

KENT COUNTY COUNCIL

REGENERATION AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT POLICY OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

MINUTES of a meeting of the Regeneration and Economic Development Policy Overview and Scrutiny Committee held in the Darent Room, Sessions House, County Hall, Maidstone on Tuesday, 18 January 2011.

PRESENT: Mr M C Dance (Chairman), Mr I S Chittenden (Vice-Chairman), Mr P J Homewood, Mrs J P Law, Mr K H Pugh, Mrs J A Rook, Mr K Smith, Mr M V Snelling, Mrs E M Tweed, Mr J N Wedgbury (Substitute for Mr A R Chell) and Mr M J Whiting (Substitute for Mr J R Bullock, MBE)

ALSO PRESENT: Mr J A Kite and Mr K G Lynes

IN ATTENDANCE: Ms B Cooper (Director of Economic Development), Mr N Smith (Head of Development Investment) and Miss T Grayell (Democratic Services Officer)

UNRESTRICTED ITEMS

53. Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2010

(Item A4)

RESOLVED that, subject to the amendments to Minute 46 set out below, the Minutes of the meeting held on 17 November 2010 are correctly recorded and they be signed by the Chairman.

Minute 46, paragraph 2:

third bullet point under 'ASHFORD' :

- there was a difference of view locally over the value of 'Ashford's Future'. Some Members expressed the view that it is a good driving force and a big advantage for Ashford, which, if it were to be discontinued, would need to be replaced with something as dynamic. Other Members, however, did not share this view;

first bullet point under 'CANTERBURY' :

- since the visit, Herne Bay had benefitted from £26million of private investment and £4½million from the City Council for sports and other service provision;

There were no matters arising.

54. Presentation - Draft Kent Forum Housing Strategy

(Item B1)

Mr B Horton, Strategic Housing Advisor, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Horton introduced the report and presented a series of slides which set out the background, development and aims of the strategy. He explained that the strategy would be launched in March 2011 and would then develop, with partners, a detailed implementation plan. In response to Members' comments and questions, the following points were highlighted:-

- a) the strategy was welcomed as a way forward, but difference of opinion between planners and regeneration continues to be an issue in some areas;
- b) the strategy should place more emphasis on the importance of safety and quality building in new developments. This issue links very closely with the Designing Out Risk item later in the agenda, and the Kent Design Initiative sets out a framework for quality development. Both these issues would be emphasised at the strategy launch; and
- c) KCC is ready to be genuinely creative and innovative in working with its partners to continue Kent's good national reputation in this field.

2. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the information in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks; and
- b) the draft Strategy be welcomed, with some Members expressing reservations about the issues mentioned in paragraph 1. b) above.

55. Presentation - Tourism and Progress of the Kent Contemporary Campaign (Item B2)

Mrs T Bruton, Head of Regeneration Projects, and Ms S Matthews-Marsh, Chief Executive of Visit Kent, were in attendance for this item.

Mr K Pugh declared an interest in this item as his wife chairs the Sheppey Tourism Alliance.

1. Mrs Bruton introduced the report and set out KCC's role in supporting Kent Tourism, with private sector partners, and the financial contribution KCC made to it. She explained that tourism was the best performing sector of the UK economy, despite the current economic climate. Ms Matthews-Marsh thanked Members for the support, investment and leadership which KCC had provided, and the Cabinet Member for his support in championing tourism. She presented a series of slides which set out the background to the Kent Contemporary campaign, and the simplicity of its message, based on Kent being known as the Garden of England, which could be extended to 'Explore your garden', 'Relax in your garden', etc.

2. The Cabinet Member, Mr K G Lynes, praised the approach taken by the Kent Contemporary campaign, and its use of an award-winning photographer, whose views of Kent offered a new way to look at familiar landmarks. It also made innovative use of social networking media to allow Kent people to upload pictures of and stories about their favourite places on to the MyKent website. The predicted

financial outcomes of the campaign were expected to be good. A very detailed model was being used to calculate the average spend by each overnight visitor.

3. In discussion, and in response to Members' comments and questions, the following points were highlighted:-

- a) tourism activity and income had always made a good contribution to Kent's economic health, and Kent has a good tourism product. Kent Contemporary is a good project, and the information generated by it will be useful, but it would be helpful to have some example case studies of local businesses which have been helped by tourism income;
- b) in tourism, there are elements of competition, both within the UK and within Kent. Members commented that it would be helpful for future update reports to cover these issues and explain how they are dealt with;
- c) SouthEastern Trains have been happy to support a link between road and rail travel, allowing travellers to switch between the two on a flexible, transferable ticket. It is hoped that a 'Kent Rover' ticket might be available by summer 2011, which would be particularly useful during the 2012 Olympics;
- d) The 'Greet the World' campaign would allow Kent and Nord Pas de Calais to advertise and promote each other's tourism in a reciprocal arrangement;
- e) Members welcomed the impressive figures quoted in the report, such as the annual number of visitors (45 million) and the contribution this made to Kent's economy (£2.5 billion) and job creation (50,000 jobs). These figures had been measured using the Cambridge model, and include day visitors as well as those staying for a longer visit. 47% of hits on the Kent Contemporary website had come from London residents;
- f) Kent's investment in tourism had generated a 47:1 return, with which Members were similarly very impressed; and
- g) Kent residents are encouraged to visit other parts of their own county in the Big Day Out scheme, which in 2011 will run over a whole weekend rather than just a single day.

4. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the information set out in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks; and
- b) further annual update reports, in the same format, be made to the POSC. The next one of these should address the issues outlined in paragraph 3. b) above.

56. Designing out Risk - Building in Safety

(Item B3)

Miss A Millington, Deputy Chief Executive, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, and Mr S Griffiths, Assistant Director of Community Safety, Kent and Medway Fire and Rescue Authority, were in attendance for this item.

Mr J Wedgbury declared an interest as a serving firefighter, stationed in London.

1. Miss Millington introduced the report, which had been requested as an update on work since the issue had first been considered by the POSC at its meeting in March 2010, and set out some key developments since then:-

- the number of fires in Kent's homes and businesses is reducing, but when a fire does occur, a business's insurance costs increase dramatically and it is often very difficult, particularly for small businesses, to recover and rebuild. Loss of businesses in this way has a big impact on the Kent economy;
- KMFRA had been disappointed by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) response to its work on Designing Out Risk, and is working hard to promote the initiative;
- KMFRA's work on Designing Out Risk is now included in the Kent Design Guide, which will be launched on 27 January 2011; and
- the ultimate aim of KMFRA's work on Designing Out Risk, in terms of regeneration, is to encourage people to see Kent as a safe place to live and work and set up business.

2. In discussion, and in response to comments and questions from Members, the following points were highlighted:-

- a) research on improving the quality of timber-framed buildings is ongoing, as this remains an economical way of providing plentiful, affordable housing. There is some re-thinking around primary materials and design to identify ways to resist and delay burn. This research is being undertaken by the DCLG and also in the USA, where many more timber-framed homes are built and the ability of such buildings to resist and survive fire has been a bigger problem for longer;
- b) KMFRA works extensively to control fire risk in buildings, during construction and in occupation. Its work with builders to address the issues is having a positive effect. However, once a building is occupied and owners start making alterations to the structure, the fire safety features start to be compromised;
- c) research has shown that if a high number of sprinklers are included at the construction stage, fewer internal fire doors are required, which in turn can make the building more user-friendly for people with restricted mobility;
- d) a lot of KMFRA's work in communities is based on reassuring people about the level of fire risk. Although arson attacks are quite rare, people's fear of them is a major issue to be addressed. This

community work is undertaken by using advocates from within the community, particularly in ethnic minority communities;

- e) the report was welcomed, but Members expressed a view that it could afford to be more forceful in its comments on timber-framed buildings;
- f) some of KMFRA's work as a consultee on building safety has a statutory basis, and some is aimed at avoiding operational difficulties in attending and fighting fires. KMFRA would always seek to achieve maximum possible engagement beyond its minimum statutory requirement. The Authority's fire safety department has a huge role in advising businesses on how to reduce fire risk in their premises;
- g) KMFRA has also had influence in highway improvements, eg in junction layouts, to help improve access for fire vehicles; and
- h) Members are keen to support KMFRA in promoting its work, and those on District Councils undertook to press their local Planning Committees to take full consideration of the issue.

3. RESOLVED that:-

- a) the report be welcomed, and the information given in it and in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks; and
- b) a further update report be brought to the POSC in one year's time.

57. Feedback Report from REDPOSC District Visits

(Item B4)

Mr D Hughes, Regeneration and Projects Manager, was in attendance for this item.

1. Ms Cooper introduced the report, which had been requested by the POSC at its November meeting. It set out an action plan to take forward the regeneration priorities identified in the district visits. Many elements which arose from the visits were already covered in other documents currently emerging, such as Growth Without Gridlock, but funding and timing of work was still a major issue to be addressed. Ms Cooper answered questions of local detail from Members.

2. In discussion, and in response to Members' general comments and questions, the following points were highlighted:-

- a) KCC has a good working relationship with District Councils across the county and all are open to trying new ways of working together to make the most of the shared lack of funding;
- b) the criteria of the Regeneration Fund will be applied to identify which schemes qualify for funding;
- c) when considering projects, it is important to look at deliverability as well as priority;

- d) in the new KCC structure, strategy would come under one Director and delivery under another, and this will help transparency; and
- e) the report and the action plan had not yet been shared with District Councils, and the POSC would be kept up to date with any changes to the action plan arising from feedback from District Councils.

3. The Chairman reported that the Leader had requested an update report collating all the information arising from each district visit, to be sent to all Members of the County Council to appraise them of the regeneration priorities and issues in their electoral district. This report would be prepared by collating existing information. At the time of each visit, all local Members for the area concerned had been informed of the visit and invited to attend if they wished to.

4. RESOLVED that the information in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and the next steps proposed in the report be endorsed.

