

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

CABINET

MINUTES of a meeting of the Cabinet held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 23 June 2022.

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

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

1. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 1)

Apologies were received from Mr Hill. Mrs Hohler was in attendance. Mr Murphy attended virtually.

2. Minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2022

(Item 3)

Resolved that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 May 2022 were a correct record and that they be signed by the Chair.

3. Cabinet Member Updates

(Item 4)

1) Mrs Bell said there was less live data to review on Covid-19 but the Coronavirus was still circulating in Kent.

There was to be a heatwave in Kent and residents were asked to: keep cool, stay hydrated and be prepared. Kent's residents were urged to stay indoors when it was very hot, avoid direct sunlight, stay in the shade, keep one's room or house cool by drawing the blinds when the sun was coming in, or when it was cooler outside to open windows and doors. It was important to stay hydrated and drink plenty of fluids. It was important to be prepared and to avoid travelling when it was really hot. If travel was necessary, residents were asked to take common sense precautions.

KCC was seeking for health and social care professionals to identify people they cared for who were at high risk, make plans to support them and to check on them regularly during hot weather. Care home managers and staff identified people they were caring for at high risk and were making changes as necessary, using the Beat the Heat checklist. Advice was available on the KCC website regarding keeping cool in hot weather.

It was Carers Week between 6 and 12 June. This was an annual awareness campaign to celebrate and recognise the vital contribution made by the UK's 6.5 million carers. It aimed to highlight the challenges unpaid carers face and recognised the contribution made to families and communities throughout the UK. It also helped people who did not think of themselves as having caring responsibilities to identify as carers and access much-needed support.

The campaign was brought to life by thousands of individuals and organisations who came together to provide support for carers, run activities, to highlight the vital role carers play in our communities and draw attention to just how important caring was. There had been numerous drop-in information sessions and coffee drop-ins across the county.

KCC urged everyone to recognise Kent's carers and support them in getting the practical, financial and emotional help needed. Any carers not currently receiving help were encouraged to contact KCC for a care assessment so that they could be provided with all the support available to assist them to continue caring and to ensure their wellbeing. Anyone could ask for a carer assessment, even if the person being cared for was not receiving support from the council.

2) Mrs Chandler said that over the previous six years, HeadStart Kent had been an ambitious, county-wide programme, working to support the resilience and emotional wellbeing of young people in Kent through a variety of ways. The HeadStart Learning and Celebration Event on 8 June included hearing from young people involved in the programme, as well as from schools, organisations, The National Lottery Community Fund, and the HeadStart team, to share key learning, celebrate the many achievements and demonstrate how the programme's elements were to be sustained and developed across the county.

The event was attended by 130 participants and Mrs Chandler presented three Community Awards to the following organisations : The Prince of Wales Youth Club in Canterbury, The Young Lives Foundation and the Pavillion Youth and Community Café in Broadstairs. The award recognised and celebrated everything community organisations did to champion resilience and wellbeing, whether through their staff or volunteers, working with parents and carers, or through sessions and activities for children, young people and the wider community. Mrs Chandler was to attend a ceremony later in June to present the Canterbury Neighbourhood and Community Centres team with their award who unfortunately were unable to attend the event on the day.

Mrs Chandler highlighted the success of the programme which was attributed to over 2000 young people who had helped design, deliver and evaluate the programme, and thanks were given to all involved, including partners , who had worked tirelessly to support over 50,000 young people. The HeadStart programme would leave a lasting legacy thanks to the wealth and evidence of learning which was embedded in the county's mental health provision.

Further information on the legacy and sustainability of HeadStart was to come to County Council on 14 July and to the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee on 19 July.

Members were reminded that the Kent Fostering Service's annual Foster Carer Award Ceremony was to take place on Friday, 4 November. The awards were to recognise the outstanding work carried out by Kent foster carers and staff within Kent Children's Services. Nominations could be made by KCC staff members, partner agencies, foster carers and young people, to show their appreciation for the hard work and dedication to our children and young people in their care. The closing date for nominations was Friday 30 September 2022.

