

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 Thursday, 11 November 2010.

PRESENT: Mrs E M Tweed (Chairman), Mr A R Chell (Vice-Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden, Mr H J Craske, Mr D A Hirst, Mrs J P Law, Mr K Smith, Mr R Tolputt, Mr M A Wickham and Mr A T Willicombe

ALSO PRESENT: Mr P M Hill, OBE

IN ATTENDANCE: Mr C Bainbridge (Director of Community Safety & Regulatory Services), Ms J Edwards (Director of Policy and Resources, Communities Directorate), Mr J Hawkins (Project Manager, Transformation), Ms A Honey (Managing Director Communities), Mr M Scrivener (Business Information Manager), Mr K Tilson (Head of Finance for Policy and Resources), Ms S Woodward (Margate Task Force Programme Manager) and Ms D Fitch (Assistant Democratic Services Manager (Policy Overview))

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

82. Minutes - 16 September 2010

(Item A3)

RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting held on 16 September 2010 are correctly recorded and that they be signed as a correct record.

83. Portfolio Holder and Managing Director's update

(Item B1)

(1) Mr Hill and Ms Honey updated Members on the issues listed in the paper circulated with the agenda and answered questions from Members.

Australian Athletics use of Tonbridge School 2012 - Signing (21 September 2010)

(2) Mr Hill reported that the Australian Athletics Olympic squad would be using the facilities at the Tonbridge School in 2012. He confirmed that Kent had more Olympic training camps than any other County.

Kent Alcohol Strategy Launch (5 October 2010)

(3) Mr Hill stated that the Kent Alcohol Strategy had been launched on 5 October 2010. This strategy had been developed by the Kent Drug and Alcohol Action Team (KDAAT) from the work carried out by the Select Committee on Alcohol misuse. It had strong support from colleagues from the Health Service and he hoped that it would be a useful tool.

Museums, Libraries and Archives Council (MLA) (9 October 2010)

(4) Mr Hill referred to the recent visit by the Chief Executive of the MLA. Every County was currently looking at its library service to see how to adapt the service and policies in light of various factors including the digital revolution.

Youth Takeover Week - Shadowing (11 November 2010)

(5) Mr Hill mentioned the shadowing opportunity that was taking place this week for young people, a number of whom were shadowing Members.

Opening Folkestone Library and History Resource Centre (28th October 2010)

(6) Mr Hill referred to the recent opening of the Folkestone Library and History Resource Centre, the new facility had been very well received by the people of Folkestone and members of the Local History Society.

Turner Contemporary handover (8th December 2010)

(7) Mr Hill reminded Members that the handover of Turner Contemporary to the Trust would take place on 8 December 2010 and that all Members of the Committee had been invited to attend.

National changes relating to Communities Services

(8) Ms Honey set out the fast moving policy environment that Community Services was operating in at the moment. Key areas included the de-ring fencing of budgets and the abolition of a number of the Quangos who worked with the Directorate, including the National Treatment Agency and the Youth Justice Board. She referred to the £250m of funding allocated nationally for adult apprenticeships. Also the issues of personalised work programmes for the long term unemployed and the importance of trying to influence how this would work in Kent. The changes to the housing benefit system had the potential to cause a move in population from London to some of Kent disadvantaged communities. In relation to the Big Society there was the potential for a greater role for the community sector. She also referred to the £470m nationally for capacity building in the voluntary sector over the next 4 years. Ms Honey referred to the Big Society Bank and the proposals in Bold Steps for Kent.

(9) Reference was made to the new Select Committee on the Student Journey and the importance of this Directorate's work on apprenticeships being included.

(10) The importance of recognising that there was a lot of work in the community that was not part of any formal voluntary sector organisation was discussed. There was a need to provide some support so that the informal part of the voluntary sector was also able to take advantage of the opportunities that would become available.

(11) Concern was expressed about the impact that the lost of funding from District/Borough Councils would have on the voluntary sector. Also it seemed to be the same being involved in community/voluntary sector work rather than new volunteers.

