

## KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

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### CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 30 September 2021.

PRESENT: Mr R W Gough (Chairman), Mrs C Bell, Mr D L Brazier, Miss S J Carey, Mrs S Chandler, Mr P M Hill, OBE, Mr D Murphy and Mr P J Oakford

### UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

#### **9. Apologies and Substitutes**

*(Item 1)*

Apologies were received from Mrs Prendergast.

#### **10. Minutes of the Meeting held on 24 June 2021**

*(Item 3)*

Resolved that the minutes of the meetings held on 24 June 2021 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

#### **11. Cabinet Member Updates**

*(Item 4)*

1) Mrs Chandler said that the community in Kent had come together to deliver a successful summer programme to help children and young people reconnect to things they had missed during the Covid-19 pandemic. The Reconnect Programme received lots of positive messages regarding the opportunities available and how valuable these were to families. Thanks were given to all the clubs, companies, organisations and volunteers who were involved with the summer programme. It was clear that children and young people and their families were able to enjoy a wide range of activities, fun days, trips and support with everything from archery to yoga on offer.

Children also engaged with a variety of online learning opportunities to help them get a head start before the start of term and pupils in Kent represented 40% of the audience of the 82,500 learning opportunities presented by Invicta Academy. There were also visits to the local leisure centres, approximately 600 free school meals were delivered to children and holiday clubs were delivering free places for children on a weekly basis. There were also free bus passes for children and young people from Year 6 to age 18 and some family passes were issued as well.

The Big Ask Survey was launched in 2021 by the Children's Commissioner for England with the aim to ask children across England to set out their priorities for improving childhood. There were 500,000 responses and they reiterated the need to address the emotional wellbeing of young people.

Through HeadStart Kent, KCC had been addressing this need for a number of years and the scheme aimed to help young people facing difficult circumstances in their lives and prevent them from experiencing common mental health problems. HeadStart Kent had enabled better support through schools, families and communities and the support is designed to be implemented by young people for young people.

KCC was also leading on a number of emotional wellbeing initiatives through MoodSpark which is a website dedicated to promoting resilience and emotional wellbeing for 10 to 16 year olds.

A HeadStart Kent and Kent Clinical Commissioning Group commissioned programme had rolled out counselling available 365 days a year via the website, Kooth. Through the HeadStart Kent Programme, 52,423 young people had benefited, with nearly 15,000 accessing and completing online support through Kooth. HeadStart Kent were also project managing the roll out of the mental health support teams in schools in Kent and Medway. From September 2021 until March 2024, there were to be an additional 13 teams.

The government had funded the Wellbeing for Education Return Project which through The Education People had given training and resources to schools and colleges, supporting staff and pupils. 210 schools and 100% of colleges in Kent had accessed the training.

Kent and Medway Bereavement Service was to deliver a specialist bereavement service to children and young people between the ages of 3 ½ and 25 years old who were experiencing complex grief or traumatic bereavement.

2) Mrs Chandler reported on behalf of Mrs Prendergast.

From the extensive media coverage, people were aware that the transport industry had been suffering from significant shortages of skilled drivers. Much of the media attention had focussed on the HGV and delivery sector and the impact on the supply of goods. However, the public transport sector was equally affected and this had impacted on bus, coach and taxi operators. Earlier in the week, David Brazier, Cabinet Member for Highways and Transport and Mrs Prendergast wrote to the Kent MPs highlighting the increasing impact on home to school transport. The problems with access to fuel had exacerbated the issue. KCC was struggling with home to school transport and it was acknowledged that parents would be angry and frustrated. Reassurance was given that everything possible was being done to mitigate this.

A letter had been written by the Cabinet Members for Education and for Integrated Children's Services to the Secretary of State for Education to raise concerns on high needs and special needs funding pressures. Local authorities were having to manage increasing demand under extreme budget deficits where spend has spiralled both nationally and locally to the point of unsustainability. The letter offered the Secretary of State an opportunity to meet to discuss this further.