As part of its recruitment and workforce strategy the Children, Young People and Education Directorate recruited on average 55 to 60 newly qualified social workers (NQSW) each year. This was a significant part of KCC's strategy to recruit social workers through a dedicated recruitment campaign in the spring and autumn months. KCC had successfully recruited 60 newly qualified social workers and were anticipating further confirmations.

All newly qualified social workers were enrolled onto the Assessed Year in Education (ASYE) programme, which was a 12 month employment-based programme of support, development and assessment.

As part of that support and development work, all new social workers were offered:

- a mentor identified within the districts who was to support with cases and work alongside the newly qualified social worker to enable them to develop the learning they had already had on student placements
- 2 AYSE supervisors in Learning and Development
- 1 AYSE Co-ordinator who set up initial on-boarding meetings with newly qualified social workers and steered them and their manager through the programme
- Registration on the ASYE Skills For Care portal and associated support
- Co-ordination of ASYE Assessors per newly qualified social worker including the provision of the ASYE Assessor training courses and refreshers

All NQSW's joined frontline social work teams across the range of children and families provision. NQSW's were expected to have a 10% reduction in caseload during their time completing the ASYE and each of the 4 areas had an Area NQSW Supervisor that was a dedicated role providing group and individual tailored support to NQSW colleagues within their area.

KCC's newly qualified social workers were congratulated and were wished all the best as they navigated their way through their assessment year and gained the confidence and knowledge required to support them in the employment environment.

3) Mrs Prendergast said the Department for Education (DfE) had long sought to reduce the significant variations in school funding across the country. This was initially consulted on back in 2016 with the aim of establishing greater predictability in schools financial planning and supporting the system to make best use of resources.

In 2018/19, the introduction of a soft national funding formula for mainstream schools was calculated on an allocation for each school based on pupil numbers and characteristics from the school census. The government then aggregated this amount for all the schools in each local authority to create a total allocation for that area. Local authorities, in conjunction with the Schools Funding Forum then set their own local formula to distribute their total allocation between all the schools in their area.

Fair school funding for all, the DfE consultation in 2021 focused on implementation of a directly applied National Funding Formula and the transition from the current system to achieve this. The government had confirmed the approach to transitioning to a direct NFF, requiring local authorities to use all NFF factors, and bring their factor values 10% closer to the NFF.

Before the summer of 2022, there was to be a second stage consultation detailing how the direct NFF was to be implemented. The measure would mean that the Secretary of State in relation to England was to determine funding for all mainstream schools through a single, national funding formula.

Local authorities were to continue to have a local education budget to deliver their education responsibilities including high needs, early years, and central school services and could continue 'de-delegation' deducting funding from maintained schools' budgets to fund central services for those schools – with Schools Forums retaining some responsibilities around local education spending, but not core schools funding.

Mrs Prendergast had been invited to take part in a podcast produced by pupils at East Peckham Primary School, an initiative that had gained national acclaim and followed in the footsteps of celebrities such as Rick Astley, Michael Ball and Josh Widdicombe who had featured in previous podcasts.

The school had won Best Primary School Radio Station of the Year in the Young Audio Awards 2022, after impressing the judges with their regular podcast, involving all the children and edited by Year 6 students and set up just after the first lockdown in 2020.

Mrs Prendergast was interviewed about her role as the Cabinet Member for Education and Skills and she was thoroughly impressed with the quality of their questioning and their professionalism. The pupils were a true reflection of the schools values and she was delighted that their initiative had been recognised through the award. Mrs Wickens, the headteacher, was retiring shortly after 13 years at the school. Mrs Wickens was a huge fan of Rod Stewart and the children said they were endeavouring to secure Mr Stewart as their next interviewee. Congratulations were given to all the staff and pupils at East Peckham Primary school.