(12) Ms Honey undertook to produce a policy briefing for Members on national changes relating to the Communities Directorate.

Young People's Housing Strategy and Emergency Accommodation protocol

(13) Ms Honey informed the Committee that there was a move to have a protocol for emergency accommodation for young people, especially 16 & 17 year olds.

(14) In response to a question on accommodation for young people who had been released from prison, Ms Slaven explained that this would be addressed within the emergency accommodation protocol. The Local Authority was responsible for vulnerable young people between the ages of 16 & 18. It was necessary to clearly set out responsibilities between the tiers of local government for example it was important that the housing authority and the social services authority worked closely together.

Cultural Strategy

(15) In relation to the Cultural Strategy, Ms Honey stated work was being undertaken on the criteria to set up a Cultural Board for the County.

Tell Us Once – Countywide Roll Out

(16) Ms Honey referred to the successful “tell us once” pilot which was now being rolled out across the county in relation to the notification of deaths. Mr Bainbridge gave details of how the pilot worked and stated that as well as linking with other public sector bodies there was also private sector interest to reduce insurance fraud.

Forward Plan, Key Decisions

(17) Mr Hill gave brief details of the following Key Decision which were on the current Forward Plan:-

- *The Edenbridge Centre*

This was awaiting planning permission from Sevenoaks District Council.

- *St John's Library*

This decision had been put on hold pending the re-arrangements within the Library Service.

- *Kent Archives and Local History Service Development Plan*

This related to the reorganisation of the service to fit into the new centre.

Self issue (Libraries and Archives)

(18) Mr Hill referred to a visit to Bromley to see the self issue system which they had been using for 2 years with very few problems. This system was liked by the service users. He confirmed that KCC would be getting an updated version of system.

(19) RESOLVED that the update be noted.

84. Change to Keep Succeeding *(Item B2)*

(1) Mr Hawkins introduced the “Change to Keep Succeeding” report by the Group Managing Director on the transformation of the County Council’s operating framework. This report had been endorsed by Cabinet on 11 October 2010 and also included alternative structures which had been presented to the Cabinet Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2010. The proposed structures were out to consultation until 3 December 2010. The County Council on 16 December 2010 would approve the top tier structure which will come into effect on 1 April 2011. The proposals included a Corporate Director of Customer and Communities which would include the services where the public came into direct contact with the County Council. It was proposed to have three Directors within that Directorate. It was anticipated that the Big Society would come under the Director of Service Improvement. Key to these proposals was ensuring that the public got one message from a single voice when they contacted the County Council.

(2) Ms Honey highlighted the key changes between the original and the alternative structures. She stated that the alternative structure included Kent Drug and Alcohol Treatment Team and the Emergency Planning Team within the proposed Customer and Communities Directorate.

(3) Members asked a number of questions and the responses included the following:-

- Mr Hawkins explained that Ms Kerswell had received comments from senior officers during the summer about the design principles for the re-structuring and that there had been discussions at Corporate Management Team. Senior managers had been widely consulted. All holders of impacted posts had had a one to one meeting with Ms Kerswell. He emphasised that the structures out to consultation were Ms Kerswell’s proposals as Group Managing Director and Head of the Paid Service.
- In relation to Public Rights of Way and County Parks which had been placed within the Customer and Communities Directorate in the proposed structures, Mr Hawkins explained that the logic behind this was that these were services that the public came to us for, but he emphasised that this was still subject to consultation and approval by the County Council.
- In response to a question on why the re-structuring needed to take place prior to the budget for 2011-12 being approved, Mr Hawkins stated that it was important to make the changes now so that the economies from them could be received as soon as possible. He confirmed that capacity was being built into the structure to accommodate possible changes arising from legislation such as the Public Health White Paper.
- Mr Hawkins confirmed that voluntary redundancy at the top level would be subject to approval by Members.

(4) Comments made by Members included the importance of ensuring that the views of key stakeholders especially for the Communities Directorate were taken into account.

