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To: County Council –22 July 2010

Subject: Monitoring and Outcomes from the Select Committee Topic Review Programme – May 2005-June 2010

Classification: Unrestricted

Introduction

1. (1) The Select Committees are widely recognised as one of the successes of the Overview and Scrutiny Function.
- (2) The County Council is reminded that in 2008 the review team conducting the Comprehensive Performance Assessment commented that: “Task and finish Select Committees and working groups are highly valued by Members of all parties and have made important contributions to policy.”
- (3) These Committees of non-executive Members have had a major influence on national and local policy.
- (4) Both executive and non-executive Members have recognised the benefits of the Select Committee process. From a non-executive point of view it provides the opportunity to look at a topic in depth and the majority of Members have found this process very rewarding as it has provided the opportunity to influence Kent County Council policy. From an executive Member point of view, Select Committee reports have added strength to portfolios and in some cases, have had national standing e.g. Alcohol Misuse.
- (5) The quality of Select Committee reports has been recognised within Kent and beyond.

Topic Reviews 2005-2010

2. **Appendix 1** to this report shows Select Committees completed between May 2005 and June 2010 and **Appendix 2** summarises recommendations arising from each, together with key actions that have been implemented.

Highlights

3. The County Council should celebrate its achievements, made through the Select Committee process. Set out below some of the highlights from reviews conducted over the past few years to demonstrate their importance and the impact they have had on the policy of the County Council and partner organisations.

Water and Waste Water, particularly in Ashford – 2005 – (recommendation 3)

“Many of the Committee’s recommendations will be more or less relevant to the welfare of the River Stour. Given that the growth in Ashford’s population will lead to an increase in the output of wastewater, and that this growth sits within a context of higher temperatures and reductions in summer rainfall in the South East it must be stated here that the Select Committee believes that the Stour’s chemical and biological condition, its temperature, flow levels and its chalk river characteristics downstream, and the condition of its environment must be given a priority consideration when carrying out selection of the options for managing water resources and the water supply and wastewater system in and around Ashford. Etc...”

Outcome

- Ashford River Health Toolkit (ARHT) has been completed – this is a computer model that can simulate river flows, diffuse pollution inputs and point source effluent discharges so that infrastructure can be planned in advance of problems occurring.

Gypsy and Traveller sites in Kent – 2006 – (recommendation 17)

“For KCC to facilitate the establishment of a joint Kent and Medway Authority group, to address the accommodation needs for Gypsies and Travellers. The primary objective of this group is to address the accommodation needs that are identified. It will also provide a vehicle for consultation and a sub-regional approach for applying for funding. In addition, it will consider the revenue cost implications linked to site provision, with a view to pooling resources.”

Outcome

- A Countywide Group with nominated representatives from all local authorities and other agencies has been established and has met regularly.

It has, very significantly, included, at every second meeting, individuals invited from Gypsy and Irish Traveller communities, and this has enabled very detailed discussion of issues of mutual concern, and engagement over the planning, housing and needs assessment processes that are proceeding in Kent, the South East and across England.

The work of this group is the biggest progress made with the Select Committee recommendations, as it involves invitations to all the relevant stakeholders, including the Kent Association of Parish Councils.

The Group is the key to future progress with partnership working on the remaining recommendations.

Home to School Transport – 2006 - (recommendation 20)

“To explore the possibility of becoming a Pathfinder authority, by providing all students aged 11 to 16 years living in a selected area of Kent with an annual bus pass in order to evaluate bus usage and consequent reduction in car use”

Outcome

- The Kent Freedom pass, funded by KCC, was introduced in June 2007 for 11-16 year olds. The cost of the pass is £50 per year, allowing young people to travel on participating buses at any time, including weekends, evenings and school holidays. The scheme has been rolled out across Kent and has proved highly successful.

Climate Change - 2006 - (recommendation 7)

Review transport policy to achieve an overall reduction in emissions from transport in the KCC estate and across Kent as a whole.

