarah Hohler	Conservative
Malling North East	Andrew Kennedy	Conservative
Malling Rural East	Sarah Hudson	Conservative
Malling West	Harry Rayner	Conservative
Margate	Barry Lewis	Labour
Northfleet & Gravesend West	Conrad Broadley	Conservative
	Dr Lauren Sullivan	Labour
Ramsgate	Karen Constantine	Labour
	Trevor Shonk	Conservative
Romney Marsh	Tony Hills	Conservative
Sandwich	Sue Chandler	Conservative
Sevenoaks North & Darent Valley	Roger Gough	Conservative
Sevenoaks Rural North East	David Brazier	Conservative
Sevenoaks Rural South	Margot McArthur	Conservative
Sevenoaks Town	Richard Streatfeild, MBE	Liberal Democrat
Sevenoaks West	Nick Chard	Conservative
Sheppey	Cameron Beart	Conservative
	Andy Booth	Conservative
Sittingbourne North	Mike Dendor	Conservative
Sittingbourne South	John Wright	Conservative
Swale East	Rich Lehmann	Green Party
Swale West	Mike Baldock	Swale Independents
Swanley	Perry Cole	Conservative
Swanscombe and Greenhithe	Peter Harman	Swanscombe & Greenhithe Residents' Association
Tenterden	Mike Hill, OBE	Conservative
Tonbridge	Mark Hood	Green Party
	Paul Stepto	Green Party
Tunbridge Wells East	Paul Barrington-King	Conservative
Tunbridge Wells North	Peter Oakford	Conservative
Tunbridge Wells Rural	Sarah Hamilton	Conservative
Tunbridge Wells South	Becki Bruneau	Conservative

Tunbridge Wells West	James McInroy	Conservative
Whitstable East & Herne Bay West	Neil Baker	Conservative
Whitstable West	Mark Dance	Conservative
Wilmington	Ann Allen, MBE	Conservative

CORPORATE PARENTING PANEL – 16 FEBRUARY 2021

NOTES of a briefing held on Microsoft Teams.

PRESENT: Mrs A D Allen, MBE (Chairman), Ida Linfield (Vice-Chairman), Mr R Barton, Ms J Bayford, Ms D Bride, Ms C Chapman, Mr G Cooke, Mr T Doran, Ms S Dunstan, Mrs L Game, Mr S Gray, Ms S Hamilton, Mrs S Prendergast, Ms N Sayer, Mrs T C Scott and Ms C Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Mrs S Chandler, Mr R L H Long, TD, and Dr Lisa Holmes (Rees Centre, Oxford University)

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Dunkley CBE (Corporate Director of Children Young People and Education), Ms C Barton (Family Group Conferencing Team Manager), Ms J Carpenter (Participation and Engagement Manager, Virtual School Kent), Ms C Holden (Head of Commissioning - Children's), Mr N Patel (Head of 18+ Care Leaving Service (North & West)), Mrs M Robinson (Management Information Unit Service Manager), Mr M Walker (Interim Director for Disabled Children and Young People), Mr M Weinel (Head of 18+ Care Leaving Service (South and East)), Miss T A Grayell (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr G Romagnuolo (Research Officer - Overview and Scrutiny)

1. Membership

The Chairman welcomed Charmaine Chapman, who had joined the Panel as a new Virtual School Kent (VSK) apprentice and said how pleased she was to have another young person on the Panel.

2. Apologies and substitutes

Apologies for absence had been received from Sarah Hammond, Geoff Lymer and Sarah Vaux.

3. Chairman's Announcements

The Chairman thanked the Corporate Parenting teams who had organised the Christmas appeal and all those who had contributed to it so generously. The appeal had raised enough money to give a Christmas gift to every care leaver as well as gift hampers to disabled children and those in the youth justice system. She added that she was always proud of what the VSK team did on behalf of the children and young people in care and in representing their views and interests.

4. Notes of the briefing held on 1 December 2020

These were accepted as a fair summary. There was nothing arising.

5. Update from Children in Care Councils – written report

1. Jo Carpenter advised the Panel that Charmaine Chapman had joined the VSK team as an Apprentice, specialising in supporting young people who had been

adopted, and that three VSK Apprentices – Amy Barden, Tom Byrne and Alex Gordon – had completed their Apprenticeship Level 3 in Operational Delivery.

2. Charmaine introduced herself and advised that she had been a member of the Adoptables group and sought to help other young people, using her experience of having been adopted and the support that she had received. She had come to know the work of the VSK team and wanted to support that work.