(5) Mr Hawkins undertook to respond directly to Mr Tolputt about whether there would be an outplacement facility provided for staff and whether the Hay evaluation would take into account measures other than the size of the areas to be managed.

(6) RESOLVED that the matters raised by members be noted as part of the consultative process.

85. Financial Monitoring 2010/11

(Item B3)

(1) Mr Tilson presented a report on the forecast outturn against budget for the Communities portfolio.

(2) In relation to the Edenbridge Centre Mr Hill stated that he was confident that the project would be delivered without any additional burden to the County Council.

(3) The Directorate were congratulated on keeping so closely within their budget.

(4) RESOLVED that the projected outturn figures for the directorate for 2010/11 based on the latest monitoring report to Cabinet be noted.

86. Performance Management in the Communities Directorate

(Item B4)

(1) Mr Scrivener presented a report which gave an overview of how the Communities Directorate managed service performance and looked ahead to how the approach would develop in the light of greater self regulation.

(2) In response to a question Mr Scrivener explained that each service had local indicators which were monitored and he noted the point made about the need to ensure that assessment from external sources was included for the public facing elements of some services.

(3) A Member highlighted the role of this Committee in defining and monitoring performance parameters.

(4) RESOLVED that the report and comments made on the service performance management arrangements within the directorate and the in-year performance update be noted.

87. Budget 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2011/12 to 2012/13

(Item B5)

(1) Mr Hill introduced a report which identified the proposed strategy for determining next year's budget and the financial plans for the following years. He emphasised that the scale of savings required could not all be met from efficiency

savings and that where changes were made in front line services he would make sure that the services were viable and that the County Council could be proud of them.

(2) Mr Tilson highlighted certain elements of the report within the initial analysis of Spending Review 2010, the likely impact on the overall funding for KCC, the indicative cash limit and set out the latest indications of likely pressures facing the Communities portfolio. Members were invited to submit their individual priorities in order to meet the indicative cash limit.

(3) Mr Tilson confirmed that the Adult Education enrolment figures for September 2010 would be available as part of the second quarters monitoring report to Cabinet in November and would be reported to this Committee in January 2011. He explained that gross spend on Adult Education reduced in line with the reduction in income.

4) In relation to the budget and reserves for Supporting People, Mr Tilson confirmed that this was previously a specific grant and that prior year underspends were rolled into a reserve for use in future years. The grant is now received via Area Based grant and the reserve is being used to cope with need, as this is a demand led service. Once the reserves are fully utilised, a plan of action would have been achieved whereby short term support to individuals would have been phased downwards – not fully mitigated – with an emphasis on individuals being empowered to help themselves. Support would not be withdrawn, merely the level of support altered to reflect the reduction in financing.

(5) Mr Hill explained that in relation to the Turner Contemporary it had initially be anticipated that there would be income from car parking and a residential/hotel development however this had not been possible in the current economic climate, but it still hoped to be able to progress this in the future. In the meantime, the pressure had been identified for the Rendezvous site where an income gap existed. In the budget there was provision of £1.1m for Turner Contemporary for the next three years.

(6) Regarding the Open Golf Championship due to be held at Sandwich, Mr Hill explained that this event would bring approximately £7m of inward investment into the County. However it was necessary for the Local Authorities concerned to make an initial financial contribution in relation to transport and traffic planning etc.

(7) RESOLVED that the comments made by Members on the pressures outlined for the Communities portfolio be noted.

88. The Kent Coroners Service *(Item B6)*

(1) Mr Bainbridge presented a report which described the Coroners Service and how it was organised in Kent, specifically referring to areas where the County Council had control over the services and what action it could take to improve the service. It also noted the key stakeholders with whom KCC worked and the budget pressures facing the service. Also included in the report was information on mitigating action being pursued which including the appointment of a full time coroner, use of the Maidstone Register Office as a base for the new Coroner and their clerical support,

encouraging the use of premises “owned” by the Communities Directorate including the Archbishops Palace in Maidstone for Inquests and exploring the possibility of establishing one or more strategically located Corners facilities through an invest to save scheme.

