

By: Paul Wickenden, Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager
To: Scrutiny Board – 22 April 2010
Subject: **Items referred to the Scrutiny Board in accordance with its Terms of Reference.**

Summary: This report sets out item that has been referred to the Scrutiny Board for consideration.

Introduction

1. The terms of reference for this Board were approved by County Council on 10 December 2009 and are set out below :-

“This committee has been appointed by the Council under section 21 of the Local Government Act 2000, either by itself or by allocation to one or more of the Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees, to:

- (a) review or scrutinise:
 - (i) decisions made or other action taken in connection with the discharge of any non-Executive functions
 - (ii) actions taken in connection with the discharge of any Executive functions by the Leader, the Cabinet or Cabinet Members (other than formal decisions)
 - (iii) officer decisions (whether exercising Executive or non-Executive functions)
- (b) request, but not require, that implementation of a decision be postponed when considering any decision taken by an officer or by a Committee exercising functions delegated by the Council.
- (c) co-ordinate the programme of Select Committee reviews during the year
- (d) allocate Select Committee reviews to Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committees and decide the appointment, co-ordination, composition and chairing of Select Committees to conduct the reviews
- (e) undertake policy development activity where this is of a cross-cutting nature, or allocate this power to the relevant Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee
- (f) consider and keep under review the overall mechanisms and functions of the Overview and Scrutiny process and to make recommendations to the Council as appropriate

- (g) deploy Policy Overview and Scrutiny support staff and resources.”

References from the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee – 9 April 2010

(a) Investigation of possible efficiencies from Unitary authorities

2. (1) At the meeting of the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on 9 April 2010, Mr Kite clarified the reference made in the minutes of the previous meeting. The request to look at emerging evidence of possible efficiencies from some of the new unitary authorities resulted from a discussion at the budget meeting of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee where it was suggested that there might be efficiencies from some of the new unitary authorities.

(2) Mr Kite asked that, following a claim made about emerging evidence of possible efficiencies from some of the new unitary authorities, Members review any evidence of possible efficiencies.

(b) Weather damaged roads – Major Road Repair Blitz

3. (1) The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee have looked at the process, how it will be administered, the cost of this administration and the inspection arrangements for work undertaken.

(2) They have recommended that the Scrutiny Board be asked to review the Weather Damage Repairs to Roads in Kent contract and the work to date after £1million has been spent.

(c) Safeguarding Children in Kent: Defending and Developing the Service

4. (1) The Cabinet Scrutiny Committee considered a report which gave an overview of the Review Team’s assessment arrangements in both the national and local contexts and set out a number of recommendations for consideration by the County Council.

(2) They recommended that the Scrutiny Board be asked to receive a report addressing how and whom should have the responsibility for elected Members as “Corporate Parents” supporting the needs of looked after Children.

(d) Local Member Information

5. (1). Throughout the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee’s discussion on each of the items was a common theme about how local Members are kept informed of issues, initiatives and decisions affecting their electoral divisions.

(2). The Committee are aware of a range of important initiatives being undertaken which will improve the quality and flow of information to elected Members for example implementation of the Informal Member Group: Member Information (approved by the County Council – December 2008), the enhancement and refresh of the County Council website and the decision to develop Kent Digital Service. However there is a lack of cohesiveness in pulling all these factors together and a lack of clarity over who has the overall vision which the Committee recommends must be addressed. The Deputy Leader

and Cabinet Member for Localism and Partnerships be asked to report to the Scrutiny Board on how and when he proposed this work to be taken forward, and this be reported to Members of Cabinet Scrutiny Committee through their follow up items report.

Recommendations that either the Scrutiny Board or a specified POSC consider the following issues:-

- (a) Review the evidence to support possible efficiencies from some Unitary authorities
- (b) review the “contract” and the work to date after £1m has been spent
- (c) to receive a report addressing how and whom should have the responsibility for elected Members as “Corporate Parents” supporting the needs of looked after Children.
- (d) The Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Localism and Partnerships be asked to report to the Scrutiny Board on how and when he proposed this work to be taken forward

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