

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMUNITIES POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Council Chamber, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 9 July 2010.

PRESENT: Mrs E M Tweed (Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden, Mr D A Hirst, Mr J M Ozog, Mr R Tolputt, Mr C T Wells, Mr M A Wickham, Mrs P T Cole (Substitute for Mr K Smith) and Mr M J Northey (Substitute for Mrs J P Law)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms C Anley (Head of Libraries), Mr S Bligh (Archive And Local History Services Manager), Mr D Crilley (Director of Community Cultural Services), Ms J Edwards (Director of Policy and Resources, Communities Directorate), Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview)), Mrs C Kincaid (County Co-ordinator Kent Volunteers), Ms C McKenzie (Greener Kent Manager), Mr M Scrivener (Business Information Manager), Ms A Slaven (Director Youth Services and KDAAT), Ms L Spencer (Strategic Manager, Projects), Ms S Staples (Head of Kent Arts Development Unit), Mr K Tilson (Head of Finance for Policy and Resources) and Ms J Tonkin (KDAAT Young Persons Manager)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

57. Minutes - 6 April 2010

(Item A3)

(1) The Chairman thanked Mr Gardner and colleagues at the Canterbury Archaeological Trust for exhibiting some of the finds from the Beaney site in Canterbury prior to the meeting.

(2) RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 6 April 2010 are correctly recorded and that they be signed as a correct record.

58. Meeting dates - 2011

(Item A4)

The Committee noted the dates of its meetings for 2011 as follows:-

Tues, 11 January 2011

Tues, 5 April 2011

Fri, 8 July 2011

Thurs, 15 September 2011

Friday, 11 November 2011

It was noted that all meetings will start at 10.00am and may go on into the afternoon.

(post meeting note the LGA conference in 2011 will be held on 28-30 June and therefore will not affect the July meeting).

59. Portfolio Holder and Managing Director's Update

(Item B1)

(1) Mr Hill and Ms Edwards updated Members on the following issues:-

Events

(2) Mr Hill set out highlights from the Communities events that he had attended.

(3) In response to a question from a Member Mr Hill explained that a decision on where the Olympic Torch would enter the UK would be made early next year but he assured the Committee that he took every opportunity to put the case for Dover.

Kent School Games

(4) The Kent School Games had been very successful and the finals had been held the previous week. Ms Edwards reported that a team from the Department of Culture, Media and Sport, who would be involved with planning the national school games, had come look at the logistics of organising the games.

(5) The Committee congratulated Mr Hespe and his team on the success of the Kent School Games

Youth Justice Capability and Capacity Audit

(6) Ms Edwards informed the Committee that the Youth Justice Board had found the Youth Offending Service to have performed well in accordance with National indicators and to have good capacity to sustain performance. The Committee recorded their thanks to Angela Slaven and her team in achieving a successful outcome from their Youth Justice Capability Audit.

Thematic Inspection of the Youth Offending Service (YOS) Court Work

(7) Ms Slaven stated that although the findings of this pilot inspection would not be publically available until later in July the initial indications were that the YOS Court Work was of a high standard.

Margate Task Force Update

(8) Ms Edwards reported that the Task Force had been led by Communities Directorate and the work to join up staff and resources in two deprived wards in Thanet was now coming to fruition. This would be one of 4 pilot sites to be visited by the top 200 civil servants who would be briefed about the project.

Libraries achieving Customer Service Excellence Standard

(9) Ms Edwards referred to the success of the Libraries Service in achieving the Customer Service Excellence Standard. The Committee recorded their thanks to Ms Anley and her team for achieving this Standard.

Coalition Agreement & Communities

(10) Ms Edwards referred to the Appendix that had been circulated which set out the parts of the Coalitions programme for Government, published on 20 May 2010, which related to the work of the Directorate. A number of grants had been withdrawn and these had been reported to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee.

Alcohol strategy

(11) Ms Edwards explained that the Alcohol Strategy, which built on the work of the Select Committee on Alcohol Misuse, had now been to Cabinet and had been well received.

Apprenticeships

(12) It was confirmed that there would be an item on Apprenticeships at the September meeting of the Committee. Ms Edwards informed the Committee that Ms Smith, County Manager - Supporting Independence Programme, would be leaving KCC after 24 years service. The Committee expressed their thanks to Ms Smith for the contribution she had made to the work of the County Council.