The Kent Test was taken by Kent's pupils on Thursday, 9 September and testing for 'out of county' pupils took place on Saturday, 11 September. A significant amount of work was carried out by officers beforehand to ensure the testing environments

remained Covid-safe and were in line with government guidance. Where necessary alternative arrangements were made to ensure that no self-isolating child was compelled to attend their original test date. This year, additional training sessions were provided to schools on making the best use of the Head Teacher Assessment process and highlighted the importance of referring all suitable pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds and provided with support, where requested. Results were to be made available on 21 October before the national closing date for secondary applications on 31 October. Unlike in 2020, it was not necessary to provide pupils with additional preferences as parents would be able to apply knowing whether their child was eligible to attend a Kent grammar school.

There was a 16 to 19 review which was taking place aiming to improve the options and life chances of Kent's young people by enhancing education, skills and training opportunities. The call for evidence closed on 31 July and the findings were being collated. The evidence, as well as other information was to be utilised to ensure that KCC worked in collaboration with employers, further and higher education. Work was being done with the Kent and Medway Employment Taskforce addressing issues around our 'youth offer' and was identifying areas of work with leverage to reduce the number of young people not in education, training or in employment.

On 13 September, following advice from the 4 UK Chief Medical Officers, the Health and Social Care Secretary announced that pupils aged 12 to 15 years old were to be offered one dose of the Pfizer/Biontech Covid-19 vaccine with the aim of protecting children from catching Covid-19 and reducing transmission in schools. Locally, health services had been preparing to deliver a school-based vaccination programme in line with the successful model used for other vaccinations such as tetanus and polio. This was to be supported by GPs and community pharmacies and with alternative provision for those who were educated at home, in secure services or in specialist settings. Invitations were due to go out and officers were engaged with health colleagues to support and advise on the roll out.

Kent Supported Employment Service had been doing excellent work supporting people with physical disabilities, learning difficulties, autism and sensory issues to move into paid, sustainable work. Working with people aged 16 to 70, the service also supported employers with recruitment. From September 2021, the team was moving into mainstream schools to help support them in providing employment opportunities for all pupils with special educational needs and disabilities. Children were to be encouraged to name employment on their ECHPs from year 9. Training was to include embedding supported employment into the curriculum through head teachers, SENCOs, parents and teacher buy-in. KCC was the first council in the UK to introduce this in all mainstream schools.

3) Mr Brazier said that Highways and Transport launched its Road Safety Strategy – Vision Zero on 15 September which showed how the target of 0 road deaths was to be achieved in Kent by 2050. The Strategy was about the whole of society working together for the safer operation of roads. KCC's partners attended the launch event at Manston Airport. Kent Police, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue, logistics companies and parish councils attended, amongst others. There were outside demonstrations of autonomous emergency braking, intelligence speed assistance and lane control. A series of speakers were programmed, chaired by the Leader, Mr Gough and the keynote speech was given by Prince Michael of Kent.

A group of officers and Members was being established to take the Strategy forward progress towards and measure progress towards 'EDWARD' -every day without a road death. The event was organised with great care and attention to detail and according to those who attended including the media, it was a great success.

Mr Brazier and the Leader had received a copy of the authority's Bus Service Improvement Plan which was due to be submitted to the Department for Transport by the end of October. Produced in cooperation with the bus operators in Kent, it was already considered to be a fine piece of work and by Spring 2022, KCC had to demonstrate an enhanced partnership with operators. Following adjudication, the Department for Transport would be making its funding offer. There had been extensive consultation with Kent's residents and they had said they wanted more buses, later running buses and improved timekeeping.

Mr Brazier and Mr Murphy were taking part in a series of district meetings to discuss how they can work with districts to mutual advantage.

Active Travel Tranche 3 proposals were being discussed with Members and these discussions had been robust and there would be further consultation. There had already been a formal decision relating to a cycle path linking two other existing cycleways between Dymchurch to Palmmarsh on the outskirts of Hythe. There was a scheme in Faversham to introduce 20 mph zones to a substantial part of the town and it was considered the town was in many ways ideal for the scheme.