Outcome

- The *Kent JourneyShare* scheme saved more than 3 million car journeys and 1,000 metric tonnes of carbon in 2009
- KCC business miles have reduced for the 2nd year running. A 3.5% reduction was achieved in 2009-10 and saved £277,000. The launch of the BT MeetMe teleconferencing service has supported this reduction.
- Improved monitoring of fuel usage of KCC fleet vehicles and driver training in fuel efficient driving techniques.
- KCC Streetcar fleet in Maidstone being extended to a new location in conjunction with a major house builder.
- More than three quarters of schools now have travel plans.
- Freedom Pass extended to whole of Kent and used by more than 13,000 young people
- Use of sustainable transport to school has risen by 2.9%

PSHE/Children's Health – 2007 - (recommendation 2)

The Committee urges that all key agencies be wholly committed and signed up to the Kent Teenage Pregnancy Strategy in an effort to decrease the rate of teenage pregnancy.

Outcome

Partnership working between Local Partnerships, Director of Public Health, CFE and Teenage Pregnancy Board is well established. The Kent Teenage Pregnancy Strategy and its Board have been reviewed, and new action plans and priorities have been developed to bring about an increased reduction in teenage pregnancy. All key

agencies are signed up to the KCC PSHE Education Strategy and its implementation.

Transition to a positive future – 2007 – (recommendation 1)

“That KCC work with all providers to increase the availability and choice of leisure facilities for young disabled people and promote and publicise ‘taster sessions’ to encourage participation”

Outcome

KCC is one of 21 Pathfinder authorities allocated £15m for short breaks and access to leisure activities for more young disabled people. Partnership working is being developed to take this forward across the county. The Kent Partnership Board, local Learning Disability groups and KASS teams have worked with colleagues, for example, the District Council Sports Development Officer in Thanet. Bluewater management were engaged through Dartford LDPB resulting in a ‘Changing Place’ to facilitate better disabled access at the centre. Members would like good practice to be emulated across the county to bring consistency and continuity.

Flood risk Management - 2007 (recommendations 1 & 7)

1. *“That KCC look into setting up and resourcing a permanent Flood Risk Committee, in partnership with District Councils, to monitor: organisational changes affecting the management of flood risk in order to minimise the effect of such changes; the KHS gully clearance programme; non-structural means adopted by KCC and District Councils to reduce flood risk, and the Environment Agency’s progress on proposed flood defence works as well as maintenance of existing defences.”*

Outcome

- Flood risk management committee established: In response to the Flood Risk Management Select Committee and the Flood and Water Management Act (FWM Act) (April 2010) a member based Flood Risk Management Committee has been established to provide oversight and scrutiny of flood risk management across the county. (1)
- Kent Strategic Flood Partnership in development: In response to the requirements of the FWM Act, a Strategic Flood Partnership is currently being established for the county. Directors from the district and borough councils have been invited and the same will be extended to the Environment Agency, Southern Water, Internal Drainage Boards and other relevant flood authorities. It is intended that an inception meeting will be held by September 2010. (1)

7. *“That KCC ensures that its Environment and Waste Team are sufficiently resourced to enable them to: develop a county-wide coastal policy; maintain their oversight of Shoreline Management Plans (SMPs) to promote consistency across the*

county; and raise public awareness of plans.”

Outcome

- A dedicated Flood Risk Management Officer has now been secured within the County Council and the post was filled in May 2010. (7)

Carers Select Committee – 2007 *(recommendation 6)*

Emergency Card Schemes, backed up by emergency plans and response teams should be expanded and developed Kent wide if the pilot is successful.

Outcome

- On Carers Rights Day December 5th 2008 a Kent Carers Emergency Card Scheme was launched. The scheme is designed to provide carers with peace of mind when away from the person that they care for that should something untoward happened to them that emergency assistance could be accessed.

To compliment the scheme additional carers grant funding has been commissioned with the voluntary sector to provide increased levels of community based respite.

Currently there are over 1300 carers signed up to the scheme and the number is growing steadily.

An example of how the Emergency Card has been used:

A Kent Carer recently became ill and was taken to hospital. The card identified that he cared for his wife and his wife was found immediate respite care.

Alcohol Misuse – 2008 – *(recommendation 3 & 4)*

3. “The outcomes of the needs assessment should inform the production of an overarching alcohol strategy for Kent. The production of the strategy, aiming at reducing the impact of alcohol misuse in Kent, should be lead by KDAAT. The strategy should address a variety of issues including treatment services, underage drinking, public awareness, alcohol-related crime and responsible retailing. It should clearly identify effective actions to be taken, together with responsibilities and accountability of all the agencies involved in the coordination, commissioning and provision of alcohol-related services. The strategy should include mechanisms that will evaluate and monitor the progress of its implementation, and it should encourage closer collaborative ties between all the agencies involved.”