3. Sophia Dunstan and Rob Barton then introduced the report on the work of the participation team, young people's councils, social groups and engagement. A new participation group had been established for the children of foster parents and six young people had attended the group's first session. The Young Adult Council had been planning its meeting sessions, which included Paul Manwaring from the Practice Development Team to talk about decision making and Stephen Gray of the Young Lives Foundation (YLF) to talk about information and advice packs prepared to support young people moving out of a foster placement. Charmaine set out participation events planned for half term. Jo added that the team had been reflecting on how they had worked and supported each other, and young people in care and leaving care, through 2020.

4. The team had made several films reflecting the views and concerns of children and young people in care. The latest film was about experiences of growing up in a children's home and this was shown to the Panel. The film was narrated by a young man who talked about his good experience of the staff and the relationships he formed there and set out what the skills he thought were most important for residential home staff. Many young people were happy in care homes and preferred them to a foster placement or adoption but needed to be well prepared for when they left the home. Living in a children's home still carried some stigma, however, a suggestion that young people were there because they were 'bad' or troublesome and had been placed there as a last resort when other options had failed. The film emphasised the importance of children's home staff listening to young people's concerns and preferences. The video was very well received by the Panel. The Chairman asked if Independent Visitors could have a role in supporting young people in children's homes and asked what more corporate parents could do to support them. She emphasised the ups and downs of living in any shared space, be it a family home or residential care – it would sometimes be noisy, siblings would sometimes argue and be annoying and there would always be some rules which needed to be followed. Matt Dunkley praised the quality of the films made by the team and highlighted the organisational and production skills these demonstrated.

5. Asked for more details about the comments made in the film, for example, about the stigma of living in a home, and if homes felt at all 'institutional', Sophia advised that the comment about stigma had been expressed by teenagers. Younger children in homes would be asked for their views on the subjects covered. Jo reassured the Panel that homes were very welcoming and homely places and were not at all institutional. Nancy Sayer added that the homes she had visited in her work with the Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) had impressed her as being very homely.

6. Dr Lisa Holmes from the Rees Centre in Oxford, who was attending for the Lifelong Links item (minute 11, below) also commented on the quality of the film and said the work on residential care could contribute to her own research into strengthening the voice of the child and young person and exploring the view that residential care was seen by some as a last resort. She asked to be able to use the film to contribute to her research and the VSK team confirmed they were happy to allow this.

7. The establishment of a new participation group for children of foster carers was welcomed as it supported the idea that everyone had a part to play in giving young people an inclusive family setting.

8. The verbal updates were NOTED, with thanks and congratulations on the team's success with their completed qualifications and excellent films.

6. Challenge Card Update

1. Jo Carpenter introduced a challenge from the Super Council, that the promise in the Kent Pledge to provide young people in care with a computer be extended to include 7 to 11-year olds (Key Stage 2). Children in this age group were expected to complete schoolwork online, particularly in the current restrictions, and many did not have their own device to use so had to borrow one and were limited in the time they had to use it. Tony Doran advised that VSK had set its current budget of £80k, based on the cost of providing secondary age pupils with a device, and would need to assess the cost and feasibility of extending this to include primary age pupils, for whom an additional 70 devices would be needed. He was exploring three costed options:

- Extend the current offer to include KS2, at a cost of £28k for 70 laptops.
- Extend the current offer to include KS2, at a cost of £23k for 70 lower-spec netbooks.
- Change the spec for all devices to provide netbooks instead of laptops. This would meet 99% of needs at a cost of only an additional £5k on the current allocated budget.

2. Asked if these were indeed the most cost-effective options, as one Panel member had used his County Council Member grant to provide a local primary school with 10 tablets at a cost of £500, Tony advised that he had looked at using fire books, however, their use would depend on a school's IT policy, which would differ from school to school; any offer made to children in care would need to be universal. He undertook to check again that there were no further options for the Key Stage 2 age group, as younger children were known to manage better with the larger keyboard and screen offered by a laptop. Julianne Bayford added that the needs of carers supporting pupils would also need to be considered; some foster families might be supporting several children, each using a different IT format for their schoolwork. She suggested that more detail on equipment to meet the child's needs could be included in their e.PEP. Sue Chandler supported the need to take a flexible approach as schools' approaches could change so rapidly, especially in the current restrictions, and corporate parents needed to ensure that they were able to support children in care through their school life as effectively as possible. Some local initiatives existed which sought to supply schools with donated laptops and she

undertook to look into local schemes in her area as an example which could potentially be duplicated elsewhere.