A 'School Street' had successfully been installed in Southborough whereby trained school staff closed the road outside the school at arrival and departure for the safety of the children and to encourage journeys to schools without cars. This had involved several years of design work and extensive local consultation. Only particular locations were suitable for 'School Streets' and another in Margate had been working well for some time. Other schools had been applying to be considered for the further schemes.

There had been a meeting with a team from Moto, the motorway service area operators. Moto had been formulating a proposal to construct a 200 slot HGV parking facilities near Junction 2a of the M26. In simple terms, it was a matter for KCC in that this would need to connect to KCC's network though it would be subject to planning consent from Tonbridge and Malling Borough Council. This scheme would go some way to alleviating the deficit of HGV parking.

4) Miss Carey said the end of lockdown has led to the return of full capacity of household waste and recycling centres from 19 July. The demand had increased because some districts had suspended their garden waste collections. There were 105,100 visits a month. Despite the surge, KCC had been able to match demand to capacity because of the booking system. The booking system had been introduced to control the number of people on site at any one time, to ensure social distancing and reduce queues disrupting local traffic.

There were no longer any limits on the number of visits to centres. Bookings were available online 24 hours a day or by phone in office hours. A few letters had been received from people who had been under the impression they could only book online but this was not the case. Same day bookings were to be trialled at 4 sites and details were to be shared. The booking system had made it easier to survey users

and KCC had been able to get comments on individual sites. The majority of those who had responded said they valued the security and convenience of the booking system. There had been a consultation to canvass the public on whether to retain the booking system which had received more responses than any other KCC consultation. There had been over 42,000 views and over 10,000 responses. A report was to come to the Environment & Transport Cabinet Committee and Members would be able to add their views. Thanks were given to everyone who had responded.

KCC had been shortlisted for the LGC award for Climate Response. The Flood and Water Management Team were one of the finalists in Green Europe RegioStars Awards. This was for work with the Interreg NSR BEGIN Project which enabled KCC to deliver blue-green infrastructure.

5) Mr Murphy said congratulations to Simon Jones as he had been appointed on a permanent basis as Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport. There were 3 matters that had come to the fore for the Ebbsfleet Development Corporation. The first of these was the decision on the Swanscombe Peninsula. It was hoped the government would come to a decision regarding the status of the Peninsula by mid-November.

Secondly, Eurostar had announced that they would not be stopping trains at Ebbsfleet or Ashford International for the foreseeable future. This was a disappointment for the county as Eurostar was seen as one of the enablers of growth in the area.

The other issue was the building of homes at Ebbsfleet and there was a target of 525 homes this year and 246 had been built. From dialogue with developers, there had been issues with labour and a lack of skilled workers. Labour costs have increased from 5 to 10% onto the build cost.

The Covid-19 pandemic and Brexit had also affected the buildings of new homes. Furlough had had an effect as many artisans working on sites were self-employed and some had chosen to wait until the end of the scheme to return to work.

There had been problems with the supply of materials such as timber, which was mostly imported to the UK and in some cases, there had been a 250% rise in the cost of the timber due to import costs. There had also been problems with obtaining cement base products, bricks and roof tiles. This was having the effect of developers having to look for alternatives and then having to go back to the planning authorities for permission. The lack of HGV drivers was also having an effect. It was thought that these issues applied across the country.

KCC was working closely with DEFRA, HRMC and Dover District Council to get the Inland Border Facilities at Dover running. The government had announced there would be a delay on sanitary and phytosanitary (SPS) measures on goods including live animals, products of animal origin, high risk foods, plants and plant materials. The government had announced that documentary checks due to commence on 21 October 2021 and physical checks due to commence on 1 January 2022 were postponed. From 1 January 2022, importers were to be required to make pre-notifications only with certification but it was unclear what this would mean in practice.

