

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 10 May 2022.

PRESENT: Mr R C Love, OBE (Chairman), Mr N Baker (Vice-Chairman), Mrs R Binks, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Ms M Dawkins, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Mr S C Manion, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr A M Ridgers, Mr D Robey, Mr M J Sole and Mr S Webb

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE and Mr D Murphy

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport), Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities), Hayley Savage (Democratic Services Officer) and Mr D Smith (Director of Economic Development)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

62. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

There were no apologies for absence and there were no substitutes.

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

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

64. Minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 22 March 2022 were a correct record.

65. Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 5)

1. Mr Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, gave a verbal update on the following:
 - a) The Amelia Scott in Tunbridge Wells opened on 28 April 2022. The £21 million project was delivered by Tunbridge Wells Borough Council in partnership with KCC, the National Heritage Lottery Fund and Arts Council England.

- b) Mr Hill visited the set of the film 'Empire of Light' in Margate at the end of April 2022. A report on the work of the Kent Film Office would be presented to a future Cabinet Committee.
 - c) Lullingstone Country Park had been chosen as one of the 70 ancient woodlands to make up the Ancient Canopy, part of The Queen's Green Canopy to commemorate the Platinum Jubilee.
 - d) The 10th anniversary of the opening of the Kent History and Library Centre was celebrated by a series of public events on 23 April 2022.
2. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, gave a verbal update on the following:
- a) On 28 April 2022 the government announced that import controls on EU goods to Great Britain would not be introduced in 2022. Mr Murphy and the Leader of the Council were working with Leaders of Dover District Council and Ashford Borough Council to minimise the impact on the local workforce.
 - b) The Council had been liaising with Visit Kent, Locate in Kent and the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce to gauge the impact nationally of the P&O ferries not operating at Dover and the consequences of Operation Brock.
 - c) On 27 April 2022 Mr Murphy attended a jobs fayre organised by Dover District Council in response to the redundancies caused by P&O. The Department for Work and Pensions were also present for benefit advice.
 - d) On 28 April 2022 Mr Murphy visited Dungeness Power Station to gain a better understanding of the economic issues that would impact the area on the closure of the existing power station. The KCC Business and Enterprise Team continued to work closely with interested parties including the local MP, the district council, and Rolls Royce on the future of the site.
 - e) The Mayor of Dartford opened Arc-UK Technologies' new state of the art carbon neutral facility in Kent on 29 April 2022 and Mr Murphy was visiting the site on 29 June 2022.
3. Mr Jones, Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport, then gave a verbal update on the following:
- a) The Libraries, Registration and Archive Service was significantly impacted throughout the pandemic but was now operating a full service. Death registrations had returned to face-to-face appointments and the Registrar Team was experiencing an increase in ceremonies.
 - b) The Trading Standards Checked Team were working with traders to ensure they provided a safe and reliable service to Kent residents. The Operations Manager of the Trading Standards Team, Clive Phillips, had been made Deputy Chair of the new Kent and Medway Multi Agency Fraud Panel. The Trading Standards Service recently joined the Strategic Organised Crime Meeting and had taken the lead nationally in looking after organised crime groups. The Construction Products Regulation (CPR) was being amended,

following the Grenfell disaster, and would be enforced by Trading Standards. Esther Osborn was taking the Chair of the newly formed Construction Products Panel.

- c) The Domestic Homicide Review team continued to manage a busy caseload which was at its highest level for many years. The team developed two events in March and April 2022 to share learning from recent investigations which over 160 practitioners had attended.
 - d) The Community Wardens continued to provide valuable support to Kent residents. There was an increased reliance on food banks due to the cost-of-living crisis and community wardens were directing residents to the right resources to help them gain support. Community Wardens were also working with charities and other organisations to help those supporting refugees in Ukraine or those who had relocated to the UK.
4. Mr Murphy, Mr Hill and Mr Jones responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
- a) Asked about the work of Trading Standards in relation to the cladding quality issue on buildings, Mr Jones said the Trading Standards team would be involved in the enforcement of manufacturing legislated materials.
 - b) Asked whether library staff were trained to identify vulnerable people affected by the cost-of-living crisis, Mr Jones said librarians could direct residents to relevant services and support.
 - c) Asked how community wardens could support elderly residents who were anxious following the pandemic, and how their own mental health was supported, Mr Jones said managers were trained to give mentoring support and community wardens had access to their own mental health support and were provided with training to spot those becoming overwhelmed. In terms of signposting wardens worked with other authorities and charities and were a single point of contact for residents, businesses, and communities.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted.

66. KCC Public Protection - Coroner Service

(Item 6)

Ms Debbie Large, Head of Public Protection Coroner Service, and Mr Mike Overbeke, Group Head – Public Protection, were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Hill introduced the report and said it highlighted the challenges and progress that had taken place since the Council took over from Kent Police in January 2014.
2. Mr Overbeke said the service was unique in that the Council was the employer of coroner service staff and the senior coroners were responsible for the service and held an independent judicial function.