Outcome

- The Kent Alcohol Strategy, produced as a result of the Select Committee

recommendations, has been subject to wide consultation with partners and is due to be launched in the summer 2010.

4. KCC to lobby Central Government to raise the priority and profile of the issue of alcohol misuse in the UK. KCC should press for an increase in funding to finance services dealing with alcohol

Outcome

- The Select Committees recommendation to lobby Central Government to raise the priority and profile of the issue of alcohol misuse in the UK is now supported by the Chief Medical Officer and the Royal College of Physicians.

Accessing Democracy – 2008 - (recommendations 5, 6 & 17)

5. “Embrace democracy in secondary schools and school councils should be encouraged to operate through age range - advocate school councils in primary school.

(a) All elected members should be involved in schools democracy week.

(b) Ensure all teaching staff are firmly encouraged to undertake Continuous Professional Development on democracy.

(c) Linkage between School Councils, Kent County Council and District, Town and Parish Councils should be promoted.”

Outcome

- Councillors in Schools project developed. (5)

6. Citizenship pack should include information on how to register to vote, the role of local elected members and how to contact local members at District, County and National level.

Outcome

- Citizenship packs include information on registering to vote and contact details for local Members. (6)

17. The opportunity for participatory budgeting from devolved discretionary funds should be provided within the next budget year, with delivery mechanism to be determined, and a sum of underpinning monies to enable local people to determine how the resource should be spent.

Outcome

- Participatory Budget events – 7 planned to date in 2010/11 to allocate community grants. (17)

Passenger Rail Services - 2008 – (recommendation 3(a) & 4)

3. County Council should use the publicity surrounding the launch of the new services to promote:

a) Tourism from London and north of London to Kent, building on the present campaigns by Visit Kent (and other partners).

Outcome

- Visit Kent, in partnership with Southeastern and other Councils (including Medway Council), ran a joint marketing campaign between May 2009 and March 2010 to cover the period of the preview and full launch of the new high speed services. This campaign was successful with over 50,000 website hits recorded and an estimated £800,000 brought to the local economy. Visit Kent considers it too early to assess the impact on tourism this year but there is some anecdotal evidence that hotels in Medway, Canterbury and Ashford have seen a positive impact on their businesses . (3(a))

4. The County Council should lobby for services lost in the new timetable to be reinstated at the earliest opportunity.

Outcome

- The County Council held a Rail Summit on 25 March 2010 with Southeastern, Network Rail, Passenger Focus and Rail User Groups to discuss the loss and reduction of services in the new timetable and other issues and it is intended to continue to hold another in the Autumn and bi-annually in future. (4)

Autistic Spectrum Disorder – 2009 – (recommendation 3 & 7)

3. The Kent Adult Social Services Directorate should ensure that:

- *all its staff involved in the assessment of autism are fully trained to understand the uniqueness, complexity and implications of the condition. This training should be coupled with an increasing number of early interventions aimed at diverting people with autism from care pathways that are inappropriate and expensive.*
- *adequate advocacy services with ASD-specific knowledge are offered to all people with autism*

Outcome

- A training module on ASD is being developed with input from appropriate voluntary sector agencies such as Kent Autistic Trust (KAT). Target training commenced in 2009 with the intention of training the majority of staff starting later in 2010. There are also joint training initiatives being planned with Jobcentre Plus

In addition, training funded by KASS is already being provided to private and voluntary sector agencies, under contract with South Kent College This will increase awareness and understanding of ASD leading to the commissioning of more appropriate services. (3)

Kent Autistic Trust (KAT) provides an advocacy, information and support service for Kent and Medway and has secured funding until March 2015

7. *“Kent Adult Social Services should lead on the establishment of a multidisciplinary task group with representation from agencies including health, social care, housing, employment services, education, independent sector providers and the voluntary sector.*

The task group - which should liaise with the Kent Learning Disability Partnership Board - will widen and strengthen the interdependence and joint working amongst all these agencies, to provide more efficient and effective services to people with autism and individuals with learning disabilities “

Outcome

- A cross agency Autistic Spectrum Disorder Task group has been established to drive forward work on the recommendations. PCTs, KMPT, Mental Health, Gypsy Unit, CFE and KASS are all represented. A housing representative is yet to be secured, although the housing rep on the County Transition Group can provide an interim link with the group. The group reports to the Transition Executive Group chaired by the Managing Director for KASS.