4) Mr Brazier said the Department for Transport (DfT) response to KCC's Bus Service Improvement Plan bid for £220 million was an allocation of £35.1 million, two thirds of this in capital. There had been a number of meetings with the DfT and there had been a round table with the Minister, Baroness Vere to discuss how we secure the funding. The emphasis was to be on highways schemes to improve bus priority on the highway network and ticketing and fares initiatives to encourage bus use. The money could not be used to support current services, so KCC was not able to mitigate our proposed cuts in support for routes or alleviate the increase in the cost of the standard Kent Travel Saver.

It was understood that KCC would not be able to reduce the extent of discretionary support for buses for the three-year period of the grant.

The government's introduction of Local Cycling and Walking Infrastructure Plans (LCWIPs) was in 2017. The intention was to make cycling and walking the natural choices for shorter journeys and in Kent, LCWIPs had been created by the district councils. Several of these had started to develop plans, but several had yet to develop plans. LCWIPs were to be incorporated in local transport plans and were to be integrated into the transport system in an area.

Mr Brazier attended a seminar in Cambridge, arranged by Sustrans and Cambridgeshire County Council. This consisted of a number of presentations by the

County Council, Cambridge University and Sustrans. Cambridge was growing and there was a good deal of expansion in the scientific sector and the growth of housing and satellite developments to the city. Very prominent in the planning was the provision of facilities for cycling, walking and public transport. During the afternoon, there was a cycling tour of the city to share how much had been achieved.

Mr Brazier intended to encourage the development and growth of LCWIPs in Kent, giving rise to modal shift, active travel and improved health for residents. New developments in Ashford already demonstrated how this was to be achieved.

Mr Brazier cut the ribbon at the opening of the new bus station in Gravesend. The new bus hub had provided Gravesend with canopies, seating, toilets and real time information. The real time information made it very clear for users where and from where the buses would be departing. The fast-track service served Gravesend. The £2.5 million facility was funded in large part by SELEP with contributions from KCC and Gravesham Borough Council. The scheme completed the revival of the entire area of the town surrounding the railway station.

KCC had been informed by Baroness Vere, Minister for Roads, Buses and Places that the application for powers under Part 6 of the Traffic Management Act had been successful and that she had signed a designation order that would allow KCC to enforce moving traffic offences in the county. This meant with the use of camera technology, KCC would be able to verify offences such as stopping in yellow boxes, prohibited right turns or a range of offences prescribed by the legislation. Emphasis was being put on improving traffic flow in our towns and not on the increased income.

5) Miss Carey said there had been a visit from members of the Plan Bee group and others to Moat Farm in Shadowhurst near Ashford to see the wildflower meadows, which supported a great variety of insect life, plants and birds. They also saw one of the natural flood management projects that KCC had supported. There had not been a substantial test to the new arrangement yet but it was expected that it would provide some relief to Yalding. There was scope for more such projects which were considerably cheaper than building concrete dams and they also improved biodiversity by providing a wet landscape, attracting different types of plants and wildlife. Together, the natural flood management projects had multiple benefits in that they helped with adaptation to the weather, were good for nature and beautiful visually.

6) Mr Murphy said the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce and Your Business Awards were being launched and companies across the county were able to enter the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce Annual Business Awards and pitch themselves as being one of the best companies in the county. Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce had launched the 2022 Awards to help showcase the business community, and this year the contest was run in association and closely with Kent County Council. Across Kent, businesses were leaders in their respective industries and were making a positive contribution to the county's economy and the communities in which they worked. KCC was to co-host the Awards and companies who are interested in entering were able to find the applications forms on the Kent Invicta Chamber of Commerce lead webpage.

BT had announced that they were to upgrade landlines to digital technology at the end of 2025. This meant in practice that all landline calls were to be delivered over digital technology, using a broadband connection. The Broadband Team were working closely across KCC directorates and with partners to ensure that KCC was prepared for the switchover and that appropriate measures were in place to ensure communications continued with withdrawal of the copper network.