From 1 July 2022, all documentary and physical checks were to commence across the UK. In terms of Dover, 130 people had been recruited but there were concerns that following staff training, there might not be work for the staff.

A full briefing was to be given regarding broadband on 15 October. Building Digital UK (BDUK) had announced that there would be a £203million investment over 3 to 5 years to improve broadband connectivity. In 2019, the proportion of properties in Kent with gigabit capable broad capabilities was 7.8% but now it was 29.6% and tribute was paid to the Broadband Team. In terms of national voucher scheme, the take up had been £3.5million in Scotland, £3.3million in Wales and in Kent, it was £6.14million. This showed the importance of broadband to Kent's residents. The government was to publish a paper addressing 'hard to reach' areas.

Work was being done with the Head of Strategic Planning on a new entry level Town and Planning Apprenticeship. KCC was to bid on to get places for apprenticeships as there was a shortage of trained government officers in the county and these were needed to progress the economy of the county.

There had been a multi-disciplinary call about Stodmarsh, where there had been concerns about potential leakage of nitrates and phosphates into water systems. This was particularly affecting the Canterbury and Ashford areas as well as the North Downs. This issue had the potential to hold up development of up to 20,000-30,000. Kent has one of the highest densities of housing requirement in England and therefore, it was particularly important to resolve the problems at Stodmarsh.

6) Mr Hill said all 99 libraries were open after an enormous amount of work to re-open 56 libraries in August. There was to be an engagement process to inform future shape of the library service.

The Summer Reading Challenge was a success and there was still time for children to complete the challenge. Around 12,000 children participated, online or physically and over 6000 had completed the challenge. Mr Hill was making a visit to Brockhill Country Park to give out medals to the successful children.

There had been significant pressure on Ceremonies Services during the summer months, as many people had delayed their ceremonies due to the pandemic and the constraints on how many people could attend. However, the service was back to normal and open for bookings. 60% more ceremonies were carried out on top of the normal amount pre-pandemic. 3624 ceremonies had been completed since April 2021, of which around 2500 were during July, August and the first half of September.

Turner Contemporary had their tenth anniversary event on 16 September which attracted around 400 people down to Margate and many senior figures in Kent attended. The new director had been announced. Clarrie Wallis was a Senior Curator from the Tate and it was felt that it would be a very successful appointment.

Mr Hill went to Southborough on 18 September 2021 where there was a celebration of the opening of Southborough Town Council's hub. There was a positive reaction from the public to the library and medical centre within the new hub.

7) Mr Sweetland said steps were being taken to engage with Kent residents. KCC was a large organisation which covered a wide range of services and residents had questions on specific things we do and also more general questions about what KCC does and how. KCC had introduced 'Ask Us Anything' and the information coming from this would help to inform what messages need to be clearer for the public and what signposting was needed to other services. This was supplementary to the other ways KCC was engaging with residents and the trial had been successful.

KCC's e-newsletter had more than 2600 subscribers and there was an aim to get more subscribers and more residents involved. The next circulation challenge was to get 20,000 new subscribers.

As well as sharing information and guidance about KCC's activities, it was a great way for residents to get news and updates about the way KCC worked. The e-newsletter also was a source of advice and directed people where to get help and support, when needed. The 25<sup>th</sup> issue was to go out on 6 October 2021 and all were encouraged to sign up and to give feedback. Thanks were given to Andrew Bose and all others who put the e-newsletter together.

There was a residents' engagement website called 'Let's Talk Kent' and it had been busy with important consultations. An enormous number of responses had been received on the Household Waste Recycling Centres consultation which was to close on 30 September 2021 and it was the largest response KCC had ever received. There was a second round of Active Travel consultations closing on 25 October and the consultation on the Draft Adult Social Care Strategy was to close on 24 October 2021. There were 3 other key consultations live on the Kent and Medway Domestic Abuse Strategy; Community Mental Health and Well-being Services; and the Civil Society Strategy.

Other ways that residents were able to stay informed including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram LinkedIn and NextDoor.