3. The challenge was NOTED, with thanks, and the actions being taken welcomed, and the Panel agreed that all options be investigated to best meet the challenge.

7. Verbal Update by Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services

1. The Cabinet Member for Integrated Children's Services, Sue Chandler, gave a verbal update on the following issues:-

National Apprenticeship Week, 8–12 February 2021 - the County Council celebrated the successes of its apprentices as part of National Apprenticeship week. Youth Justice Participation Apprentices had been in post just over a year and continued to do an amazing job in capturing the voices of young people across the service, as well as offering a meet and greet service at court for all young people, to support them and walk them through the process. She took opportunity to pay tribute to everyone who had completed an apprenticeship with the County Council to date and to all those who were currently working towards one. Now, more than ever, apprentices would be invaluable to the recovery of businesses as the county headed out of the pandemic.

Try Angle Awards – the Spirit of Try Angle Awards ceremony would take place virtually on 12 March 2021. The awards were in their 26th year and celebrated young people and groups who really tried their best, whether at school, work, college, in business or in their wider community across Kent, often with little recognition and in difficult circumstances. There were eight categories this year. Sue would attend the award ceremony on behalf of the County Council.

Care Leaver Housing - on Monday 1 February 2021, the former Supported Lodgings (SLODs) Service transferred to the management of the County Council under the new name of Kent Supported Homes. The new service was a key part of the wider accommodation offer for young people, supported by both the Child in Care teams and the 18+ Care Leavers Service. The wider aim was to build on the service to provide a more integrated and flexible accommodation offer to young people aged 16 and over within the care system. Sue welcomed the former Catch22 staff who had transferred to the County Council and said she looked forward to seeing the development of the service over the coming months.

Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children (UASC) update – the County Council had announced on 7 December 2020 that it had resumed receiving new arrivals of unaccompanied asylum-seeking children into the Council's care, but had given a warning that a long-term solution needed to be implemented to avoid overwhelming Kent services again. The Council continued to work with the Home Office on short-, medium- and long-term plans towards a sustainable and equitable national system for the care of UASC, and continued to hope for a mandated National Transfer Scheme.

2. Asked to clarify the short-, medium- and long-term solutions for UASC, Sue explained that:
- in terms of short and medium-term solutions, lateral flow testing was used to avoid UASC needing to quarantine upon arrival, unless they tested positive, and extra Home Office resources would be allocated to help resolve age disputes and status issues more quickly so UASC could move on to take up employment and support themselves.
 - a longer-term solution would be offered by making the National Transfer Scheme mandatory and by securing more funding for UASC care leavers. The Local Government Association was working with the Home Office on this and the Leader of the County Council, Roger Gough, was involved in negotiations.

3. Matt Dunkley responded to concerns about the length of time taken to establish UASC status, and the danger of young people going missing during this time. He advised that the process could take several years, during which the County Council would be responsible for their care. The average age of arrivals was 16–17 so they would be 23-24 by the time their status was determined. Since 2015, 95% of UASC care leavers had been granted indefinite leave to remain. If this process could be made quicker, young people could start to work and support themselves earlier, reducing their dependence on the County Council, and the Department for Education supported this view. Most who went missing went very soon after arrival and had to be recorded as missing, even if the County Council knew where they were.

4. The verbal updates were NOTED, with thanks.

8. Performance Scorecard for Children in Care

1. Maureen Robinson introduced the scorecard and advised that there had been little change since last reporting. The number of initial health assessments being completed on time had increased month on month but the number of dental checks completed had decreased, largely due to the impact of the covid-19 pandemic. This impact had also caused a delay in court hearings for special guardianship orders and adoptions. Some foster carers had experienced problems accessing dental appointments for children but had been more successful when reminding the surgery of the child's care status. Caroline Smith confirmed that all foster carers had been made aware of the need to do this. There was some backlog of cases due to lockdown but improvement was expected soon.

2. The performance data in the Corporate Parenting Scorecard was NOTED, with thanks for the work which goes into collating and updating the information, to keep corporate parents informed.