3. Ms Large provided the historical context of the service, the transformation and modernisation that had taken place since the 2013 Coroner's Act and the introduction of the Chief Coroner, the coroner's role, and the circumstances under which investigations took place. Ms Large said the transformation had put the perspectives and experiences of families at the centre of their work.
4. Ms Large and Mr Overbeke responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
 - a) Members discussed the shortage of pathologists and how this could be resolved. Ms Large said there was a shortage of pathologists who wished to carry out post-mortems and the issue was understood by the Chief Coroner and Ministry of Justice.
 - b) Asked about storage facilities in Aylesford and its ability to facilitate stillborn storage, Ms Large said stillborn post-mortem examinations required specialist paediatric pathologists and specific mortuary facilities. Specific mortuary facilities were not currently provided by the Kent NHS mortuaries and Kent did not have a paediatric centre.
 - c) Asked how the quality of service was monitored by feedback and data, Ms Large said a new electronic system, developed during the pandemic provided data reporting and key performance indicators were produced on some core business. Feedback from families was difficult due to the nature of the service. A coroner's website was being scoped for development during 2022 which would provide families and stakeholders with a mechanism to provide feedback.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

67. District Visits Programme - Recent Visit to Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council
(Item 7)

Mr Rob Hancock, Programme Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Murphy introduced the report and was positive about the recommencement of the visits, their benefit in breaking down barriers between the Council and the districts and welcomed feedback from Members.
2. Mr Hancock outlined the programme of future visits with the next visit taking place on 20 May 2022 to Sevenoaks. Mr Hancock asked Members wishing to attend, and who had not yet registered, to let him know as soon as possible.
3. Members discussed and endorsed an additional focus, in terms of economic development and communities, of visiting projects where Kent County Council and/or partnership organisations and businesses had invested in services for residents. Members discussed the benefit of incorporating visits to places such as the Turner Contemporary in Margate, the Amelia Scott in Tunbridge Wells and Dungeness Power Station.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee reflected on the visit and made recommendations to the Cabinet Member on the future visits programme.

68. Apprenticeship Update and KCC's Support Role

(Item 8)

Ms Michelle Flegg, Workforce Development Strategy Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Murphy introduced the report and highlighted the importance of apprenticeships and investing in young people.
2. Ms Flegg provided a background summary of the apprenticeship levy introduced by government in 2017 and explained how the levy had been used within KCC and how it had been shared with employers. Ms Flegg said the Kickstart programme was a £2billion funded national programme which was aimed at creating six-month work placements for unemployed people within the age group of 16-24 who were deemed to be at risk of long-term unemployment. The programme closed to entrants on 31 March 2022 with placements due to be completed by September 2022. Ms Flegg provided the statistics of people on the scheme and a summary of the financial implications. Ms Flegg said the Council was exploring the possibility of T levels, joint apprenticeships, and traineeships.
3. Mr D Smith said the Leader as Chairman of the Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce had issued a press release urging employers to share their apprenticeship levy. The press release was circulated to Members following the meeting.
4. Ms Flegg and Mr D Smith responded to comments and questions from the committee, including the following:
 - a) Asked about the low figure for Local Authority Trading Companies (LATCOs), Ms Flegg said in the previous two years there had been a lot of activity within Cantium Solutions, and this figure would increase in the next financial year as the financial activity was balanced.
 - b) A Member said data for the last four years would be useful so that figures could be compared year on year.
 - c) Only 22% of apprentices were under 24 and only 6% under the age of 18, and a Member asked how these figures could be improved. Ms Flegg said apprenticeships were accessed by existing employees for their professional development. The employment of young people into the organisation and the availability of appropriate apprenticeship standards for the work of the Council affected these figures.
 - d) Asked about the difference in gender breakdown Ms Flegg said this was reflective of the gender breakdown of the organisation.
 - e) Regarding the sharing of the apprenticeship levy, Ms Flegg said this was not being shared with commissioned services but was being shared with small

and medium sized employers across Kent, for example a construction company or care home.

- f) Asked if there was an incentive to meet targets, Ms Flegg said figures were reported on an annual basis to government. The public sector target moving forward into the next financial year had been disbanded and a league table would be used.
- g) Asked about apprenticeships within the care sector and the need to encourage people into higher grade jobs, Ms Flegg said there was a range of apprenticeship levels being offered within KCC to provide career and development pathways.

RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee noted the current position and the numbers achieved during the last financial year and commented on future direction.

69. Kent and Medway Economic Strategy

(Item 9)

This Item was taken before Item 8 – Apprenticeship Update and KCC's Support Role.

Mr Ross Gill was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Murphy introduced the draft strategy and asked Members to consider the questions under paragraph 6.2 of the report.
2. Mr D Smith provided a background summary of the draft economic strategy and the way forward in its development and improvement before it would be adopted by the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership.
3. Mr Gill said earlier versions of the strategy had been shared with colleagues in the Kent and Medway Economic Partnership and the districts to draw together a comprehensive evidence base. Mr Gill ran through the questions outlined in paragraph 6.2. A strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threat (SWOT) analysis had been carried out and three high level objectives had been identified along with five ambitions. Mr Gill said the strategy aligned with the Strategic Statement and was part of the Strategic Reset Programme.
4. Asked how the Shared Prosperity Fund could be accessed for the deprived and economically underperforming areas in Kent, Mr Smith said the strategy would address the long-standing places of Kent which had previously not been able to improve. The strategy provided the evidence base for propositions to government and district councils, and action plans would be developed alongside the framework.
5. Members provided feedback which included:
 - There were opportunities from Brexit by way of trade deals for businesses and it should not be classed as a threat.
 - Innovation and an export focus be included as high-level objectives.
 - Sustainable and Inclusive were important but as secondary objectives and properties of economic activity.

