

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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, 8 July 2025

PRESENT: Mr A Brady, Mr D Burns, Mr P Chamberlain, Ms S Emberson, Mr J Finch, Mr C Hespe, Mr M A J Hood, Mr A J Hook and Mr H Rayner

ALSO PRESENT: Mr B Collins and Ms L Kemkaran

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr D Shipton (Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy), 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 (Interim Corporate Director Finance) and Ms H Savage (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Election of Chair

(Item 2)

1. Mr Christopher Hespe was nominated by the Leader to be the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.
2. The Committee agreed this nomination and Mr Hespe was declared as Chairman of the committee.
3. RESOLVED that Mr Hespe be elected as the Chairman of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

2. Election of Vice-Chair

(Item 3)

1. Ms Sarah Emberson proposed, and Mr John Finch seconded that Mr Paul Chamberlain be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.
2. As there were no further nominations, the Chairman declared Mr Paul Chamberlain as Vice-Chairman of the committee.
3. RESOLVED that Mr Paul Chamberlain be elected as Vice-Chairman of the Policy and Resources Cabinet Committee.

3. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 4)

Apologies were received from Mr Wayne Chapman and Mr Luke Evans.

Since the agenda was published Mr Osborne had ceased his committee membership of Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee in view of his Cabinet responsibilities.

4. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda (Item 5)

There were no declarations of interest.

5. Minutes of the meeting held on 5 March 2025 (Item 6)

Mr Brady and Mr Rayner highlighted an error at paragraph 8 of Item 8 – *Council Tax Collection Subsidies and Incentives*.

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 5 March were a correct record, subject to the amendment above, and that they be signed by the Chairman.

6. Medium Term Financial Plan Update (Item 7)

1. The Deputy Leader, Mr Brian Collins, and the Interim Corporate Director Finance, Mr John Betts. introduced the report which set out the Medium-Term Financial Plan (MTFP), the proposed process and timetable to update the current plan, and the latest announcements and consultation on the government funding settlement.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - In relation to the Fair Funding Review there was uncertainty around how or when grants would be distributed or how business rates would be reset. The response to the consultation was due in mid-August and was being prepared.
 - The announcement of the Local Government Finance Settlement was anticipated at the end of November. The distribution of social care grants to individual local authorities was uncertain, for example, which elements would be departmental specific grants or which elements would be part of a generalised need across the country. It was anticipated that a policy paper, following the consultation, would be published by central government at the end of September.
 - Mr Shipton provided a technical explanation of how the funding the Council would receive could be estimated based on methodology that was used for the Recovery Grant, and what factors could be considered in relation to Kent. It was unknown how the council tax equalisation would operate.
 - The Spending Review had indicated that there would be an increase in core spending power over the next three year period planned for local government, 60% of the core spending power was expected from council tax and the rest through grant settlements.
 - The challenges involved in providing services to the Isle of Sheppey and coastal communities should be recognised and highlighted to government.

- The Administration was working on a Strategic Framework which would be developed alongside further updates from government.
 - An update on the Department of Local Government Efficiency (DOLGE) would be provided by the Leader at Full Council on 10 July.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee notes the proposed process and timetable to update and revise the MTFP.

7. Performance Dashboard for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department
(Item 8)

Mr Matt Wagner (Chief Analyst) was in attendance for this item.

1. The Chief Analyst, Mr Matt Wagner, introduced the report which showed the performance against targets set for Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for services within the Chief Executive's Department (CED) and Deputy Chief Executive's Department (DCED) up to the end of March 2025. The report also included the recommended KPIs and targets for the current financial year.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - From a financial perspective the KPIs provided a good overview of where the organisation was in terms of its financial resilience and monitoring.
 - The KPIs were determined through discussions with the relevant Corporate Directors and Cabinet Members with technical advice from the Chief Analyst, and reviewed on a periodic basis.
 - Regarding KPI GL02, more Freedom of Information requests were being received since the May elections. Recent performance had increased due to a greater awareness across KCC of outstanding requests and weekly reporting to the Corporate Management Team.
 - Regarding KPI GL03, there had been an increase of approximately 25% of Subject Access Requests received. The publishing of information on the Council's website attributed, in some cases, to less requests being received compared to other local authorities.
 - In relation to KPI P103c the capital receipts received to date was significantly higher than the previous year. Surplus assets were continually monitored to identify assets for disposal and the Council had a statutory duty not to hold properties on a vacant basis with no designated requirement as well as a statutory duty to ensure assets were disposed of in accordance with the duties set out in legislation. A disposal programme would continue to be brought forward where appropriate and assets were disposed of in accordance with the Council's Freehold Disposal Policy. The Freehold Disposal Policy took into account the Localism Act and how communities could put forward proposals. In the event of Local Government Reorganisation it was noted that no decision or direction from Government had yet been made as to how this would apply to Kent. This was not expected until March 2026. Any change to the Freehold Disposal Policy as a result of LGR would require a key decision. The Council's Freehold Disposal Policy would be circulated to Members of the Committee.

