

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

GROWTH, ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND COMMUNITIES CABINET COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Thursday, 22 September 2022.

PRESENT: Mr N Baker (Vice-Chairman in the Chair), Mrs R Binks, Mr C Broadley, Mr T Cannon, Ms M Dawkins, Mr S Holden, Mr M A J Hood, Mr J A Kite, MBE, Ms J Meade, Mr J Meade, Mr D Robey, Mr M J Sole and Mrs S Hudson

ALSO PRESENT: Mr D Murphy and Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mrs S Holt-Castle (Director of Growth and Communities) and Mr S Jones (Corporate Director of Growth, Environment and Transport)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

84. Apologies and Substitutes

(Item 2)

Apologies for absence had been received from Mr Love, Mr Webb, and Mr Ridgers. Mrs Hudson was present as substitute for Mr Webb.

85. Declarations of Interest by Members in items on the Agenda

(Item 3)

There were no declarations of interest.

86. Minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022

(Item 4)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 19 July 2022 were a correct record.

87. Verbal updates by the Cabinet Members and Corporate Director

(Item 5)

1. Mr Hill, Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services, gave a verbal update on the following:
 - (a) The Council's country parks had retained all eight of their Green Flag Awards which demonstrated the quality of the parks and the hard work of staff involved. £1.1million of government covid recovery money had been spent on several improvements including play areas with inclusive elements for those with disabilities.
 - (b) The Summer Reading Challenge 2022 named 'Gadgeteers' ran between 9 July and 10 September 2022 and 18,419 children took part.

- (c) The Javelin Way development in Ashford was completed on 8 September 2022 and included a new centre for the Jasmine Vardimon Dance Company as well as 26 neighbouring business units. The development would be formally opened in December 2022.
 - (d) Twelve new Community Wardens had been recruited and were currently undergoing training.
2. Mr Hill responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
- (a) A Member referred to the success of the Summer Reading Challenge and asked whether there were any opportunities for partner organisations to continue the work and encourage young people to attend libraries. Mr Pearson, Head of Libraries, Registrations and Archives, said the Reconnect Programme and the Kent Show had promoted awareness of the challenge and links had been made with schools. Mr Pearson said the team was keen to explore working with partners and emphasised the importance of the Summer Reading Challenge in encouraging children to continue reading.
 - (b) Asked whether Members would be notified when new Community Wardens had been recruited to their division, Mr Hill confirmed this would take place.
3. Mr Murphy, Cabinet Member for Economic Development, gave a verbal update on the following:
- (a) As a result of the No Use Empty initiative a local building company in Dover was hoping to open the first of a series of new industrial workshops on the Whitfield site and a company in Belgium had bought premises off plan. In addition, a listed building in Margate was being renovated and Mr Murphy confirmed, further to comments from Members at previous meetings of the committee, that banners would be displayed on No Use Empty buildings indicating the Council was investing in development.
 - (b) The Council was working with Lord Waverly on a parliamentary committee to look at the logistics for goods and services across the country. Mr Murphy emphasised the importance of distribution and referred to Pannattoni, one of the biggest warehousing companies in the world, who had a site at Aylesford which included Amazon, Evri and DHL. A company called Mesaroli, which specialised in cool and refrigerated transportation, was now located at Discovery Park in Sandwich.
 - (c) The Council, in conjunction with Folkestone and Hythe District Council, were setting up a joint working group to look at the feasibility of using Dungeness Power Station for the Rolls Royce reactors. Work was progressing in terms of industrial capabilities, in particular the life sciences, and the Council was working with UK power networks to ensure the continuation of power in Kent.