8) Mr Oakford said that the Budget Review Process had started and results from public consultation had come in and the public had indicated what was important to them. It was noted that 5 times the number of residents had commented on the consultation relating to Household Waste Recycling Centres than on the Budget Consultation.

KCC was seeing continuing pressures relating to Covid-19 through budget process and greater demand and this was of great concern. KCC was to review this with Cabinet Members and Directors through a set of Budget Pressure Review meetings. Work to explore how KCC uses buildings was progressing well. A new style of working environment was being trialled within Invicta House and feedback was to be obtained from staff.

There were pressures with regard to the construction of schools due to the lack of labour, inflation, lack of building materials, etc. The same issues discussed by Mr Murphy in his update around the construction industry had impacted KCC and the school build programme.

9) The Leader said KCC had sought to respond to the situation with fuel and the responsibility for leading on that matter was with central government. Nonetheless,

KCC had pursued the issue through the Kent Resilience Forum with a focus on the impact on KCC's services.

There had continued to be considerable interest in living standards for poorer residents with the impact of energy inflation, with some with ending of furlough and the end of £20 uplift of Universal Credit. The government had announced the Household Support Fund to be distributed through local authorities. The 'Levelling Up' White Paper was to be published by the government included in which was expected to be more information about 'County Deals'.

## **12. Revenue and Capital Monitoring**

*(Item 5)*

*Zena Cooke, Corporate Director, Finance and Mr Richard Smith, Corporate Director, Adult Social Care and Health were in attendance for this item.*

1) Mr Oakford said the report was in a revised format and contained additional information on reserves, the treasury position and council tax. The report was based on the position in May 2021, updated with significant items up until the end of July 2021. The forecast revenue position excluding schools and Covid-19 was a £9.7 million overspend. The majority of the overspend was within Adult Social Care. This included increased cost of care packages for people with learning difficulties and older people. There had been an increase in numbers and the cost for clients with mental health difficulties as well as changes in support for disabled clients with more receiving care through supported living services and less through direct payments. The reported Covid-19 position showed a forecast spend of £32.1million. There were corporately held Covid-19 related budgets of £16.1million and the remainder of the spend was to be met through the Emergency Covid-19 Reserve, resulting in a situation of 'breaking even' for the year. Without the additional government funding, KCC's forecast outturn would have been £32.1million higher.

The Capital Forecast showed an underspend of £42.7million, with £57.3million relating to re-phasing and £14.6million as a 'real' overspend. The Schools Delegated Budget had reported a £49.6million overspend which reflected the impact of high demand for additional SEN support and high cost per child of high need placements.

The Treasury Management position was consistent with regular reports to the Governance and Audit Committee which showed the council's level of external and internal debt and investments. The management of the council's Treasury was governed by the Treasury Strategy. KCC's strategy for borrowing was to seek an appropriate low risk balance between low interest rates and long-term certainty over financial cost.

Accumulated external borrowing had amounted to over £850million, largely consisting of long-term maturity debt of fixed rate interest. Only around 15% of the debt was due to mature over the next 5 years. The Investment Strategy sought to take an appropriate balance between risk and return, minimising the risk of incurring losses through defaults, maintain adequate liquidity and securing reasonable returns. The investments included internally managed short term and medium term investments and long term external investments in pooled funds.



Monitoring of district council tax collection had become even more important in the wake of reductions in the council tax base following the Covid-19 pandemic. There had been an impact from increased council tax reduction discounts and reduced collection rates. The scale and pace of recovery on both of these elements would be key in the 2022-23 Budget and Medium Term Financial Plan Strategy as compensation from government had so far only extended to extending the treatment of the in-year collection losses from 1 year to 3 years and for one grant in 2021-22 to compensate for the reduction in the collectible tax base.

2) Ms Cooke said the outcome of the Spending Review would be particularly important, given the point made that without the one-off Covid-19 grants that were received late in the last financial year, an overspend would have been reported. There was an ongoing impact of Covid-19 on the cost of services and this was to be monitored closely. The high needs budget deficit was the single biggest financial risk for KCC and work was being done with the service to stem, in particular, in-year increase in cost, which was not being experienced elsewhere in the country.

