

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

ENVIRONMENT, HIGHWAYS AND WASTE POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Environment, Highways and Waste Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 22 January 2010.

PRESENT: Mr C Hibberd (Chairman), Mr N J Collor, Mr J Cubitt, Mr D S Daley (Substitute) (Substitute for Mr M Robertson), Mr M J Harrison, Mr J D Kirby, Mr S Manion, Mr R A Pascoe, Mrs P A V Stockell (Substitute) (Substitute for Mr J R Bullock, MBE), Mrs E M Tweed and Mr M Whiting

ALSO PRESENT: Mr N J Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways & Waste

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr M Austerberry (Executive Director, Environment, Highways and Waste), Dr L Davies (Director, Environment & Waste) and Mr R Hallett (Directorate Finance Manager)

Prior to the commencement of the meeting the Chairman:-

- (a) referred to the recent bad weather and informed Members that a final winter service report would be submitted to the Committee in March; and*
- (b) reminded Members to submit items for the Agenda to Mr Hibberd.*

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2009 *(Item A3)*

RESOLVED that the Minutes of the meeting held on 10 November 2009 are correctly recorded and that they be signed by the Chairman.

2. Cabinet Member's and Executive Director's Update (Oral report) *(Item B1)*

(1) Mr Chard gave a verbal report on the following issues:-

- Winter Service
- Kent Permit Scheme
- Freedom Pass
- East Kent Waste
- Lower Thames Crossing
- Rail – Maidstone to Cannon Street

(2) RESOLVED that the update be noted and a copy circulated to Members of the Committee.

3. Financial Monitoring 2009/10

(Item B2 – Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Mr Mike Austerberry, Executive Director of Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) A detailed quarterly budget monitoring report was presented to Cabinet, usually in September, December and March, and a draft final outturn report in June. The reports outlined the full financial position for each portfolio and were reported to POSCs after they had been considered by Cabinet. In the intervening months an exception report was made to Cabinet outlining any significant variations from the quarterly report. The November exception monitoring report for 2009/10 was submitted for the information of POSC members.

(2) RESOLVED that the budget variations for the EHW Portfolio for 2009/10 based on the November exception report to Cabinet be noted.

4. Budget 2010/11 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2010/13

(Item B3 – Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Mr Mike Austerberry, Executive Director of Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) The Committee considered draft budget proposals for the Environment, Highways and Waste Directorate, with reference to the KCC published budget consultation paper issued on 5 January 2010. The report also provided a response to the issues raised at the Informal Member Group of this Committee, created in November 2009 to discuss detailed budget issues.

(2) Mr Chard and Mr Hallett introduced the draft Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan for the EHW Directorate. The total of the proposed savings and income generation required in order to meet the indicative cash limit for 2010/11 was £3.2m. The majority of the savings would come from improvements in highways procurement. There would also be staffing efficiencies; over £1m savings in Waste; and the ending of the 2010 target for the Clean Kent campaign.

(3) The gross savings were offset by the reversal of the capital/revenue swap on support for socially necessary but uneconomic bus routes. A further £0.04m of net income was to be generated by Country Parks in 2010/11 with additional increases in targets across the following two years. In line with the zero pay award for KCC officers for 2010/11, it was proposed that no inflation was added to highways fees and charges for the new financial year.

(4) There followed a question and answer session which included the following issues:-

- (a) support for socially necessary but uneconomic bus routes;
- (b) the modernisation and development of waste facilities;
- (c) staffing efficiencies in Highways, Resources and Planning through delayering and streamlining processes;
- (d) an extension to the Freedom Pass.

(5) During debate certain Members expressed their concern that the relative priorities the IMG placed upon the various services may not be representative of all Members' views.

(6) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the proposal **not** to add an inflation increase to highways fees and charges in 2010/11, be noted; and
- (b) the revenue and capital budget proposals, along with the responses made to questions from Members be noted.

5. Environment, Highways and Waste Half Year Business Plan Monitoring 2009/10

(Item B4 – Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Mr Richard Hallett, Directorate Finance Manager, Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) The report detailed the directorate's progress against the Business Plans during the period 1 April to 30 September 2009, covering achievement of performance against activity/projects and targets. Progress was presented to Cabinet on 30 November 2009.

