

By: Roger Gough, Cabinet Member for Support Services and Performance Management and David Cockburn, Executive Director of Strategy, Economic Development and ICT

To: Governance and Audit Committee 30th April 2010

Subject: Shared Services work in Kent

1. Summary

As part of the Audit Commission work programme for 2008/9 they undertook a 'snapshot analysis' report on aspects of partnership working in Kent, linked to the CSCI/Audit Commission inspection of aspects of KASS services in March 2009 and the CAA assessment in 2009 of the work to develop the Kent Later Life Strategy.

This is neither an audit report nor an inspection, but an attempt by the Commission to update their knowledge of the position in Kent following the comment in the June 2008 Corporate Assessment report that *"KCC's capacity to deliver its ambitions would be stronger if it adopted a more inclusive, listening approach, particularly with local partners"*

This report sought views only from voluntary and community sector organisations and only those engaged-with as part of the partial inspection of KASS and with the development of the Later Life Strategy. It also failed to distinguish between those organisations representing service users and working in partnership with KCC to develop and commission services, and those organisations working with us as contractors to deliver services.

The report contains a number of statements treating the perceptions of those interviewed as statements of fact, when a simple cross-reference to the Directorate concerned would have established the truth. This is particularly the case in respect of what the Commission reports as the contractual position in KASS, where the statement that they have been "driving down the value of domiciliary contracts" is both incorrect and inflammatory. KCC sought to hold down contract prices, by tight control of the cost of living increases, but nothing more.

What may be significant are not the statements themselves, but the fact that such misinformed views are held by partners and contractors and that KCC is clearly failing to get the real truth 'out there'.

In a similar vein the comments about the working relationships between KCC and various forums representing (the views of) older people, whether direct service users or not, contains errors of fact and of interpretation, for example in respect of the long-established forum in Dartford.

KCC is currently conducting an authority-wide review of the effectiveness of partnership working and this 'snapshot' is being used as one of the inputs to that review process. Beyond that, there is no action to implement as a consequence of this report.

2. Recommendation

Members are asked to note the flaws in this report, but accept the content as a contribution to the wider review of partnership working now underway within KCC and with partners.

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Background Documents: None