

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POCC IMG

MINUTES of a meeting of the POCC IMG held in the Medway Room - Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Friday, 25 July 2008.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Ms A Harrison and Mr G Rowe

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P D Wickenden (Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Service Manager (Policy Overview))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

2. Notes of the meeting on 25 June 2008

(Item 2)

(1) Mr Wickenden reported that the Leader had approved the budget timetable in relation to Policy Overview Committees and Cabinet Scrutiny Committee as proposed by this IMG at its meeting on 25 June 2008.

(2) RESOLVED that notes be approved.

3. Publicising Select Committee Topic Reviews and Launching Select Committee Topic Review reports

(Item 3)

(1) The IMG considered a report from the Overview, Scrutiny and Localism Manager and discussed the way in which the Select Committee Topic Review could be publicised and when published launched.

Publicising Select Committee Topic Review

(2) Members emphasised the importance of the issuing of a press release when the Terms of Reference, scope etc of a Select Committee had been agreed. This press release should be cross-party from Members of the Select Committee setting out the aims and scope of the Select Committee and the timetable for the review. The press release would welcome input from the public and interested parties. Any input received as a result of this could form part of the evidence for the review.

Launching of Select Committee Topic Reviews

(3) Members emphasised the importance of an effective launch for Select Committee Topic Reviews which engaged the Select Committee Members, Partners etc who had been involved with the review and the public.

(4) It was suggested that the best time to launch Select Committee reports was at a County Council meeting when the majority of County Councillors would be present. It was suggested that this should be a very early item on the County Council agenda after Questions and the report by the Leader of the Council. The Select Committee item should last an appropriate amount of time dependant upon the topic. It was anticipated that this would probably be approximately two hours but could be longer. It was suggested that the Chairman and other cross party Members from the Select

Committee should have input into that part of the County Council agenda to determine who should be invited to come along to speak and to agree the length of time that this item should take. This item should be led by the Select Committee Chairman and Members rather than the Cabinet Members.

(5) Members also stressed the importance to use Kent TV to launch Select Committee Topic Reviews and to publicise them. Other opportunities to engage the public such as displays at Gateways, libraries etc, depending on the subject of the review, should also be considered.

Publicising Select Committees

(6) It was agreed that the Greater London Assembly (GLA) press release example was a good one. Members particularly liked the idea of involving third party comments to gain a wider interest. It was agreed that the use of this model should be further explored.

(7) RECOMMENDED that the examples of the GLA Press Release and the Protocol for Public Relations and Scrutiny from Telford and Wrekin Council, along with the comments made by Members, form the basis of a draft protocol to be submitted to the meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on 10 September 2008 for consideration.

4. Select Committee Topic Review Work Programme

(Item 4)

Passenger Rail Services Select Committee

(1) In relation this Committee, which was being supported by officers from the Environment and Regeneration Directorate, Mr Wickenden stated that the Committee report was due to be submitted to Cabinet in December 2008. The Select Committee would start its work shortly.

Kent Graduate Programme

(2) At the last meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee Members had requested Mr Wickenden to submit a bid to host a placement. Mr Wickenden had been informed by Mr Gilroy that he did not regard supporting a Topic Review to be an appropriate use of the Kent Graduate Programme. Mr Wickenden therefore contacted Mr Fairburn to discuss using individuals from the Talent Management Pool to support a Topic Review. The allocation of an officer from this source to support the proposed Accessing Healthcare Select Committee was being explored. Mr Wickenden would update Members at the next meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee on progress with this review and how it was to be resourced.

Select Committee –Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD)

(1) The Select Committee on ASD had requested an extension of time for the review to enable them to submit their report to the January 2009 Cabinet meeting. Concern was expressed that the Select Committee were not tightly focusing on the area of Adult Social Services and the Select Committee appeared to have widened its remit and was looking at Children's Services which was not part of the original proposal.

(2) Ms Harrison requested the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee to reach an agreement on how many topic reviews are to be running at one time as there was an issue of the availability of Members to sit on Select Committees with the increasing demand for Members to serve on other Sub-Committees and IMGs.

RECOMMENDED that:-

- (a) the update on the Passenger Rail Services Select Committee and the Kent Graduate Programme be noted;
- (b) Mr Wickenden report back to the next meeting on progress with identifying additional officer resources to support Select Committee Topic Reviews; and
- (c) Mr Wickenden report back to the members of the IMG on the focus of the ASD Select Committee before a decision was made on whether to allow an extension of time for the review.