58. Growth Without Gridlock - A Transport Delivery Plan for Kent *(Item B5)*

Mr P Crick, Interim Director of Integrated Strategy and Planning, was in attendance for this item.

1. Mr Crick introduced the report and explained that Growth Without Gridlock had been launched on 1 December 2010 for consultation, and that this was Members' opportunity to comment on it and how it should be delivered. Members had each been sent the executive summary document which had been issued at the launch and which summarised the issues relevant to each district of Kent. More detail on each was available in the full Growth Without Gridlock document, which would be made available to Members upon request.

2. Mr Crick responded to Members' comments and questions on local detail. General points highlighted were as follows:-

- a) many towns in Kent suffer very badly from the effects of frequently-gridlocked traffic and would need help with traffic management to address the problems;
- b) although each district is addressed in the Growth Without Gridlock document, more detailed plans for local delivery in each area would be developed later;
- c) a landing charge would apply to foreign cars and coaches; and
- d) as a strategic document, Growth Without Gridlock will be addressing issues which are key to the new Local Enterprise Partnerships (LEPs), and meetings between KCC and its LEP partners and neighbours would need to tackle these issues thoroughly.

3. RESOLVED that Growth Without Gridlock be welcomed, and the proposed delivery programme, outlined in its executive summary, be agreed.

59. Supporting Community Infrastructure

(Item B6)

1. Mr Smith introduced the report and responded to comments and questions of local detail from Members.
2. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks, and the approach being taken in the Integrated Infrastructure and Finance Model be endorsed.

60. Financial Monitoring 2010/2011

(Item B7)

Mr D Shipton, Finance Strategy Manager, was in attendance for this and the following item.

1. Mr Shipton introduced the report and explained that the Regeneration and Economic Development Unit budget had an ongoing underspend arising from the moratorium on recruitment.
2. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report be noted, with thanks.

61. Draft Revenue and Capital Budgets 2011/12 and Medium Term Financial Plan 2011- 2013

(Item B8)

The Chairman secured the Committee's agreement to consider this item as urgent business, as the papers could not be placed in the public domain with the required five clear days' notice, due to the late publication of the draft budget.

1. Mr Shipton introduced the report and responded to comments and questions from Members. The issues highlighted were as follows:-
 - a) the budget document which would be considered by the County Council in February would be presented in portfolio order, to aid the traditional debate, as well as the A to Z order of services currently used for the draft budget book. For the Regeneration & Economic Development Portfolio, the proposed spending on project activities is shown on page 74 of the A to Z, and strategic staff costs are shown on page 81 as part of the CED Directorate Management & Support. At this stage in the restructure proposals, it is not appropriate to identify budgets for individual units as this could only be presented for the old structures. It is intended that the final budget book will show budgets for new unit structures. The year-on-year change for the Regeneration and Economic Development Portfolio is shown on page 95. Members at some earlier POSC meetings had commented that the A to Z budget book format was difficult to follow;
 - b) the report which had been prepared for the POSC contained more detail than included in the draft budget book, and provided detail of the staff costs included under the CED heading, to reconcile the total proposed budget for the portfolio of £5.224m for 2011/12. Most of the

reduction compared to the budget of £6.361m for 2010/11 will arise from re-prioritisation of project activity; and

- c) the Cyclopark project listed in the report under the Revenue budget is being progressed under the headings of two portfolios; Regeneration will show the revenue costs and Environment, Highways and Waste the capital project.

2. The Chairman invited the Cabinet Member, Mr Lynes, to comment on the portfolio's budget. Mr Lynes said the budget for his portfolio was small in comparison to those of other portfolios, and entirely project-driven. Projects which are valued by the KCC and its partners will continue, always working to find new ways to achieve their aims. He explained the method used to calculate the budget; taking all lines back to zero and adding in funding based on agreed priorities. The Regeneration unit would seek to save on FTE posts, and if it proved possible to make more savings than planned, he would seek to be allowed to put those savings into the Regeneration Fund. He reminded Members that the Regeneration Fund had supported projects across portfolios other than his own, and as such was a practical example of cross-directorate working.

- 3. RESOLVED that the information given in the report and in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks.

62. Update on Major Projects, including Core Monitoring *(Item B9)*

1. Ms Cooper introduced the report and responded to comments and questions about specific projects. General points highlighted were as follows:-

- a) there are many potential links between Regeneration and Communities, and these should be highlighted and acknowledged as project work moves forward. This link would provide a way to measure the outcomes of effective regeneration work;
- b) DTZ will shortly produce a report on the benefits of regeneration work in Thanet, in terms of job creation and reduced benefit dependency, and that report will be sent to Members when available. The POSC could also have a future agenda item on the findings of the DTZ report; and
- c) in choosing which regeneration projects to support, KCC needs always to be astute in choosing projects which would best contribute to the county's economy, and be ready to highlight this contribution.

- 2. RESOLVED that the information set out in the report and given in response to Members' comments and questions be noted, with thanks.

63. Update on Select Committee Work *(Item C1)*

RESOLVED that the information set out in the report be noted, with thanks.