- (d) The Council had supported Dover District Council's Levelling Up bid for the Beacon project and, if granted, this funding would boost living standards and increase higher education needs in the area.
 - (e) An All Member Briefing on Section 106 Contributions was scheduled for 31 October 2022.
4. Mr Murphy responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
- (a) Asked about the Council's position on fracking, Mr Murphy said fracking was an issue for concern and the fracking policy was under review. Mr Murphy said he would be happy to update Members outside of the meeting.
 - (b) Asked whether representations would be made to government regarding important infrastructure projects and issues in relation to economic development, Mr Murphy agreed this was essential, given Kent's geographical position, for both the county and the rest of the country.
5. Mr Jones, Corporate Director for Growth Environment and Transport, gave a verbal update on the following:
- (a) The year continued to be busy for the ceremonies team with over 6,500 ceremonies taking place so far, the largest number since 2016, and the team had worked extensively with local businesses to enable ceremonies at private locations in addition to registered offices.
 - (b) The Trading Standards Team were working with communities to raise awareness of cost-of-living scams and doorstep crime activity. The team had run an event in Romney Marsh and had so far visited over a thousand homes to ensure local communities got the best support. There had been targeted awareness of illicit goods including illegal dangerous vapes and a consignment of almost 8,000 vapes had been confiscated.
 - (c) Community Wardens had been busy engaging with residents and partners and continued to carry out welfare checks for the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and delivering positive wellbeing activities within communities.
 - (d) The Kent Community Safety Team had hosted several events recently to share best practice. The domestic Abuse Commissioner and their team had spent time with Council staff to explore the learning from Domestic Homicide Reviews.
 - (e) The Kent Scientific Services had been testing pesticide sampling on goods coming through the ports and analysing the content of Cannabidiol (CBD) products to identify the risks of organised crime within communities.
 - (f) The Kent Country Parks Strategy 2023-2028 consultation opened on 4 October 2022 and would close on 12 December 2022.
 - (g) The Kent and Medway Horticultural Employment Task Force achieved an award for 'HR Initiative of the Year' at the Fresh Product Consortium

(FPC) Fresh Awards 2022 for their work with fruit and salad producers in identifying how young people could become involved in the industry.

6. Mr Jones responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
 - (a) Asked about the extent of the illegal vapes issue, Mr Jones said the intelligence team was mapping out significant networks of distribution locations and worked closely with other authorities and the police.
 - (b) Asked about Ukrainian nationals removing themselves voluntarily from the Homes for Ukraine Scheme and the support the Council could provide in making sure individuals could access services, Mr Jones said by engaging with communities, and working with district and borough colleagues, every endeavour was made to ensure those who needed or sought support received it.
 - (c) Asked about the impact in Kent when support for Ukrainian refugees ceased, Mr Jones said the Council would respond to the national guidelines.
 - (d) Asked how the Council could ensure schools places were offered to Ukrainian families, Mr Jones said he would respond outside of the meeting.

RESOLVED that the verbal updates be noted.

88. 22/00088 - Department for Digital, Culture, Media and Sport (DCMS) - Create Growth Fund
(Item 6)

Ms Sarah Wren, Principal Project Officer, was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Wren introduced the report and said the result of the bid had been delayed due to the funeral of Queen Elizabeth II and the change in Prime Minister.
2. Ms Wren responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
 - (a) Asked about the percentage of funding the Council would receive and the cost for administering the project, Ms Wren said the programme included two members of project staff. The programme had a target of 100 businesses and would be delivered in 6 cohorts of 15 – 20 businesses in each.
 - (b) Asked whether the businesses providing the support were local and had been approved, Ms Wren said the partnership board included three sector specialist organisations who were experienced in delivering business support programmes. Those organisations would design the programme and be responsible for some of the delivery. Feedback had also been built in throughout the programme.

- (c) Asked how the programme would be advertised to the music community, Ms Wren said sector specialist organisations had been appointed for performance, music, and design and had relevant networks.
- (d) Asked about equality implications and DCMS prioritising bids based on inclusivity, Ms Holt-Castle said the principal purpose was to widen and diversify the number of businesses involved in the creative industry sector.
- (e) Asked about the amount of money each business would receive, Ms Wren said the money allocated to each business was for the cost of support. They were then able to access a £7million loan or grant fund, and additional support through the national provider.

RESOLVED that the proposed decision to be taken by the Cabinet Member for Community and Regulatory Services subject to the bid to DCMS being successful, that KCC enters into a grant agreement with DCMS and takes on the lead role of accountable body for the management and delivery of the regional South-East Create Growth Programme 2022 to 2025 as shown in appendix A, be endorsed.