On 19 May, Mr Murphy and officers were pleased to input into the Affordable Housing Select Committee and the final report was awaited. In addition, input was provided into the short-focused inquiry into Section 106 developer contributions within the county and again, the results and recommendations from that committee were awaited.

Ebbsfleet Development Corporation were celebrating the formal completion of 300 houses within the Ebbsfleet city development. This was a huge achievement contributing to the much-needed housing in the county. Officers had been working closely with districts to assist with the Levelling Up funding bids that the various districts were putting to central government and thanks were given to Lee Burchill for his contributions to this work. Close work was ongoing with district councils in order to help and facilitate the construction of their bids and it was hoped they would be successful in the Levelling Up process.

It was also announced that the Chamber of Commerce had been awarded a £500,000 grant from central government for their Local Skills Improvement Plan (LSIP) projects and that was very welcome news. Work was also ongoing with colleagues at Essex County Council, helping them with their application to join the Straits Committee, which it was hoped would go forward in early 2023.

Meetings and discussions had continued with UK Power Networks to ensure that the county's power infrastructure grid was suitable and reliable for what would be needed going forward into the future.

7) Mrs Hohler said that she and Mr Hill had attended the KCF Needs in Kent Conference on 15 June which was very well organised and a wonderful event. The theme of the conference was looking at the county's priority needs, on a district-by-district basis. The aim was to launch research and provide an opportunity to discuss the collective ambitions for Kent and its future needs and how to focus funding and connections to meet need in the county. Delegates at the conference were from the voluntary sector. There were keynote speakers, question and answer sessions as well as breakout discussions.

8) Mr Sweetland said KCC's new recruitment website had been launched. In an increasingly competitive market, it was more important than ever that KCC's recruitment site gave applicants easy access to the available jobs and a good feel for what it was like to work at KCC. KCC's reputation as a good employer was an important factor in attracting good people to apply for the job and career opportunities across the broad range of services.

KCC had won the Charity, Education, Public Sector category for this year with The Job Crowd for the second year running. KCC had also moved into the top 30 graduate employers across all sectors. The Job Crowd was the leading ranking of graduate and apprentice employers based exclusively on anonymous feedback from graduates. The graduate program had been in place since 2019 and there were 10

streams running with 10 current graduates. Getting this recognition from The Job Crowd would help KCC to continue to attract graduates to join KCC as an employer of choice.

KCC had been highly commended at the Kent Employer Awards 2022 for our Kickstart Programme. The award recognised the valuable opportunities KCC had provided for individuals to join that programme to enhance their skills and build confidence enabling them to be competitive in the labour market.

Like The Job Crowd award, this had not been something KCC had nominated itself for, this was done by the Department of Work and Pensions. The Kickstart Scheme had a positive impact on the lives of 122 people who had accessed a placement with KCC so far.

KCC had launched a search amongst Kent residents for volunteers to join the Digital Champion Network. Those volunteering were to have opportunities to support and improve the digital skills of Kent's communities. Anyone with patience and a willingness to learn was asked to get in touch with a view to being trained to provide support to people across a range of things, including accessing public services online, online GP booking services and more general advice about internet shopping and Zoom meetings. Information was available on the Digital Champions Network page on Kent.gov.uk.

The Kent County Show was on 8, 9, and 10 July and was to feature the Reconnect Programme.

9) Mr Oakford updated regarding the Information Technology Group and improvements made in recent months. Thanks were given to Lisa Gannon, Director of Technology, who acknowledged when she joined KCC that there were challenges with IT provision, the relationship with Cantium and service being received. In March 2022, the Technology Team initiated a service improvement project with a focus on 3 key areas. The first area was cyber security, which was of the utmost importance. The others related to laptops and the IT ServiceDesk.

The improvement project with KCC and Cantium took a collaborative approach working towards joint objectives. Each team completed a detailed review of their area and these fed into joint action plan. The action plan looked at the areas of most benefit to KCC, in particular to Officers and Members. Feedback from staff working on the teams had been positive. The joint plan was being actioned and the benefits and improvements were starting to be seen.