The Group will work closely with the Kent Learning Disability Partnership Board. The thrust of its strategy is to make existing services work better for people with ASD rather than establishing a new specialist service. (7)

Provision of Activities for Young People – 2009 – (recommendation 4(c) & 13)

4(c) *“That there be a drive to recruit certified PC V drivers employed by KCC and partner organisations in Kent to register for occasional voluntary driving duties (subject to satisfactory CRB disclosure being in place) to assist the Youth Service’s provision of sports/leisure activities to young people. Once established the Youth Service should assess the viability of extending the scheme to include affiliated and non-affiliated voluntary organisations. “*

Outcome

- A job description and recruitment process for volunteer drivers is currently being finalised and will be distributed via the Kent Volunteer network and also to partners through the district based Volunteer Driver networks. (4)

13. *“That KCC Innovations Team works with young people, supported by professional advisers to produce a policy and guidelines for the safe use of social networking sites (Facebook, Bebo etc) by young people, and that KCC work towards developing protocols for effective and appropriate use of social networking sites by*

youth work practitioners, other KCC staff and Members as well as members of Kent Youth County Council. “

Outcome

- A code of good practice has been established by the Communications and Media Centre to ensure that all departments recognise the importance of promoting a positive message about young people.

Strengthening of the Select Committee Process

4. (1) Since the County Council received the last report in April 2009 a number of initiatives have been embedded in the Constitution to strengthen the Select Committee process. This includes:-

- establishing a two year Topic Review Programme;
- costing the recommendations of the Select Committee report before publication;
- agreeing the Terms of Reference with a cross-party group of Members who will serve on the Select Committee well in advance of the first meeting; and
- the protocol for the launching and publicising of Select Committee reports, agreed by the Council on December 2008.
- Keeping the hearings sharp and focused on those persons who the Committee really need to see in person and calling for additional written evidence as necessary.

(2) It has become evident from the most recent Topic Reviews of this County Council that successful outcomes of many recommendations rely on partners and stakeholders working together with the County Council to achieve them.

(3) Following the Alcohol Misuse Select Committee's lead, an important part of the process before placing the report of a Select Committee in the public domain was found to be the bringing together of stakeholders in order to gain support for recommendations so that there is shared ownership, and fewer obstacles to implementation. This has now become standard practise for all Select Committees what will rely on co-operation from partners and stakeholders to implement its recommendations.

Scrutiny Board

5. (1) There are a number of initiatives which the Scrutiny Board has commissioned to build capacity for this area of work,

(2) The County Council agreed to introduce a Rapporteur Scheme so that an elected Member or group of Members can research an issue (with limited support from Officers) and prepare a report. This scheme is being developed and will be

reported to the County Council in due course for embedding in the Constitution once it has been considered by the Selection and Member Services Committee

(3) The best example of a “rapporteur pilot” to date was the small group which looked at the reconfiguration of Women’s and Children’s Services for the Maidstone and Tunbridge Wells NHS Trust,. This Group took evidence from a wide range of people, prepared their own written report which they submitted to the Health Overview and Scrutiny Committee.

(4) Another example is the work of the Regeneration and Economic Development POSC. The Committee have been visiting colleagues in each Borough/District Council area across Kent looking at economic and regeneration issues then reporting back their findings to the next meeting of the Committee. This has provided the Committee with a real understanding of the economic development issues across the County

Conclusion and Opportunities

6. (1) With the developing pressures on the public sector task and finish groups and a rapporteur framework provide a key influence on the future operation of the County Council and the public sector.

(2) The whole process needs to develop with greater input from the residents of the County and its customers than it has had until now. “Listening to our Communities” must not be a choice it is a given.

RECOMMENDATION

7. The County Council is asked to note the report and celebrate the impact and added value that the outcomes of the Select Committee reports provided for Kent residents.

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Background Documents – none