89. Performance Dashboard

(Item 7)

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

1. Ms Kennard introduced the Performance Dashboard for Quarter 1 of 2022/23 and highlighted the key areas of performance. Ms Kennard said two Trading Standards Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) were currently under review and had been removed from the report.
2. Ms Holt-Castle and Mr Hill responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
 - (a) Asked about '16 to 17 year olds who are NEET' (not in education, employment or training) and a future report to the committee, Ms Holt-Castle said the Chairmen of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee and the Children's, Young People and Education Cabinet Committee agreed to receive reports addressing relevant elements of this issue at their respective committees in November 2022. A Member asked about SEND (special educational needs and disability) and Ms Holt-Castle said she would check in which report this would be included.
 - (b) Asked about the targets for SPA03 - *Percentage of schools with a high proportion of pupils eligible for free school meals engaging with the Kent School Games* - and SPA04 - *Number of people attending and engaging with training and learning opportunities facilitated by Kent Sport* - and for clarity on the number and range of schools who took part in the Kent Schools Games, Ms Holt-Castle said the targets were new for this year and had been set as a best estimate. The team had underestimated the success of some online courses and the targets would be reset for next year. Ms Holt-Castle said all schools, including academies, were invited to take part in the Kent Schools Games.

- (c) A Member commented on the success and importance of the libraries following the pandemic and how this reflected a return to normality. Asked whether there were plans for future expansion of the library service and whether there were enough libraries to meet demand, Mr Hill said there was an extensive network of 99 libraries in Kent and he was confident the coverage provided an effective library service.
- (d) A Member asked whether the Council's work in relation to the Shared Prosperity Fund could be included in the report to the November committee on apprenticeships and skills. Ms Holt-Castle said the Council had been working closely with all the districts regarding the funding and that would be reflected in the report.

RESOLVED that the performance report for Quarter 1 of 2022/23 be noted.

90. Nutrient Neutrality

(Item 8)

Mr Tom Marchant, Head of Strategic Planning and Policy, was in attendance for this item.

1. The Vice-Chairman reminded Members that the report would also be presented to the Environment and Transport Cabinet Committee and discussion should focus on the remit of the Growth, Economic Development and Communities Cabinet Committee.
2. Mr Murphy said a report was first brought to the March 2022 meeting of the committee and this report provided an update on the situation.
3. Mr Marchant introduced the report and gave an overview of the key government announcements, updates, and progress since March 2022. Mr Marchant highlighted progress which had occurred since the report was written in relation to the Dover district. Work over the last 12 -18 months had demonstrated that additional nutrients would not have a significant affect and Dover District Council were therefore able to release some planning consents. Mr Marchant referred to the map attached to these minutes and said the area shaded blue remained affected by the requirement to achieve nutrient neutrality. He said the Council was working positively with local planning authorities, statutory government agencies and Southern Water, and that collaboration would continue.
4. Mr Marchant responded to the following questions and comments from Members:
 - (a) Asked about support for small developers, Mr Marchant said there was an impact on smaller schemes and the role of small to medium sized enterprises (SME's) to housing delivery in the county was appreciated. Mr Marchant said it was hoped the Catchment Wide Strategy would, in time, support SME's to develop smaller sites. Mr Murphy referred, later in the discussion, to the No Use Empty Scheme which provided loans to SME's to develop empty homes and bring them back to the market.

- (b) Asked about Southern Water's involvement in the issue of nutrient neutrality, Mr Marchant said Southern Water was a key partner in reducing the level of nutrients in the short to medium term and their operations were within the consenting regime.
- (c) Asked whether a detailed map could be provided to show how individual divisions would be affected, Mr Marchant said he would be happy to provide further information outside of the meeting.
- (d) Asked about the financial impact on the development industry, Mr Marchant said this would be better quantified once the Catchment Wide Strategy had been developed and further government announcements were made.
- (e) Asked about the government's housing requirement in the context of nutrient neutrality, Mr Marchant said the government had made a commitment to review planning policy and guidance which may affect the 5 year housing land supply and discussions around planning reforms.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

91. Members' Recent Visit to Thanet District

(Item 9)

Mr Hancock introduced the report and highlighted the visit to Turner Contemporary (which had not been included in the report) and the presentation by the Director who outlined her approach and plans for the future of the gallery. Mr Hancock outlined the future programme and said the Maidstone visit had been postponed and would be rearranged for January or February 2023.

RESOLVED that the report be noted.