(2) Mr Bainbridge explained the financial benefits of establishing a full time Coroners post when one of the part time posts becomes vacant in April, he was confident that there would be enough work for this full time post.

(3) In response to a question, Mr Bainbridge explained that the decision on whether to hold a post mortem rested with the Coroner. One provision of the Coroners and Justice Act 2009, which has yet to be implemented, was the appointment of a medical examiner who would look at the medical certificate and advise the Coroner if a post mortem was required. Pilots had indicated that this would reduce the number of post mortems. The County Council were lobbying the Government to implement this provision of the Act which would achieve savings.

(4) Regarding mortuaries Mr Bainbridge explained that there were currently 4 or 5 used at the moment, if the County Council established its own mortuary(s) there would be the potential for one sited in West Kent to sell its provision to other Local Authorities. A Member emphasised the importance of making sure that this sensitive service was accessible for people across Kent.

(5) In relation to increase in annual charge for post mortems made by Dartford and Gravesham NHS Trust which would create an in year pressure, Mr Tilson stated that negotiations were on going to try to get a phased increase in these costs.

(6) RESOLVED that the report and in particular the actions being taken to tackle the budget pressures currently facing the service be noted.

89. Margate Task Force - progress report

(Item B7)

(1) Ms Woodward presented a report which updated the Committee on the Margate Task Force (MTF), in terms of progress to date, the local and national interest that MTF had attracted, operational and strategic priorities for the short and longer term future and its relevance to the wider Kent context. There were two appendices circulated with the report, the first was a summary of the High Cost Cases study and the second was a draft proposal to introduce a Selective Licensing Scheme for privately rented accommodation within the Margate Task Force area.

(2) Ms Honey explained that this work was not just about money but was also about working with partners to have greater control over resources. She stated that the funding for Ms Woodward’s post came from a performance reward grant and was one off funding it was therefore necessary to look at the long term funding of this project.

(3) Ms Woodward explained that she was working closely with KDAAT, and had mapped the service as take up with was low through existing access routes. They were looking at assertive outreach and how to get people into treatment.

(4) In relation to the numbers of vulnerable children and adults placed in the area by other local authorities, Ms Woodward explained that they were ensuring that the relevant local authorities were aware of the situation. Some Directors of Children's Services were not aware of the number of looked after children that they were placing in these inappropriate areas of Kent.

(5) Ms Woodward stated that her background was in working with 14 – 19 year old young people and therefore she was well placed to work closely with schools and colleges to identify the risk of young people becoming NEETS (Not in Education or Employment).

(6) Regarding the proposal to introduce a Selective Licensing Scheme for privately rented accommodation in the area Ms Woodward explained that it was the intention to keep bureaucracy to a minimum as long as standard were met. The object of the scheme was to target areas where there was an ongoing problem. Ms Woodward confirmed that it was the intention to share the learning from this scheme with other areas.

(7) The matter of tenants not paying rent received from Housing Benefit to Landlords and leaving the property with rent arrears was raised. Ms Woodward stated that there was the option for tenants to agree that housing benefit be paid direct to the landlord which was an option preferred by many landlords.

(8) In relation to a question on what the parameters for success for the project were, Ms Woodward stated that in the past there had been a lot of good work carried out in the area but there had not been a co-ordinated approach. They were now looking at a co-ordinated approach with public services across the area based on the Community Safety model. It was challenging to look at setting collective targets across the partnership but she would be reporting to the Task Force Board, where she would be presenting the milestones for the project and would be able to report these to Members after that.

(9) RESOLVED that the report and the comments made by Members be noted and that an update report be submitted to a future meeting.

90. Select Committees - update

(Item C1)

(1) The Committee received an update report on the progress of the Select Committee on Extended Services and the establishment of a Select Committee on the Student Journey.

(2) RESOLVED that the update be noted and that Members advise the Democratic Services officer of any items that they would like to suggest for inclusion in the Select Committee topic review programme