Cabinet Members commented and asked questions:

- Mrs Chandler said that changes to services for care leavers had not been about cutting costs and KCC as corporate parent were working to promote the independence of care leavers.
- The Leader said that there had been concerns that suppressed demand in social care would come back following the pandemic and if it was not in terms of numbers, that cases would increase in complexity.
- In response to the Leader's comments, Ms Cooke said that Finance was working closely with colleagues in the directorates and with analytics to look at modelling and forecasting moving forward.
- Mr Smith said that during the pandemic people had not been able to access preventative services so acuity of need of those coming into the system was greater. There had been a marked increase in need for mental health services. There had been pressures on the workforce and it had been difficult to recruit and retain staff. One of the strengths in Kent was the level of detail in the data held and this would help to look at what could be done to address the changes in demand. There had been changes relating to hospital discharge and people during the pandemic had been placed in very costly placements. Conversations were ongoing with NHS colleagues about working to address this issue and measures were in place to address the changes in demand.
- Mrs Bell said that an increase in activity was not always negative. An increase in supported living for people with learning disabilities meant that fewer people were in residential care and while this potentially cost more, the benefits for individuals needed to be taken into consideration. There were long term benefits from providing extra provision to allow more people to live independently in the community.
- Mr Oakford said there was a huge amount of concern about the level of overspend through the coming year and in real terms there was not more money for next year than the current year, unless something surprising was to

happen through the Spending Review. One of the greatest concerns was that some of £31million of Covid-19 money was one off and if related costs recurred, this would be on top of the other pressures and costs would need to offset during the budget setting process.

- Miss Carey said that people had a right to services and if people were eligible, the service had to be delivered. During lockdown, district authorities were collecting more waste with people being at home and therefore, there was more waste for processing. KCC had tried to manage demand and in working with district authorities, the amount of waste people were putting out for collection had reduced. However, recycling rates were still below 50% and the best recycling in the county was 65%. If waste was sorted and not contaminated, this material had value but ultimately, the best way forward is to reduce waste.

3) RESOLVED to note and agree the recommendations in the report.

### **13. Spending Review 2021** (Item 6)

*Dave Shipton, Head of Finance Policy, Planning and Strategy was in attendance for this item.*

1) Mr Oakford said that the Chancellor of the Exchequer announced a Spending Review on 7 September 2021 and was for the next 3 financial years which was a welcome change following recent 1 year settlements. A 3 year settlement would allow KCC to plan. The outcome was to be announced on 27 October with Autumn Budget. The deadline for submissions to review by external stakeholders was 30 September. Thanks were given to Dave Shipton and the Finance Team for the huge amount of work put into the report within a short time. It was hoped that government would take the submission into consideration.

2) Mr Shipton said that the responses from local authorities were likely to have commonality and cover similar points. KCC welcomed the 3 year settlement and KCC's submission included the impact of previous settlements since the last multi-year Spending Review, which covered 2016-2019. There had been two subsequent 1 year settlements in 2020-21 and 2021-22. In revenue terms, the submission notes that over this period an additional £221million was raised in Kent through council tax, which had increased KCC's budget in cash terms but there had been a £40.5million reduction in grants from central government (excluding Covid-19). The submission questioned whether this mix of council tax and grants was sustainable moving forward and it was felt there had been an over reliance on council tax. Spending had increased by £500million over the same period and therefore, there was a shortfall in real terms.

Total capital spending had been £1.6billion over that period, of which over £324 million had been funded by borrowing which had an effect on revenue budgets. KCC had a comparatively high level of long-term legacy debt to fund previous capital spending, and if KCC had to take out additional borrowing to fund future capital investment, the financing cost of that could take a significant proportion of any future council tax receipts, if there was not adequate grant funding as part of the Spending Review settlement.