- Flexible working was not just an opportunity but also a threat due to lower productivity. Working in offices was important for the hospitality industry.
 - The framework be adapted to reflect the pandemic recovery and reversion to pre-pandemic working.
 - Important to recognise that Kent was the nearest part of the UK to other countries and a global focused county.
 - Population growth and higher than average building of houses could be a threat to communities due to the lack of infrastructure and effect on agricultural land.
 - Kent had many individual competing economies, and the strategy could focus on key sectors and how they could benefit from the strategy.
 - An executive summary be included at the start of the document to highlight the key points.
 - The inclusion of a focus on global research to promote universities and attract academics, and support for creative businesses and the music industry.
 - More explanation of inclusivity.
 - Green economy was an opportunity and should include training and apprenticeships.
 - The third ambition – *Secure resilient infrastructure for planned, sustainable growth* – was not just an ambition but also a necessity.
 - Opportunity to find a permanent solution for the use of the M20 as a lorry park when looking at the economic development of Kent and infrastructure investment.
6. The Chair highlighted the importance of a sense of ambition for residents and businesses across Kent being built into the document and Members agreed the framework was a good starting point.

RESOLVED that the committee gave feedback to the Cabinet Member on the development of the Strategy and the draft framework.

70. Infrastructure Funding - All Member Briefing Scoping Paper (Item 10)

Mr Nigel Smith, Head of Development, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr N Smith introduced the report and highlighted the proposed scope for a future All Member Briefing on developer contributions. Mr Smith asked Members to consider the bullet points on page 74 of the Reports Pack.
2. The Chair reminded Members that any comments made during the item were subject to any legislative changes that may subsequently arise, and Mr Jones confirmed that the All Member Briefing would include all prevailing and impending legislation. The Chair asked for any legislative changes to be circulated to Members prior to the All Member Briefing.
3. Members noted the importance of analysing discrepancies between districts that operate Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) and those that operate Section 106 Agreements, specifically in respect to special educational needs and disability (SEND) provision, and that responsibility for extended education provision also fell under the CYPE directorate.

RESOLVED that the committee reviewed and made recommendations to the Cabinet Member on the proposed scope of an 'All Member Briefing' and any subsequent legislative changes following the meeting would be circulated to Members ahead of the All Member Briefing.

71. Kent and Medway Business Fund Bi-Annual Monitoring - Q3 2021/22
(Item 11)

Mr Martyn Riley, Project Manager, was in attendance for this item

1. Mr Riley introduced the report and said it was an accumulative report that highlighted the number of jobs created and the amount of loans allocated since 2012. Mr Riley summarised the main issues.
2. Asked whether there was a record of the number of jobs lost, Mr Riley said the cumulative total job figures took account of the jobs that had been created and monitored and in existence for 2 years. If jobs were lost during monitoring, then these were no longer recorded in the total jobs figures. This was a government requirement.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

72. Performance Dashboard
(Item 12)

Ms Rachel Kennard, Chief Analyst, was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Kennard introduced the Performance Dashboard for Quarter 3 of 2021/2022, highlighted the key areas of performance, and summarised the proposed Key Performance Indicators (KPI) for year 2022/2023.
2. Ms Kennard responded to comments and questions from the committee, including the following:
 - a) Asked about the target level for LRA20 – *Customer satisfactions with PCs and Wi-fi* – and whether the KPI could be split, Ms Kennard said the KPIs for Libraries, Registrations and Archives had been reviewed and there would be an overall satisfaction rating for the library service. This KPI would be monitored at service level and Mr Jones said the service had been affected by the pandemic and the satisfaction level would need to be monitored.
 - b) Asked about Trading Standards performance (TS01 and TS02) and the reduction in performance, Ms Holt-Castle said this was partly due to where business intervention fell within the quarter and the time involved. There were three drivers including the complexity of the issue, secondly whether the issue became an investigation and thirdly whether the intervention was ignored.
 - c) Asked about SPA03 – *Percentage of schools with a high proportion of pupils eligible for free school means engaging with the Kent School Games* – and what was considered a high proportion, Mr Jones said the information would be circulated to Members after the meeting.

The below information was provided by the Kent Analytics Team and subsequently circulated to Members:

It is the top 30% of schools in terms of percentage of pupils eligible for Free School Meals (176 schools in total), which, based on latest data, means it is those schools who have 28.4% or more pupils eligible for Free School Meals.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

73. Work Programme 2022/23
(Item 13)

Members discussed the inclusion of regular Section 106 and CIL monitoring reports in addition to the Annual Infrastructure Funding Report, and this would be considered further at agenda setting meetings.

RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be noted.