9. Missing Looked After Young People - Annual Report

1. Dan Bride introduced the report and highlighted the main patterns identified from data. She emphasised that missing incidents had reduced during the time of the

pandemic restrictions and lockdown, that most children in care did not go missing at all and that those who did were isolated incidents only. The few young people who had been missing for an extended period (between 2-4 weeks and one year) were all UASC and were mostly male. If a young person had been missing for more than 48 hours, multi-agency work would start and be escalated to a national scale if necessary. Kent was an active user of the National Referral Mechanism and its practice was more robust than that of many other local authorities. The cases of young people missing for a long period would be monitored closely for the first six months and then three-monthly from then onwards.

2. The process for conducting return interviews was to be reviewed, to help the Council to understand fully the reasons for missing episodes. Young people would be asked whom they wanted to speak to, for example, if they did not want to speak to a social worker they could have their interview with someone from the YLF. The language used would also be changed, with 'conversation' replacing 'interview'.

3. A new model, the Complex Adolescent Harm Framework (CAHF), sought to help the Council better understand reasons for and patterns of missing episodes and work would continue to develop this to the point at which it could start to produce useable data.

4. The information set out in the report was NOTED, with thanks, and the work being done to develop understanding of missing episodes was welcomed.

10. Care Leavers 18+ Service progress report

1. Caroline Smith introduced the report and advised that, although the number of responses to the survey had been small, most responses had been positive and had rated the service favourably. The County Council was working on its accommodation offer to care leavers, and the service previously supplied by Catch22 had been brought back in-house on 1 February 2021. Part of the Council's response to the survey would be to manage young people's expectations of the support the Council could provide, particularly in terms of accommodation. 2020 had been a very difficult year and there had been four unexpected deaths among care leavers. The Panel was assured that the young people most affected by these deaths had been offered bereavement support.

2. Caroline, Nimesh Patel and Mark Weinel responded to comments and questions from the Panel, including the following:-

- a) the pilots of the rent guarantor scheme and Council Tax rebate scheme had both cost less than expected. The rent guarantor scheme in particular had been very timely and had worked well to support young people who had fallen behind with their rent as a result of the economic impact of the pandemic. Both schemes would become part of the ongoing local offer to care leavers;
- b) the unexpected deaths had occurred early on in the pandemic restrictions in 2020. Risk assessments had been carried out and support offered to the people most affected by the deaths, for example, flatmates and friends, as

well as carers or former carers. Some had taken this up and some had not yet but had been asked to keep in touch. These conversations had been face-to-face rather than virtual and had used appropriate personal protection equipment. Staff had received training in supporting young people most at risk of struggling with their mental health, and multi-disciplinary meetings with CAMHS and the Kent and Medway NHS and Social Care Partnership Trust were seeking to improve links between professionals to best support young people facing crisis. It was hoped that this joint working could be rolled out across the whole county, and a specialist bereavement service would be procured.

3. The information set out in the report was NOTED, with thanks.

11. Lifelong Links Evaluation - Rees Centre, Oxford

1. Clare Barton introduced the report and thanked Rob and Brad from VSK for their help in making a film to promote Lifelong Links, which launched on 28 January. Although additional funding for 6 months had been given by the Family Rights Group, the current funding would still end in 2021. Dr Lisa Holmes from the Rees Centre thanked all those who had contributed to the evaluation of the pilot project and summarised the key points of the findings, including that 91% of young people reported good outcomes from meeting family members, also that anxiety that a young person meeting their birth family may lead to instability of their placement had been largely unfounded. A template would be prepared for all local authorities to use. Clare added that she was on the working group which would put the findings into place.

2. Julianne Bayford advised that experienced foster carers tended to support Lifelong Links more readily than newer carers and she supported it being made available to as many young people as possible. Lisa commented that in many other local authorities, it tended to be newer foster carers who were more open to it. The concept of Lifelong Links tended to be easier to accept when it was introduced early in a placement. Lifelong Links would be built into all foster carers' training, and it was hoped that any carers who were sceptical could be encouraged by those who had embraced it more readily. Matt Dunkley added that a young person's contact with their birth family could be difficult to manage but, if managed well, could be very successful. To work well, Lifelong Links would need to have a structure and establish practice principles, including an evaluation mechanism. Clare advised that Kent was the first local authority to have an accredited Lifelong Links service. Sue Chandler added that the positive stories of young people who had benefitted from Lifelong Links would be helpful in promoting it, and the enthusiasm for the scheme shown by the Minister for Children, Vicky Ford, would also be a great help. The Chairman said how proud she was that Kent was a trailblazer in Lifelong Links.

3. The information set out in the report and the continuation of the Lifelong Links project in Kent were NOTED, with thanks.

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