

POLICY AND RESOURCES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 10 September 2024

PRESENT: Mr D L Brazier (Chairman), Mr M Dendor (Vice-Chairman), Mr P V Barrington-King, Mr P Bartlett, Mr A Brady, Mr G Cooke, Mr P C Cooper, Ms M Dawkins, Mr A J Hook, Mrs S Hudson, Ms L Parfitt (Substitute for Mr J P McInroy), Mr H Rayner and Mr P Stepto

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P J Oakford, Mrs C Bell and Mr D Jeffrey

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs A Beer (Chief Executive), Mrs R Spore (Director of Infrastructure), Mr B Watts (General Counsel), Mr D Whittle (Director of Strategy, Policy, Relationships and Corporate Assurance), Mr J Betts (Acting Corporate Director Finance), Ms R Anderson (Head of Business Information, Strategy and Assurance), Ms M Odeleye (Hard FM and Security Contracts Manager), Mr H D'Alton (Programme Manager (Strategic Programmes)), Mr Edwards (Infrastructure Strategy Manager), Ms Da Silva (Refugee Resettlement Business Support Manager), Mr M Thomas-Sam (Corporate Lead Adult's and Children's Policy and Strategy), Wagner (Chief Analyst), Ms P Blackburn-Clarke (Delivery Manager - Engagement & Consultation), Ms L McPherson (Policy Officer (Equality)), Miss K Phillips (Corporate Lead - Business Planning & Corporate Policy), Mr A Feacey (Resilience and Emergency Planning Manager) and Mr A Jeffery (Head of Resilience & Emergency Planning)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

219. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies were received from Mr Lehmann, Mr Bond and Mr McInroy for whom Ms Parfitt-Reid was present as substitute.

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

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

221. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2024

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 10 July 2024 were a correct record and that a paper copy be signed by the Chairman.

222. Facilities Management Bi-Annual Update

(Item 5)

1. Ms Spore introduced the report that provided a bi-annual update on the Council's facilities management arrangements to provide services across the corporate and schools estate, for which KCC had responsibility. It included an update on the performance of the current contract and detailed changes over the last six months.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was noted that:
 - a) A review of security services was underway looking at how the service could be delivered. A decision whether or not to continue to deliver the service in-house was expected shortly.
 - b) Although the border Entry/Exit System (EES) was not a KCC responsibility, there was a need to ensure that any potential disruption for the introduction of the new system did not impede the Council's ability to respond to incidents involving the Council's estate.
 - c) The Council had a dedicated cleaning team who undertook spot checks and cleaning audits, as well as investigation into any concerns raised. Members and officers were encouraged to use the QR codes, that were distributed around the buildings, to submit anonymous feedback on cleaning standards.
 - d) Consideration would be given to how members of the public could provide feedback on the cleanliness of the Council's buildings.
 - e) Dip testing was carried out each month and reporting from contractors was found to be largely accurate.
 - f) It would be useful for the report to include data on how long it took for completion of late tasks, as this would help provide more context.
 - g) The costs relating to the cleaning and maintenance of the new reception centres for Unaccompanied Asylum Seeking Children sites were funded by Government.
3. RESOLVED to note the report.

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223. 24/00069 - Asset Management Strategy 2024 - 2030
(Item 6)

1. Ms Spore introduced the report that provided an update on the new 2024-2030 Asset Management Strategy.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was noted that:
 - a) Progress to reduce the Council's carbon footprint was being tracked and actions were being taken to reduce energy consumption.
 - b) The Strategy was intended to be used to develop a better understanding of the long term costs of managing the Council's assets. This information would be used to inform discussions and future decision making.
 - c) The strategy was an aspirational document and detailed a desired direction of travel.
 - d) There was an existing detailed and rigorous process that was followed for the disposal of buildings. Service provision dictated the Council's property requirements, and when required the public were consulted when changes to services were proposed.
 - e) Officers were working with South East Water to establish where water regulators could be installed in the Council's estate.

- f) It was intended that there would be more shared use of buildings to generate more efficient use of buildings.
 - g) There were a lot of buildings currently being underutilised, the strategy looked to make the portfolio leaner, and officers were working with partner agencies to identify opportunities for more joint working.
3. RESOLVED to endorse that the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services agree the adoption of the new Asset Management Strategy 2024-2030, subject to the inclusion of the wording 'where budgets allow' to more clearly indicate that the strategy was an aspirational document.
 4. In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the constitution, Ms Dawkins and Mr Brady wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that they abstained from voting to endorse the proposed decision.

224. Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department

(Item 8)

1. Mr Wagner introduced the Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department. It showed performance against targets set for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs).
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was noted that:
 - a) The three red rated KPIs were:
 - a. CS07: Complaints responded to in timescale
 - b. GL02: Freedom of Information (Fol) Act requests completed within 20 working days.
 - c. GL03: Data Protection Act Subject Access Requests (SARs) completed within statutory timescales.
 - b) The majority of SARs and complaints related to the CYPE directorate. The CYPE directorate was working through the EHCP backlog and expected to be back to a business as usual position by the end of the year.
 - c) There was a need to ensure that services were adequately resourced to meet their targets. A lot of work went into setting targets appropriately, they were benchmarked against other councils and were sometimes determined by statutory responsibilities.
 - d) Internal Audit assessed KPI targets and would conduct a review.
 - e) The Fol team worked with services to respond to Fol requests. Many Fol requests were received from journalists and companies.
 - f) Government should allow a small amount to be charged for each Fol request.
 - g) Officers were looking at ways to make the Fol request process more efficient and automated. This included putting more information online. There have been improvements in the services despite the increase in requests received. Consideration would be given to offering an informal Members Briefing on the topic.
3. RESOLVED to note the performance position for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department.

225. 24/00071 - Afghan Resettlement (ARAP and ACRS) and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) - proposed service delivery from February 2025
(Item 9)

1. Mr Whittle introduced the report that set out proposals for delivering the Afghan Resettlement Schemes and United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme from 1st February 2025.
2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was noted that:
 - a) Officers were exploring how the 'no use empty' scheme could be used to provide additional accommodation.
 - b) The removal of Council Tax single person discount to individuals living on their own when they take in refugees would not encourage uptake. Council Tax collection and discounts were managed by district and borough council.
 - c) The result of the Government's recent consultation on the refugee and asylum numbers per district for 2025, would be circulated to Members for information.
3. RESOLVED to endorse to the Leader of the Council on the proposed decision to:
 1. Approve the acceptance of Home Office grant funding for the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) and to determine the appropriate delivery model.
 2. Agree to Kent County Council continuing to be the 'Lead Recipient' for the Home Office grant for all districts in Kent with the exception of Ashford, Canterbury and individuals resettled to the Ministry of Defence and Local Authority Housing Fund properties in Dover.
 3. Approve that the Afghan Resettlement Schemes (ARAP and ACRS) and the United Kingdom Resettlement Scheme (UKRS) be delivered based on the preferred option (recommissioning using a new commissioning delivery model).
 4. Delegate authority to the Chief Executive Officer, in consultation with the Leader to take relevant actions, including but not limited to, entering into the relevant contracts or other legal agreements, as necessary, to implement the decision.

226. Annual Equality & Diversity Report 2023-24
(Item 10)

1. Mr Whittle introduced the report that set out how the Council met its public sector equality duty responsibilities. The report included examples of good practice and actions that would lead to improvement.
2. In response to questions and comments it was noted that:
 - a) The work on inclusion and accessibility were good to see.
 - b) Consideration would be given to adding more detail about the support available to women going through the menopause.

- c) Inclusion and equality training for Members had been organised in response to comments and concerns raised by Members.
 - d) A management action has been identified to increase the number of EQIA completed through the designated EQIA application.
 - e) The EQIA reports were published online, and Members had the opportunity to view and challenge them before decisions were made.
3. RESOLVED to approve the Annual Equality & Diversity Report for 2023-24, attached as Appendix A to the report.

227. Customer Feedback Policy

(Item 11)

1. Mrs Beer and Mrs Blackburn-Clarke introduced the report that outlined the changes to the Customer Feedback Policy, and the key reasons for the Council not adopting the LGSCO's Code for Complaints Handling timescales. Mrs Blackburn-Clarke noted that there would be change to the way complaints were reported to the Governance and Audit Committee, and there would be changes to the classification of complaints.
2. RESOLVED to note the updated Policy, including the direction of travel with regards to the Ombudsman's code, and to note the self-assessment form attached as Appendix A to the report.

228. Decisions taken between Cabinet Committee meetings

(Item 12)

1. RESOLVED to note that decisions 24/00070 - Nuclear Compliance 2024, and 24/00078 - Disposal of Land at Intersection of M20/M25, were taken in accordance with sections 12.32 and 12.35 of the Council's constitution.

229. Work Programme 2024/25

(Item 13)

1. RESOLVED to note the planned work programme for 2024.

Motion to Exclude the Press and Public

RESOLVED that 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.

EXEMPT ITEMS

(Open access to minutes)

230. 24/00079 - Sevenoaks Land East of High Street - Pre-Consultation and the next steps

(Item 7)

1. Ms Spore and Mr D'Alton introduced the report that provided an update on activity relating to the Sevenoaks Land East of High Street project, including a

memorandum of understanding with Sevenoaks District Council who were leading on the project.

2. In response to questions and comments from Members it was noted that:
 - a) The project looked to combine the interests of KCC and Sevenoaks District Council.
 - b) It was proposed that the Leisure Centre and Library would be improved and combined with other developments including some housing.
 - c) Once complete, the project was expected to generate a financial surplus that would be used to provide services.
3. RESOLVED to endorse the proposed decision by the Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Finance, Corporate and Traded Services to:
 1. Note the feedback from the community consultation exercise conducted by Sevenoaks District Council.
 2. Support the objectives and principles of the regeneration of the Sevenoaks Town centre, subject to KCC's red line requirements, which includes the potential relocation of County Council services to new build facilities within a future scheme.