Many officers had experienced performance and stability issues with their laptops and laptop health check clinics. During the health checks, engineers were to do a health check of laptops, update software and hardware where needed. The pilot was very successful and the clinics were being rolled out across the council.

The Technology Team had implemented a new streamlining process for repairs so that disruption to work was minimised. The Team had also improved the soft management process, meaning that KCC was insulated from the ongoing worldwide supply issues. There had also been improvements to the Helpdesk function. The work on improving services had just started but after a short period of time, a difference had already been made. Thanks were given to all those involved with this work.

10) The Leader said that together with Mrs Chandler, Mrs Bell, Richard Smith and Anjan Ghosh, he had attended and chaired an opening shadow meeting of the Integrated Care Partnership. This brought local authorities and the health organisations together as part of the new structures. It had been a positive start and these meeting would be webcast in future. The new structure was to start on 1 July 2022.

4. Provisional Revenue and Capital Budget Outturn Report 2021-22 *(Item 5)*

John Betts, Interim Corporate Director (Finance) was in attendance for this item

1) Mr Oakford said the report outlined the provisional outturn for 2021-22 and it was the 22nd year that KCC was able to demonstrate sound financial management. This was a considerable accomplishment considering the forecast position experienced throughout the year. The last reported position showed an overspend of £13.9 million. In the last quarter, KCC had managed this down to a slight underspend of £500,000. This was primarily due to proactive management, additional unexpected grant income, re-phasing of tenders and a review of expenditure that could be legitimately charged to various grants. Within the overall outturn position, there was significant overspend in Children's Services totalling £8 million. This had been offset with underspends elsewhere. The provisional outturn was an underspend of £7.6 million, with 'roll forward' requests of £7.1 million, bringing the net position to an underspend of £0.5 million.

The Covid related spending had been closely managed and monitored throughout the year. The Covid related spending charged to the Covid-19 Emergency Grant reserve amounted to £17.9 million, leaving a balance of £53 million in the reserve. There were a number of commitments against the reserve going forward into 2022/2023.

KCC's earmarked and general reserves had increased by £15.3 million to £408.1 million. The largest item was the emergency contribution to the General Fund of £14 million. This brought the general reserve to 5% of the revenue budget.

The capital outturn position was an underspend of £172 million with the vast majority of this related to re-phasing and a £2 million real underspend.

The Schools' delegated budgets had reported an overspend of £41 million which reflected the increased number of children requiring an Education, Health and Care Plan. The needs of children had become more complex and with the complexity came more expense. The Dedicated Schools Grant deficit was £97.6 million. However, KCC had been invited by the Department for Education to take part in the second round of the Safety Valve Programme discussions to support the development of a sustainable plan for recovery.

2) Mr Betts said it was a remarkable achievement to demonstrate sound financial management and achieve an underspend given the pressures. There had been a consistent focus on good financial management. There was to be a considerable amount of financial challenge in the coming year but KCC was in a robust position.

3) RESOLVED to agree the recommendations set out in the report.

5. Quarterly Performance Report

(Item 6)

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

1) Rachel Kennard outlined the report for Quarter 4, reporting full year results for 2021-22 as well as proposed indicators and targets for the coming year. Overall, the position was positive. 24 of the KPIs were 'RAG' rated as green, 6 rated as amber and 3 performing below target rated as red.

2) The 3 areas that had been 'RAG' rated as red were:

- 77% of complaints had been responded to within timescale which was below the floor standard of 80% but this was an improvement to the previous quarter. Work was ongoing to improve this area.
- The KPI relating to Section 106 developer contributions had been affected by one large site in Thanet. Work was being undertaken to rectify the situation.
- There had been an improvement throughout the year for the KPI under Children, Young People and Education, 'ECHPs issued within 20 weeks'. This KPI was expected to continue to improve.

3) It was noted that only 5 KPIs had shown deterioration.

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

- The KPIs demonstrated a resilient operating environment and how well KCC stood up against pressures.