92. Work Programme 2022/23

(Item 10)

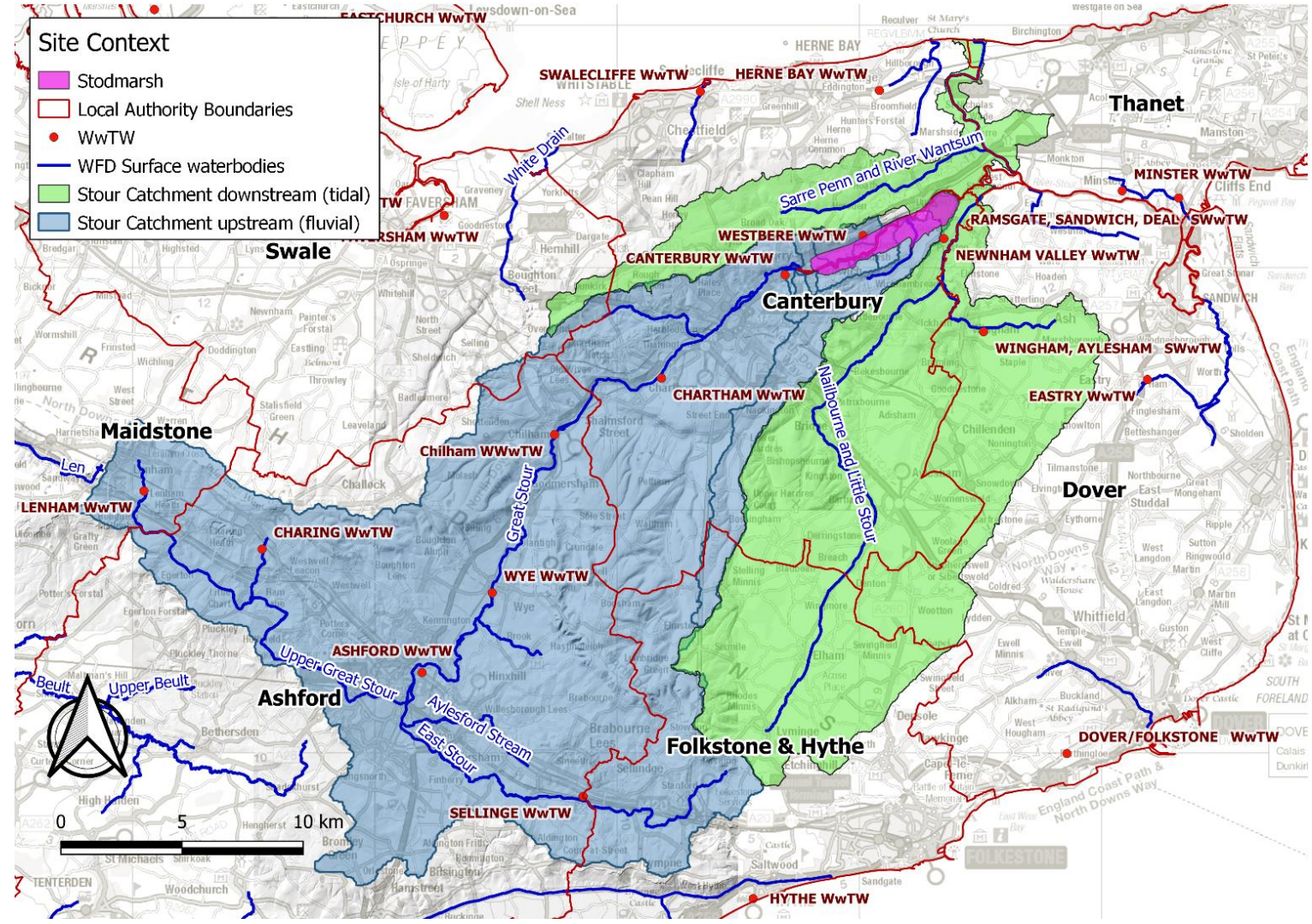
RESOLVED that the Work Programme 2022/23 be noted subject to the following additions to the draft November agenda:

- Strategic Framework for Active Kent and Medway
- Developers Guide Consultation Draft
- KCC Gypsy and Traveller Sites Pitch Allocations Policy
- Playground
- Support for businesses in light of government announcements

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Stodmarsh

- Internationally designated wetland in unfavourable condition
- Additional nutrients will prevent recovery
- Upstream and down stream catchment affected



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