(13) RESOLVED that the update be noted.

60. Financial Monitoring 2010/11

(Item B4)

(1) Mr Tilson presented a report on the initial budget monitoring exception report for 2010/11 which was due to be reported to Cabinet on 12 July 2010.

(2) In response to a question on approaches that had been made to get the coroners budget removed from the County Council, Mr Hill explained that there had been support from the previous government to appoint a Chief Coroner for the United Kingdom, however the Coalition Government were not proceeding with this. This meant that there was still no single point of contact for issues relating to the coroners service.

(3) Mr Hill explained that as much as possible was being done to ensure that organisations that KCC supported with revenue or capital funding were not so reliant on KCC in the future. He gave the example of the Museum of Kent Life which had been transferred to a commercial enterprise to run. Regarding the Turner Contemporary, although there was an ongoing revenue responsibility the Trust were encouraged to raise funds themselves so that they were ultimately not reliant on Local Government funding.

(4) Mr Hill stated that, depending on what happened in October 2010 with the Comprehensive Spending Review, there may be a significant reduction in revenue funding

bearing in mind that the Directorate drew a large amount of funding from external grants. This would be discussed further by this Committee's IMG on the budget.

(7) Mr Tilson explained that approximately 50% of the Directorate's income came from external grants and any reduction could have a direct impact on services. Each unit was looking at its fixed and variable cost element to try to ensure that there was the ability to reduce expenditure in line with funding.

(8) RESOLVED that the budget variations and comments for the Communities Portfolio for 2010/11, based on the first exception monitoring report to Cabinet be noted.

61. 2009/10 Budget Outturn Report

(Item B2)

(1) Mr Tilson introduced a report which summarised the end of year position and outturn for the Communities Portfolio, including both the revenue and capital budgets.

(2) The Chairman informed the Committee that a meeting had been arranged of an Informal Members Group to contribute to the development of the budget which would be held on 29 July 2010. This would be followed by a further meeting in September 2010.

(3) Mr Hill stated that the completion date for the Turner Contemporary was 8 December 2010. The project was still on time and within budget. The Beaney project was slightly delayed but the costs had reduced the contingency sum to 2% which was too low so therefore more money had to be found from the Capital programme.

(4) In response to a question on KDAAT Ms Slaven explained that it was anticipated that there would be a shift in the treatment model which was likely to be more flexible to enable treatment money to be used for Alcohol issues. She acknowledged that the NHS paper on devolving funding to GPs would be a significant factor in relation to funding for substance misuse.

(5) A copy of the Kent History and Library Centre Newsletter was circulated. Ms Spencer explained that this was only the second newsletter and was designed for neighbours of the site. She undertook to check the distribution of the newsletter and to ensure that it was sent to appropriate District and County Councillors.

RESOLVED that the revenue and capital financial outturn for 2009/10 including rollovers for committed projects and changes to capital programme be noted.

62. Performance Outturn Report for the Communities Directorate - 2009-2010

(Item B3)

(1) Ms Edwards and Mr Scrivener presented a report which gave an overview of progress against objectives during 2009/10 as set out in individual service unit plans for that year. It also highlighted some of the main achievements across the Directorate during the year. Ms McKenzie provided an update on the Directorate's performance on climate change and environmental management.

(2) The use of BT Meetme as an effective tool in saving time travelling to meetings was highlighted.

(3) In response to a question on what happened to the saving made by reducing business miles, Mr Tilson explained that as this was a target set corporately the savings would go back to the corporate centre.

(4) RESOLVED that:

(a) the directorate's performance and achievements during 2009/10 be noted.

(b) the progress against KCC's environment policy as set out in Appendix 2 and the priorities identified in section 5 of the report including the suggested changes to KCC Environment Policy be noted.

63. Unlocking Kent's Cultural Potential: A Cultural Strategy for Kent

(Item B5)

(1) Ms Staples introduced a report on the draft Cultural Strategy for Kent which had been developed by KCC's Arts Development Unit following a consultation process that had involved members of this Committee, officers and members of all Kent local authorities, other partners and stakeholders. It would form one of the delivery mechanisms for Kent's Regeneration Framework and was attached for members comment and endorsement.