5) Resolved that the Quarterly Performance Report – Quarter 4 be noted.

6. Economic Strategy

(Item 7)

David Smith, Director of Economic Development and Ross Gill, Associate Director at SQW were in attendance for this item.

1) Mr Murphy introduced the report.

2) Mr Smith outlined the report and advised that work had been ongoing to make a document which was to be supported across Kent and Medway and would form the basis of an 8-year framework for specific actions. The strategy was completely aligned with the KCC Strategic Statement.

3) Mr Gill said a draft of the document had been considered at a meeting of Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee (GEDC CC) on 10 May and it was also shared with county partnerships. Comments had been incorporated into the revised Strategic Framework draft. Members of GEDC CC were

keen to have a greater 'line of sight' over evidence so this had been built into the document. The evidence, in many cases, was historical and reflected gradual, incremental changes and it was considered how to reflect the changes in context within the draft Strategy.

There would need to be a consensus on the strategic as while KCC was a driver in the work, support was needed from the districts and Medway. There would need to be a balance in the longer term between flexibility and a certain amount of abstraction and grounding actions.

Some actions had already been taken forward in the multi-agency context.

4) Further to questions and comments, it was noted:

- It was considered there was a huge opportunity in improving access through the Port of Dover. The strategy built on the strength of Dover and one of the actions already being worked on was a 'green route' through to the continent.
- There was a huge movement where people had gone from working in offices in London to working where they lived in Kent and where people were spending money in their communities. However, it was important to press for more investment in Kent's transport network, in particular the train and highway networks. Kent's proximity to London was also a strength.
- Alignment with existing strategy around education and the skills base was important. It was queried how the Strategy was being linked with business and how to strengthen links in Kent. The next stage would involve publicly engaging with partners such as universities, FE colleges and places like Discovery Park. They would be crucial in delivering the strategy alongside districts.

5) RESOLVED to note the draft Strategic Framework.

7. Ukraine Update

(Item 8)

Rebecca Spore, Director of Infrastructure was in attendance for this item.

1) Ms Spore outlined the presentation (attached).

2) In response to questions and comments, it was noted:

- The expectation was the government would reimburse local authorities for costs such as school transport. The DFE guidance had still not been received so there was a risk the cost would not be met.
- Some groups were going back to Ukraine but the majority of people were securing places to work and for children to go to school in the community.
- Concerns were raised about housing issues due to placement breakdown. Homelessness was recognised as key risk and the longer placements go on, the more likely there could be breakdowns. There will be challenges around accommodation for when the 6-9 months of placement ends and capacity moving forward.

3) RESOLVED to note the update.

8. South East Migration

(Item 9)

Sarah Hammond, Interim Corporate Director for CYPE; Louise Fisher, Assistant Director (Front Door); Chris Grosskopf, Refugee Resettlement Programme Manager; and Roy Millard, Head of Partnership (South East Strategic partnership for Migration) were in attendance for this item.

- 1) Ms Hammond outlined the presentation (attached).
- 2) Ms Fisher outlined the section of the presentation relating to UASC.
- 3) Mr Millard and Ms Grosskopf outlined the presentation regarding South East Strategic Partnership for Migration (attached).
- 4) Further to comments and questions from Members, it was noted:
 - Thanks were given to the Area Education Officers for their assistance with young people coming from Afghanistan.
 - There were 53 female UASCs between January and June with the majority in 15-17 age group.
 - It was reported that 80% of claims for asylum were successful last year on the first hearing and the figure rose on appeal. It was high in comparison to 'normal' years, where the percentage was around 60% and it was not clear how much the pandemic affected this. Negative decisions were not being served during the pandemic. Once granted, there was not the same system to track where people had gone to settle down. However, it was important when considering the modelling for full dispersal.
 - Most Ukrainians were not claiming asylum but some were as they had 'fallen between the schemes', as was the case for Syrians a few years ago.
- 5) RESOLVED to note the report.