- In relation to KPI CS07 there was a disparity between directorates and a Member requested that this be broken down further by directorate. The Marketing and Resident Experience team worked with the directorates to help managers respond to individual complaints. Backlogs were effected by volume of demand and resource in the relevant department.
 - A review of the targets for future years would be required once the Strategic Statement had been finalised in readiness for 2026/2027.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee notes the performance position for the Chief Executive's Department and Deputy Chief Executive's Department.

8. 25/00048 - Freehold disposal of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover CT16 2JH
(Item 9)

Mr Mark Cheverton (Head of Real Estate Services), Mr Daniel Parkes (Principal Surveyor) and Ms Rachel Paton (Surveyor) were in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Collins introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of Thistley Hill in Dover.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - Local Members had been contacted regarding the proposed disposal but no comments had been received. As the disposal progresses should there be any comments from local members in accordance with the Property Management Protocol the decision maker would be made aware.
 - The funds of sale would be allocated to the capital programme and receipts were not ring fenced to particular projects.
 - There was flexibility to use capital receipts for revenue purposes for specific expenditure but it was not a long term solution for the Council to balance its budget.
 - The building had been a school until 2007 and was then utilised as office space for the Council. Over time the property had become unfit for purpose and the service had relocated to Dover District Council offices.
 - The Council operated and has set resources to support a reactive warm, safe and dry policy across its estate and significant maintenance refurbishment work had not been possible at Thistley Hill.
3. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. the disposal of Thistley Hill, Melbourne Avenue, Dover, CT16 2JH; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execution of all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.

9. 25/00049 - Freehold disposal of Sevenoaks Adult Education Centre, Hatton House, Bradbourne Road, TN13 3QN
(Item 10)

Mr Mark Cheverton (Head of Real Estate Services), Mr Daniel Parkes (Principal Surveyor) and Ms Rachel Paton (Surveyor) were in attendance for this item.

Local Member, Mr Richard Streatfeild, was present for this item.

1. Mr Collins and Mrs Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure, introduced the report regarding the proposed disposal of Sevenoaks Adult Education Centre.
2. Further to questions and comments from Members the discussion included the following:
 - Marketing advice had been received from three agents. A freehold sale was being sought albeit on an all enquiries basis meaning bids could be made leasehold or freehold.
 - Some Members expressed their concern that a town like Sevenoaks would not have an Adult Education Centre.
 - Key decision [24/00046](#) detailed the previous administration's decision to alter the Community Learning and Skills delivery model. This decision delegated authority to the Director of Infrastructure to progress work on the proposed decision.
3. The Local Member, Mr Richard Streatfeild, provided a verbal statement. He explained that the previous Administration had taken the decision that education would focus on basic skills courses and not leisure and pleasure, which Sevenoaks Adult Education Centre provided. There was considerable disappointment amongst Sevenoaks residents that the Adult Education Centre (AEC) would close. Residents over 65 in Sevenoaks, in particular, wanted to do leisure and pleasure courses, locations for which were not available in Sevenoaks or close by. Mr Streatfeild expressed his view that the decision be delayed and reconsidered based on the following points:
 - Sevenoaks had a requirement for basic skills courses (which was recently determined at Sevenoaks District Council) and locations for such had not been identified. The AEC remained the most likely place where those courses could be run.
 - Sevenoaks was one of the few places in Kent that didn't have a site for special educational needs education and pupils with special education needs were therefore transported out of the district at considerable expense.
 - Regarding potential Local Government Reorganisation the site would be an asset to a potential unitary authority to deliver courses in the future.
4. Mrs Spore reassured the committee that prior to a disposal property being put forward there was a detailed process to identify whether the property was required by any KCC services. Colleagues within education had been consulted and it was not currently required as part of educational plans. The Community Learning and Skills Team planned to align courses to government funding and this was driving their current approach. The service had been exploring options at Sevenoaks Library as well as other community venues in the Sevenoaks area for basic skills provision.

5. Mr Hood proposed, and Mr Rayner seconded, that the Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee recommends to the Deputy Leader that the decision be delayed until proper consideration can be given to the points raised by Mr Streatfeild in paragraph 3 above and that the outcome of reconsideration be reported to a future Policy & Resources Cabinet Committee prior to decision. The Chairman put the motion to the vote and the motion was lost.
6. RESOLVED that the Cabinet Committee, by majority, endorses the proposed decision to:
 1. the disposal of Sevenoaks Adult Education Centre, Hatton House, Bradbourne Road, TN13 3QN; and
 2. delegate authority to The Director of Infrastructure, in consultation with the Deputy Leader, to finalise the terms of the disposal and execute all necessary or desirable documentation required to implement the above.
7. In accordance with paragraph 16.31 of the Constitution, Mr Alister Brady, Mr Mark Hood, Mr Antony Hook, and Mr Harry Rayner wished for it to be recorded in the minutes that they voted against endorsing the decision.

10. Work Programme 2025/2026

(Item 11)

1. The following items were suggested by Members for consideration at the next agenda setting meeting:
 - Disposal and Asset Management Strategy
 - Leases and peppercorn rents
 - Local Authority Trading Companies (LATCOs)
 - Oracle Update
 - The sale of Sessions House and the office move from Invicta House to Sessions House.
2. RESOLVED to note the Work Programme 2025/2026.