Most of the focus in the submission was on the overall quantum to make sure that local authorities had sufficient resources to meet the demand.

Other comments made in the submission included:

- The adequacy of dedicated schools grant (DSG) and reference was made to the high needs block.
- Evidence was given around social care pressures with increasing complexity of cases and higher costs from clients coming into the system.
- Focus had also been given to the additional £5.4 billion for new social care reforms and whether that was adequate.
- Council tax reform was long overdue.
- Funding reforms through the Fair Funding Review which had been delayed.

3) The Leader said that he welcomed the points made in the report regarding the importance of areas such as infrastructure, economic development, 'levelling up'. KCC's ability to play a role in this was dependent on the degree of increasing demand-led expenditures and the ability to flex some resources into those other areas.

The Leader asked for the wording on 6<sup>th</sup> paragraph of page 16 of the submission which said:

*The plan to allow self-funders to access care at the same personal cost as local authority supported clients is likely to lead to increased costs for existing and new local authority clients and needs to be funded as part of the £5.4bn package for social care over 2022-23 to 2024-25.*

to be changed to reflect that clients would need to be funded regardless of the adequacy of the allocation from the £5.4billion package.

4) RESOLVED to note the timetable for SR2021 and endorse the Spending Review submission.

#### **14. Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report** (Item 7)

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

1) Rachel Kennard outlined the report for Quarter 1, reporting results until the end of June 2021. Overall, the position was positive. 22 of the KPIs were 'RAG' rated as green, 9 rated as amber and 2 performing below target rated as red.

2) The 2 areas that had been 'RAG' rated as red were:

- Under customer services percentage of calls to contact point which were answered. The service had been impacted by staff leaving and a high sickness rate with Covid-19 being a contributing factor. A recruitment drive had started in June, with some new advisors put in post by the end of June and others in early July. Improvements to the answer rate were expected for Quarter 2.

- There had been an improvement for the KPI under Children, Young People and Education, 'ECHPs issued within 20 weeks'. The KPI was based on a 12 month rolling average and there had been an increase of 4 percentage points on the figure for the year to end of Quarter 4. The trend over the last 4 Quarters was significantly statistically upward.

3) Further positive points from the report were noted:

- The KPI relating to developer contributions secured as a percentage of amount sought had improved from RAG-rated as red in Quarter 4 to green in Quarter 1.
- In Public Health, NHS Health Checks were rated green for Quarter 1 following the introduction of amended targets which reflected the disruption to delivery due to Covid-19.

4) It was also noted during Members' discussion of the Quarterly Performance Monitoring Report:

- There had been good results in terms of customer satisfaction of 94% for the Registration Service.
- The figure was improving for ECHPs issued within 20 weeks and the numbers going forward from Quarter 1 were to improve more. There had been increased demand and there was preventative work ongoing.
- There had been significant achievements in the measures in the Children's Social Care area, particularly in the light of the pandemic.
- The improvement in the KPI relating to developer contributions was welcomed as these were contributing towards the cost of waste-related infrastructure.
- It was highlighted that Kent's Plan Bee Facebook page had 950 followers.
- It was anticipated that the KPI relating to customer services percentage of calls to contact point which were answered, would see significant improvement in the next Quarter.
- Improvements to the KPI relating to FOI requests were sought as there were legal and reputational repercussions.

5) Resolved that the Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 1 be noted.

## **15. Building Back Better - Our Plan for Health and Social Care** (Item 8)

1) Mrs Bell introduced the report regarding 'Building Back Better' and advised that the government had announced its plans for Health and Social Care, particularly in relation to funding. It had been proposed that £5.4billion was to be invested into

Adult Social Care over the following 3 years but it was not clear how this would be allocated to local authorities. There were elements that would need to be taken into consideration such as client contributions to their care, funding of the cap, the effect of demand as more people become eligible for council support for their care. KCC awaited further details and the White Paper but consideration was being given to the potential impact on the Budget.