(2) As part of the half-year monitoring, progress was checked against each of the 2009/10 Service Level Business Plans whereby most of the Projects, Developments or Key Actions were identified as 'on-course' or 'done and ongoing'. A copy of the Executive Director's Statement and half year monitoring report giving a summary of progress was set out in the Appendix to the report. The monitoring showed that 6% of the 2009/10 actions were not 'on-target' to complete this financial year and were listed with reasons and proposed actions.

(3) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the progress against Environment, Highways & Waste Service Level Business Plans for the period 1 April to 30 September 2009 be noted; and
- (b) a presentation and discussion relating to the freight structure be arranged for a future meeting of the POSC.

6. Equalities in Environment, Highways and Waste Annual Report

(Item B5 – Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; Mr Mike Austerberry, Executive Director (EHW); and Dr Linda Davies, Chair, Equalities Group (EHW))

(1) The report provided an update on progress with Environment, Highways and Waste directorate's work on Equalities and Diversity, in support of Kent County Council's ambition to achieve level 'excellent' in the Equalities Framework for Local Government (EFLG) by March 2011.

(2) A new Equality Bill, drawing together all previous Equalities and Diversity legislation was expected to receive Royal Assent early in 2010. The Bill aimed to provide straightforward practical guidance for employers, service providers and public

bodies. The EFLG which provided the detailed criteria to explain how local authorities should manage Equalities and Diversity issues had been published.

(3) The EFLG was based on a wider definition of equality that moved away from a purely legalistic interpretation to a concept of equal life chances. It aspired to be simpler, smarter, proportional and more relevant than the previous standard. It was outcome-based, and recognised that:-

- equality was an issue for us all
- we don't all start from the same place
- to create a fairer society we needed to recognise different needs

Local authorities would be audited on the following five performance areas:

- Knowing your community and equality mapping
- Place shaping, leadership, partnership and organisational commitment
- Community engagement and satisfaction
- Responsive services and customer care
- A modern reflective and diverse workforce

(4) During debate Mrs Tweed referred to the Customer Impact Assessments which replaced Equality Impact Assessments in KCC, and asked how Kent Highway Services engaged with the elderly to meet their needs. This stemmed from concerns about the elderly being trapped in their homes during the recent snow, and although it was agreed that there was a social services aspect to it, the discussion led onto what else Highways did for this part of the community.

(5) RESOLVED that:-

- (a) the content of the report be noted; and
- (b) the approach for embedding Equalities into the directorate's business, in support of KCC's corporate commitment to achieve level 'Excellent' in the new Equalities Framework for Local Government be endorsed.

7. Environment, Highways and Waste Risk Register 2010/11

(Item B6 – Report by Mr Nick Chard, Cabinet Member for Environment, Highways and Waste; and Mr Richard Hallett, Directorate Finance Manager, Environment, Highways and Waste)

(1) The report identified the strategic risks that were managed and controlled within the Environment, Highways & Waste Directorate.

(2) It had been agreed at a meeting of the Governance and Audit Committee on 5 March 2008 that in future years the risk registers would be considered by POSCs in the January cycle before being reported to the Governance and Audit Committee. The requirement to maintain risk registers ensured that potential risks, which might prevent the Authority from achieving its objectives, were identified and controlled.

(3) During 2010/11 the controls in the register would continue to be tested and checked in order of significance, and new actions monitored. Risk Management Plans would be developed for every risk within the Directorate rated as *High* (i.e. with

a score of 16 and above). The plans were a tool to be used by managers with their Services and Business Units to document and monitor actions for the high risks.

(4) RESOLVED that the Environment, Highways & Waste Directorate Risk Register, updated in September 2009, be noted and supported.

8. Select Committee – update

(Item C1)

Report by Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager)

(1) Further to Minute 9 of 10 November 2009, the Membership of the Select Committee on Renewable Energy was Mr K Ferrin, (Chairman Elect), Mr R King, Mr C Hibberd, Mr C Smith, Mrs E Tweed, Mrs P Stockell, Mr D Hirst and Mr T Prater. It had been agreed that Ms Sue Frampton, the Research Officer supporting the review, would start preparatory work on developing the terms of reference and scope for the review. The Select Committee would start its work in January 2010 and submit its report to County Council on 14 October 2010. Regular update reports would be submitted to the POSC on the progress of the Select Committee.

(2) RESOLVED that the report be noted.