

By: Alex King, Deputy Leader  
Paul Wickenden, Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager

To: Select Committee: Accessing Democracy – 15 June 2010

Subject: Select Committee: Accessing Democracy - progress monitoring report

Classification: Unrestricted

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Summary: To advise Members of the actions that have been taken forward since the publication of the Accessing Democracy Select Committee in the autumn of 2008.

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## **Introduction**

1 (1) The Accessing Democracy Select Committee reported to the County Council in December 2008.

(2) The Terms of Reference for the Select Committee Topic Review for Accessing Democracy were:

- To understand why many people do not participate in and influence decision making in Kent
- To discover what would/could encourage more people to participate in and influence decision making in Kent
- To discover what Kent County Council can do to increase participation

(3) The Committee received evidence and information from a wide range of stakeholders, academics and officers.

(4) The Select Committee made a total of 17 recommendations for further action. The monitoring report (Appendix 1) sets out progress made against these recommendations

## **Context**

2 (1) High on the political agenda and one of the priorities is “citizen engagement and empowerment”. The shape of Public Services, how they are commissioned and delivered will be fundamentally different and will require different governance arrangements to support locally elected representatives to reach even the very smallest communities and help them to develop their sense of identity and place.

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(2) The process of transformational change so the County Council is fit for purpose to respond to the economic and service demands which lie ahead is already underway.

(3) Transformational change will not be achieved without transforming the County Council's Governance arrangements. The structure must provide the most cost-effective way forward for an 'excellent' authority, without increasing the burden of bureaucracy when the resource is required on the front line providing services to our customers.

(4) The Select Committee report is inextricably linked to a range of core strands of work which are fundamental to the role of the elected Member:-

- Acquiring the Member Development Charter
- Implementing the recommendations of the Member Information Informal Member Group
- The duty to involve, inform and consult
- The duty to promote democracy

### **Progress**

3 Given the context and recognising that the outcomes and recommendations of this Select Committee are a core piece of work which impacts on the transformational change of commissioning services, service delivery and new governance arrangements which will be required across the public sector we acknowledge that progress to date may not be as advanced as we would have liked. However, given the economic climate and the transformational change required the work that has been achieved lays some strong foundations on which the County Council can now build over a period of time.

### **Recommendation**

4 Members are asked to note and comment on the contents of this monitoring report .

*Background Document: Select Committee Report Accessing Democracy*