Almost all self-funding clients paid higher fees for care costs than those funded by the local authority. The proposed changes would possibly lead to the reduction or elimination of the fee differential between self-funders and those funded by the local authority. It was unclear whether the risk was to be borne by providers whose income would be reduced or by the local authority paying higher fees. It was acknowledged that either scenario would potentially have a big impact on the sustainability of the provider market or severe additional pressure on council budgets.

Spending on social care accounted for half of KCC's budget, supporting not only older people but people of working age with disabilities. The additional funding from the National Insurance Contributions Levy was to cover the cost of implementing the changes set out in the proposals but there was still an expectation that the demographic and cost pressures would have to be met through council tax, the social care precept and long-term efficiencies.

The appendix to the report highlighted situation with regard to care in rural areas and the challenges including high demand for services for people over 65 and a recent decrease in contracting of residential care provision. It recommended to the government that as well as increasing funding in the Spending Review to meet rising cost and unmet need before 2023, the government enshrine in law that a dedicated proportion of the levy be allocated to social care.

2) The Leader said thanked Dave Shipton and Michael Thomas-Sam for the report.

3) RESOLVED to note the report.

## **16. Kent County Council Net Zero Target Progress Report**

*(Item 9)*

*Ben Watts, General Counsel; Stephanie Holt-Castle, Director for Growth and Communities and Deborah Kapaj, Sustainable Estates Programme Manager were in attendance for this item.*

1) Miss Carey introduced the report which was focused on the work KCC was doing to achieve Net Zero for KCC services and estates by 2030. It was important that there was proper measurement of what was achieved but the achievement of Net Zero was a clear aim. KCC had been measuring its carbon emissions since 2005 and these were reported as part of the Quarterly Performance Monitoring. The pace and focus on reduction of carbon emissions had increased here, nationally and internationally. £20.6million of funding had been awarded to KCC projects from the Public Sector Decarbonisation Scheme, which was significantly more than other local authorities in the south east had been awarded.

There was an obligation to spend the funding and deliver the projects before the end of March 2022 and the team had been working across the whole council to delivering the projects and to reduce KCC's carbon emissions.

2) Ms Kapaj said that a huge amount of progress had been made since the target had been set. There was a very detailed action plan and much of the action plan had been initiated and progress was being made on reducing KCC's emissions. Details of the plan and roadmap were included as appendices to the report.

Wider work was ongoing through the Climate Change Network which was overseen by the Kent & Medway Environment Group. Alongside KCC's commitments, the districts had plans for their areas. More would need to be done to support businesses who would not have the expertise or resources.

3) Ms Holt-Castle said there were 3 areas that would need to be tackled in order to meet the Kent target of Net Zero by 2050: roads and transport, domestic housing and industrial commercial buildings. These areas made up 90% of emissions and support was needed from central government in terms of national legislation and in terms of funding to incentivise in those areas.

4) Mr Watts said it was vital that KCC stayed within the legal and governance confines. The projects were complicated to deliver and work was moving at pace, requiring significant resources.

In response to questions, it was noted:

- The climate had already changed and there would be more work with adapting to climate change. KCC was ahead of other local authorities and in a strong position in terms of the climate change agenda. KCC had identified the risks and mitigations to be put in place to deal with climate change. It was acknowledged that even when targets are met, climate change would still have an effect in the county.
- KCC's fleet of vehicles were moving towards being fully electric and there was a fleet of 39 (soon to be 48) electric vans which were being lent out to businesses for free. This was done through Highways England funding the capital costs and KCC meeting the revenue costs. Low Carbon Across the South East (LoCASE) had tremendous reach in terms of helping businesses move into low energy sectors but also in supporting them to reduce their carbon emissions. It was felt there was increased interest as businesses could save money and measures such as 'greening' also meet social responsibility. New technology and innovations would assist in reaching the 2050 target.
- It was noted that the grants from government came with very tight timescales, it was difficult for local authorities to respond thoroughly. KCC was lobbying government on this point so that quality projects with long-lasting impacts could be delivered.

5) RESOLVED to note the report.