(2) Mrs Tweed stated that this document had been well received at the Cabinet Members meeting. As regeneration was an important part of this strategy it would be helpful if this report was circulated to the Members of that POSC.

(3) Members highlighted the importance of supporting the cultural sector as it made a large contribution to the economy of Kent as well as providing a positive outlet for people in difficult times.

(4) RESOLVED that the draft Cultural Strategy be endorsed for approval at Cabinet and subsequently the Kent Partnership.

64. Archives and Local History Service

(Item B6)

(1) Mr Crilley and Ms Anley presented a report which updated Communities Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee Members on progress with the planning for service transformation, including the vision for the service, the staff structure needed to deliver the service and the future relationships with depositors. A number of interesting documents from the archive, which illustrated the importance and diversity of the collections, were available for Members to view at the meeting.

(2) In response to a question on whether private depositors, who subsequently sold their items, would be charged for storage, Ms Anley stated that this had been considered and currently options were being kept open. The services were moving towards a more formal relationship with depositors. Another option being explored

was obtaining permission to produce merchandise for articles that KCC did not own but which it stored in the archive.

(3) Ms Anley confirmed that the services were working with Visit Kent to attract history tourists and were working with other bodies such as District Councils and other centres.

(4) RESOLVED that the progress towards the delivery of the History and Library Centre, and the developing plans for transformation of Archive and Local History services be noted.

65. A Hidden Harm Strategy for Kent

(Item B7)

(1) Ms Slaven and Ms Tonkin introduced a report which presented the final draft of the Hidden Harm Strategy with a focus on delivering improvements in outcomes for children and young people who were affected by their parent or carers drug and alcohol misuse. The Strategy had been developed by the multi agency Hidden Harm Working Group and had been subject to extensive consultation. The Hidden Harm Strategy would impact positively on outcomes for children and families through coordinated interagency partnerships and joined up front line delivery as required by the National Drugs Strategy and Think Family approach.

(2) Ms Tonkin confirmed that there had been extensive multi-agency consultation including work with directorates across KCC.

(3) RESOLVED that the draft Kent Hidden Harm Strategy be endorsed and it be noted that reports on progress will be submitted to future meetings of the Committee.

66. Volunteering

(Item B8)

(1) Mrs Kincaid presented a report which outlined the significance of volunteering in Kent and the activity sponsored by KCC to promote this. The contribution made by volunteers and volunteer managers in KCC services was also highlighted and the report concluded with a section on the employee volunteering scheme in the council. Circulated at the meeting was information on progress to date with the Kent Youth Community Action Pilot.

(2) A Member referred to an article in his local press which suggested that volunteers were taking the place of paid employees at a local theatre. Mrs Kincaid stated that volunteers should not be used instead of paid employees, it was important that volunteers knew their rights and were not exploited. Mrs Kincaid undertook to look into this case.

(3) In response to a question on the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB) checks and the Kent Youth Community Action Pilot, Mrs Kincaid replied that she was very conscious that young people should not be put into vulnerable situations. She stated that a barrier to volunteering was people feeling undermined by police checks. CRB checks for volunteers were free, and the cost was in the administration. Umbrella

organisations for CRB checking are available across the county and can process checks for small voluntary bodies.

(4) Mrs Kincaid explained that the Youth Offending Service involved volunteers both in the first court appearance (Referral Order Volunteers) and were keen to get young people in custody involved in something that would benefit them and the community prior to their release. However, in order for the young person to be motivated this should be voluntary, not mandatory, and they should be supported to gain maximum benefit.

(5) RESOLVED that the activity outlined in this report be noted and Members be kept informed of the progress with the Kent Youth Action Pilot.

67. Select Committees - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received a report which updated them on the progress with the Select Committee on Extended Services and requested suggestions for items for future topic reviews.

(2) It was noted that the feedback on progress with the recommendations of the Select Committee on provision of Activities for Young People would be submitted to the September meeting of the Committee

(3) RESOLVED that the update on the Extended Services Select Committee be noted and that any suggestions for Select Committee topic reviews be submitted to the Democratic Services Officer.