

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

POLICY OVERVIEW CO-ORDINATING COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee held at Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Monday, 3 December 2007.

PRESENT: Mr E E C Hotson (Chairman), Mr C J Capon, Dr M R Eddy, Mr P W A Lake, Mr C J Law and Mr D Smyth.

OTHER MEMBERS PRESENT: Mr P Carter (Leader), Mr M Dance, (Cabinet Member for Operations, Resources and Skills), Mr R Gough (Cabinet Member for Regeneration and Supporting Independence), Mr G Gibbens, (Cabinet Member for Public Health), Mr M Hill (Cabinet Member for Community Services) and Mr A Marsh (Lead Member for Policy and Performance).

OFFICERS IN ATTENDANCE: Mr P Gilroy (Chief Executive), Mr R Hardy (Director of Improvement and Engagement), Ms J Whittle (Staff Officer to the Leader), Mr P Wickenden (Overview and Scrutiny Manager), Ms D Fitch, Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview).

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

14. CPA Corporate Assessment – Draft Self Assessment

(1) Mr Hardy introduced the current draft of the CPA Self Assessment document (version 6.1). This had a different format from previous versions as it followed the headings and structures of the key lines of enquiry for CPA and had included additions and comments made from various sources since the last meeting of the Policy Overview Co-ordinating Committee. The final version of the Self Assessment was due to be submitted on Monday, 10 December 2007. He mentioned that there were a number of highlighted gaps which would be completed shortly.

(2) The Leader stated that there would possibly be one more draft of this document but he now believed that this more accurately reflected the innovation within the organisation and articulated the authority's ambition. It was a much more accurate reflection of what the organisation was all about and he expressed his thanks to Mr Hardy and his team. He made two points which were as follows:-

- In relation to the use of prudential borrowing, one of the largest aspects was the Special School's Review which had not been mentioned.
- In relation to the 14-24 Unit there should be some work done on the wording to place greater emphasis on this unit.

(3) Mr Hill asked whether the fact that there was now no longer an executive summary, was a weakness. In response to this, Mr Hardy stated that he would look further at whether there should be something similar to an executive summary, however, the document would be on the KCC website and officers would ensure that it was easy to navigate with links to supporting documents.

(4) Mr Hill stated that there were a number of aspects relating to his portfolio area which needed some minor amendments. He hoped that the information which was due to be provided would cover these.

(5) Mr Lake referred to Page 10 - the East Kent Empty Property Initiative and the very useful article that had appeared in The Times.

(6) Mr Gibbens sought a reassurance that the issue of health inequalities was interwoven into the document. Mr Hardy undertook to look at this again, but stated that the way that the document had been approached was that the detail was included in a specific section and then reference was made to it throughout. He would check to make sure that the thread in relation to health inequalities was there.

(7) In response to a question from Mr Hotson, Mr Hardy stated that officers would ensure the document is jargon free so that it could be easy to understand by people outside of the organisation. Mr Hotson stated that In areas where we were saying that there was further work to be done, it was necessary to ensure that we were clear about what we were proposing to do and there should be an acknowledgement in relation to for example internal communications, we acknowledged that it was always possible to do things better. Mr Hardy stated that he believed that where we were saying we were not doing something, it was clear within the text what we were proposing to do about this.

(8) Mr Law made the following specific points:-

- Page 3 – fourth paragraph – in relation to the figure of 15,000 for KCC employed staff (excluding school staff) as the gross revenue budget of £2.1b is given, this would seem to imply that 80-90% of the budget was staff costs whereas, the actual revenue budget took into account school staff. Therefore, he suggested that further consideration needed to be given to how this was worded.
- Page 4 – last paragraph – the initials RSB – (Royal Bank of Scotland) needed to be explained.
- Page 5 – he sought clarification of whether Healthwatch was to be part of the new LINKs organisation and if so this should be stated. It was clarified that it was not possible for Healthwatch to be part of the LINKs.
- Page 11 – paragraph 4 – there is very little mention of Members within the report. Mr Law suggested that maybe a phrase such as “all Members have a key role in performance management, specifically as part of Policy Overview Committees and Select Committees”. Mr Hardy confirmed there would be a brief mention in this paragraph of Select Committees. In response to this, Dr Eddy requested, as Chairman of Cabinet Scrutiny that he had sight of this. It was agreed that it would be circulated.

- Page 15 – second paragraph – “the piloting of free travel for 11-16 year olds”. It was suggested that we should be clear that this was the Freedom Pass for which we charged a £50 administration fee.
- Page 23 – the point was made that there were many publicly owned clubs and premises for a specific sport which were not being used as widely as they should be. It was suggested that there should be an objective of using all premises designated for 80% of the time.

(9) Mr Daley stated that there was little about waste and the risks attached to the incinerator at Allington and how this risk was being dealt with. Mr Hardy replied that waste did not feature highly as an issue within the CPA. However, the Inspectors would also be looking at the Municipal Waste Strategy and he mentioned that other authorities were still envious of Kent for making the decision to go ahead with the Allington Incinerator.

(11) Mention was made of Page 14 – Savings and Efficiencies and the importance of emphasising that Kent was modernising and transforming services.

(12) The Chief Executive emphasised that there was still further work to do to edit the paper as the number of words was still too high and he confirmed that there would be extensive referencing within the document to other documents including waste strategies.

(13) Mr Marsh referred to Page 15 and the reduction in the number of invoices processed for care homes (in the first paragraph) from 24,000 to 12 and suggested that this figure needed to be checked.

(14) Mr Hardy then went set out the timetable for the CPA. The Inspection Team were due to arrive in Kent on 9 January 2008 for a three day tour of Kent. During week commencing 28 January 2008, they would be back in Kent to carry out the inspection. There would be one to one interviews with senior officers and Members and groups of staff, contractors and also there would be the opportunity for the inspectors to observe meetings. Mr Hardy confirmed that it would be for the inspectors to decide which meetings they wished to observe. The draft conclusions from the Inspection Team were expected by the end of March with the score being given by the end of May, beginning of June.

(16) Mr Hardy confirmed that even if paragraph numbers were not used, he would ensure that the text would be easy to follow and referenced. He also confirmed that the bold words within the text would feature in the glossary or have hyper-links.

(17) The Chief Executive stated that none of the inspectors had worked in a large local authority and that they had spoken about just focusing of two districts. He had suggested that they made full use of video conferencing and video streaming to get a broader picture as Kent had good examples of local community engagements such as the recording of the Dover Group which could be used.

(18) RESOVLED that the comments made by Members be noted.